

Political Ideologies Contexts, Ideas and Practices
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Lecture 19 Anarchism Lec 3/4 39:12
Mutualism; Syndicalism; Anarcho-Capitalism

Well hello again everyone, we're doing the next part of our Ideologies NPTEL course for 2019-20, and we're moving on through anarchism, we haven't quite completed it. What we shall do is complete anarchism or at least the background to it. We'll then look at some recent evaluations of it and also look at, well, what may be the world's longest-standing contemporary anarchist community - and the kinds of issues people there have faced. But we'll - that'll be well, the second part, I'll complete the theory now, the second part will be more like the kind of thing we would do in a seminar.

So, we'll look at criticisms of anarchism, we'll look at defences of it, and we'll look at the issues faced by an example of it. So, let's make a start, we've got to continue with our theory, we're going to look at different forms of anarchism, one is mutualism. Now the French word *syndicat*, S Y N D I C A T, means a union, more commonly a trade union, and anarchism became a mass movement only in the form of anarcho-syndicalism.

And in the early phases of industrialization, trade unions were banned for long periods. We have already seen that, I think in our Mark's topic. The British legal ban was lifted only in 1824, when the Combination Acts were repealed.

After that, unions grew steadily stronger. The French National Union body, the Confédération Générale du Travail, CGT or CGT in French, adopted syndicalism before 1914. Syndicalist ideas also spread through the Americas and Italy, and, as we have seen, through Spain, where they still continue to inform the politics particularly of Catalonia, the province of Catalonia.

Now anarchist thinkers were attracted by syndicalism, even though syndicalism involved what have been called crude theories of class. But the syndicalists of the time rejected conventional politics because they thought it was corrupt and pointless. That charge is still levelled by anarchist political groups today, and syndicalists at that time, around the turn of the 20th century, 19th to 20th century, held that workers' power should be expressed through boycotts and sabotage and strikes leading to a general strike. They also had strong and relatively non-

hierarchical grassroots movements, and that was an added attraction for anarchists.

One problem for anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-syndicalism, is the risk of focusing too closely on trade unions at the expense of economic reform or revolution - but the examples of Catalonia and the movements there show that syndicalists can have much wider aims. Now we need to look again at anarcho-communism, and this also requires the abolition of the state. There was an Italian anarchist called Errico Malatesta and he agreed with Kropotkin over this, and according to Kropotkin anarcho-communism is consistent with humans' natural capacity for cooperation.

This was put partly in opposition to Charles Darwin, and Kropotkin observed the extent of cooperation among different species of animals. And he concluded that evolution strengthens social ability - and he concluded, therefore - sociability is an evolutionary asset. Now since then they have been many findings, and I won't go into detail, here to the effect that a great many species cannot survive without substantial amounts of cooperation; and those arguments can be put whether or not in Darwinian terms, and we don't need to go into detail there.

But certainly the extent of cooperation and even communication or cooperative communication has been observed, not only among cetaceans, whales and dolphins and so on. But among various other species, including if I am not mistaken some of the higher primates such as chimpanzees or other such primates.

Now for Kropotkin an anarcho-communist society would have no state, it would instead consist of small, self-sufficient communities. Each of these would hold its wealth in common, and the sharing of work and benefits would strengthen social bonds among members. So would direct participation by all members in making decisions for the community concerned. It's crucial too, that each community would always be small enough to avoid the centralization and depersonalization which anarchists see as inevitable in larger communities.

Now, this is not as odd as it sounds. It's certainly been noted that when people have the chance to participate freely and without coercion, making decisions, even in the formal political process, they tend to make sound practical decisions, and that's been found for example, in even in things like participatory budgeting; and the more people found out, citizens involved found out, the wiser and more practical their decisions.

That does not mean they lost sight of the overall benefits and the overall moral and political

goals. They made better decisions, they were better informed, and participated better. Now that's a very interesting thing to do. We'll see later on that this has been done in respect, even of drafting a state's constitution, that was Iceland, and drafting an electoral system for the Canadian state of British Columbia. We'll meet those in a later chapter, our concluding chapter on republicanism and citizenship.

But anarchism or Kropotkin, certainly in his form of anarchism, thought we could do without a state, we would have small self-sufficient communities instead. We'd hold our wealth in common, now, that is not as odd as it sounds. We are familiar with the history of cultures where the idea of land ownership almost did not exist, if I am not mistaken, certainly, First Americans or Native American peoples had a very different conception of occupation and title to land from the ones we have today.

And if I am not mistaken, again that kind of, those, I mean very different conceptions of land occupation, without ownership, probably obtained among Australian Aboriginal peoples. It is said that when, that they had each people had a characteristic song, and that if you moved some distance and heard a different song, you knew that you were on the border or had crossed it. You may be aware of a book by Bruce Chatwin called Songlines, and he went around Australia with, incidentally in company with Salman Rushdie, perhaps 30 years ago, writing about his encounters with people who inherited such [song] songline traditions?

Well, those are largely what we might call left anarchists, or collaborative or cooperative anarchist ideas. But what about individualist anarchism? That's another significant form of anarchism. This is founded on the idea that the individual is sovereign. It is most extreme expression perhaps is found in the work of the German philosopher Max Stirner, a 19th century philosopher and according to Stirner, the individual is free to act as just as they choose, irrespective of laws, social institutions, or conventions.

Other less extreme forms of course exist, and some of them have had some political impact, especially during the last three four decades when neoliberal ideas have purportedly been dominant. Well Stirner's position has not itself had much effect on anarchism, and individual anarchists or individualist anarchist have generally retained some conception of order and how to achieve it.

And they're broadly grouped under the heading of libertarianism. The American novelist Henry Thoreau held at the individual must act according to their own conscience, especially in

response to governmental wrongs. He himself disobeyed the US government because it upheld slavery and because it waged war against other countries. He spoke in favour of the abolitionists - John Brown was immortalized in the famous song. That was in 1859, Thoreau spoke in favor of John Brown and extremely unpopular and often dangerous thing to do, and like various other American anarchists, Thoreau campaigned against slavery. Other anarchists like Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker thought in terms of mechanisms or processes whereby some sort of market exchange would serve to reconcile conflicting interests. It's a familiar theme in neoclassical and neoliberal economics. It's also strongly advocated by libertarians.

Now Josiah Warren, like John Locke, thought that mixing our labour with something, working on it, made it our own property, and he proposed a system in which labour time would be the medium of exchange, so that people would take could take advantage of the division of labour and that itself, as we've seen with Marx increases productivity. More recently, the American philosopher Robert Nozick has restated a conception of individual rights such that our earnings are entirely ours by right and therefore, that taxation is a violation of the individual's personhood; Nozick wrote that back in 1974.

Well, there have been more explicitly economically-focused forms of anarchism and one of them is Individualist anarchism. One is anarcho-capitalism, which saw something of a revival in the last three decades of the 20th century. So, this is free-market anarchism or anarcho-capitalism. Most of the proponents of it were academics. But the novelist Ayn Rand, whose novels are associated with liberalism or free-market anarchism, was not herself an academic. She died in 1982, penniless and totally dependent on state benefits, which she loathed and had railed against all her life. Remember that's how she ended up.

Now among the proponents of anarcho-capitalism were philosophers such as Robert Paul Wolff, Robert Nozick, Murray Rothbard, and others. Nozick accepted the idea of a minimal state, and the main function of that would be the protection of individual rights. Robert Paul Wolff considered philosophical anarchism to be the only, I quote, 'the only reasonable belief for an enlightened man' - he actually says that. Murray Rothbard is another one in that writing in that period, the early 80s, Rothbard thought, that the individual and any property they may have, were utterly sacrosanct. He insists that individuals may dispose of their property only by voluntary contract.

Now Rothbard recognizes that we may need protection against others, and we might need

systems to resolve disputes. But he has total confidence in the market to meet all needs and he proposes private, I quote, 'protection associations' and even private courts. According to Rothbard, the market will weed out incompetent associations or unfair courts, because customers will go elsewhere.

Such ideas are not as far-fetched as they might sound, and for example, while the American West was being settled by immigrants from Europe in the 19th century, the settlers devised their own rules and procedures, including dispute resolution, enforcement, protection agencies, and much else. The so called Wild West was much less wild than the movies have made it out to be. I also understand that much larger proportions of the cowboys in the wild west were African-American than the movies have suggested; that would need checking but I understand that that is the case. Possibly even one half of cowboys were African-Americans.

Well, this has been written about by two American academics, very convinced libertarians, called Anderson and Hill, and they showed certainly that the settlers devised their own rules, whether they were up in wagon trains or encampments or mining settlements. They in fact the, if I am not mistaken the courier agency Wells Fargo started as a protection agency riding shotgun on the wagon trains.

And of course, the Wild West settlers were outside the United States because the western borders of the United States were still largely on the east coast. So, they had to devise their own laws and procedures and even their own courts or imitations of courts. Incidentally, they banned lawyers. I understand that at least Anderson and Hill point out that in at least one form of dispute settlement lawyers were banned.

But it does mean the Wild West was much less wild than the movies make it look. But Anderson Hill may well have neglected a background factor, and that background factor may well have been decisive. The immigrants and settlers they write about, seem to have been largely white English speakers of working-class origins, and they seem in addition to have shared the Protestant faith. This would make it much more likely that they already held shared assumptions about the status of rules and institutions, about procedures and tribunals and enforcement bodies. Even when they themselves created, they created these with certain background assumptions about how to constitute authority about what it is to accept the authority of such bodies and procedures, and indeed, ultimately about what it is to follow a rule at all. We can only guess how these settler societies would have worked, if, for example, they had been

composed of a mixture of groups from very different cultures such as southern European Catholic immigrants to the US, Russian Jewish escapees from religious persecution and so on. It is quite likely, I certainly argue and have argued in print, that Anderson and Hill almost certainly neglected these kinds of background factors.

Well, in our own time, several governments have adopted various approaches which look libertarian, or seem to express libertarian ideas. The United States, the United Kingdom and Australia have large numbers of private prisons, and in many countries services once regarded as the duty of the state, such as airport security or security for events like the Olympics, are now delivered by private companies.

Even some military services, such as cover for US installations in Afghanistan, and supplies for US troops there, have been handed over to private contractors, in several cases the privatized services have been even worse than the public ones they replaced, and for example, the United States based security firm Blackwater was involved in so many scandals, including the murders of unarmed Iraqi civilians, that it renamed itself Xe, X-E. I do not know what it does now, if it still retains the same name, and we need to check that. But the United States troops have also discovered - this is frontline troops in war zones - have discovered that civilian contractors are not legally obliged to deliver supplies if they have to enter into combat areas or combat zones.

So, it is not clear how much the anarcho-, the anarcho-capitalists or libertarians can actually substantiate their arguments. The state continues to be heavily involved. It pays for the civilian contractors from public funds, prisons, education systems which have been effectively in England and Wales substantially privatized, certainly in the United States as well, with very large educational corporations taking over what used to be publicly funded schools, they're still paid from the public purse. The matter of supplying troops in war zones, well, has meant that the state has had to do the work itself. In addition, very few if any of the libertarian theorists seem to have criticized the enormous expansion and state surveillance that has occurred and even the most self-conscious of democracies since the September 2001, at terrorist attacks in the US, usually called 9/11.

Well, something else that such libertarians or anarcho-capitalists have seemed not to have criticized is the constitutionality or the legality, the legal nature of much of the relevant legislation, such as the US Patriot Act, it's actually called the USA Patriot Act where USA stands for Unifying and Strengthening America - it's part of the title of the Act - or the Homeland

Security Act, or the British prevention of Terrorism Act.

We haven't had much criticism from, from the libertarian philosophers who favor a minimal state or non-state in favor of the market. Furthermore, none of the American libertarians has criticized the enormous power and influence private corporations have on government, even to the extent of writing state-level laws and major national policies themselves for elected representatives to rubber stamp.

This has been well documented. I should add here that this kind of influence stems from the fact that a great many major American corporations no doubt, benefiting from two major Supreme Court cases, that is *McCutcheon* and *Citizens United*, have put enormous amounts of money into state level legislators' election campaigns, as they do into federal government election campaigns for the Congress and for the presidency. They, in effect what they do, having funded election campaigns - lawfully funded them - is, is to write the legislation themselves for elected representatives to rubber-stamp. Indeed did most of the American libertarians energies, in contrast to, to objecting to this, seem to be devoted to providing an ideological smokescreen for unrestricted market capitalism; that's been noted in the literature on anarchism.

Well, there are other forms of anarchism and even federalism has been called a form of anarchism. Anarchist thinkers reject the idea of the state because of the state's inherent tendency, as they see it, to extend an abuse its powers in progressively more imaginative ways without ever relinquishing any of those powers. For example in India, a new Land Acquisition Act passed in 2013, replaced the existing law that was, that had been be passed by the colonial government in 1894. But the new Act, passed in 2013, retained the most sweeping powers of the old Act and therefore, any central or state government official can still declare any land fit for public purpose - and the state can immediately take over the land in question.

Similarly, the repeal of the prevention of Terrorism Act in India was widely praised in 2004. But many of its provisions were later restated in other laws, such as the unlawful activities Prevention Act or Prevention Act (Amendment) 2008 and that has been documented by Human Rights watch - that was documented in 2010. This time, the new powers were restated without expiry, dates, or review dates and all of them with only one day of parliamentary debate. The draft amendments had not been shown to the public at all. Anarchist analysts would consider this kind of conduct by a state typical.

India is not alone in this. Much of the, well, the Homeland Security Act in the Patriot Act were

rushed through the US Congress very quickly and got apparently very little scrutiny. Exactly the same holds for the British Official Secrets Act 1911, which if I am not mistaken, went through both chambers of Parliament in about an hour. I understand that it went through the House of Commons in about 20 minutes, and the House of Lords in about 40 minutes.

But that is not unusual with state security legislation. It tends to go through hastily, under-scrutinized and under-evaluated, and very often is simply not shown to the public at all. But there's another set of reasons why anarchists reject the state. They have got a lot of evidence to say the state will always expand its powers even to the point of illegitimacy and even through illegitimate or covert procedures.

But there's a further set of criticisms. The state as we have it was created in particular historical period and for specific political purposes. The Peace of Westphalia, which many of the European monarchs of the time signed in 1648 - it took if I am not mistaken years to agree it. The Peace of Westphalia was a deal between those monarchs and the church. It delineated the respective spheres of authority of the church and the monarchs, and it gave the monarchs unquestionable rule - unquestionable rule - over their defined territories. The Peace of Westphalia 1648 is, among other things, the source of the modern concept of state sovereignty, particularly over territory. Today, states are the direct inheritors of that idea.

We can note here that the Peace of Westphalia was, among other things, the settlement of bitter religious disputes between the Church of Rome and the Protestant church or Lutheran churches, it was in Europe. But it was, among other things, the originator of the modern concept of state sovereignty, and that's what we inherit today.

Now, anarchist philosophers have fiercely criticized such states, or, as they used to be called, nation-states. What are those tendencies? To centralize power, to extend their powers indefinitely, and, to conquer other states or regions. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon greatly feared the unification of Italy in the 19th century, and he saw that Giuseppe Mazzini coined the slogan, '*Dio e popolo*' - in English, 'God and the people' - and he saw that this slogan - according Pierre-Joseph Proudhon this slogan was a gift to anyone who could seize the machinery of any centralized state.

Both France and what had been England had been brought under progressive greater central control. In France Louis the XIVth even said, 'L'état c'est moi', - 'I am the state', or, 'The state, it is myself'. In England, Oliver Cromwell, who called himself the Lord Protector even though he

was a commoner and not a hereditary aristocrat, continued the monarch's extensions of their powers over Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Cromwell by the way, died in 1658, if I'm not mistaken; he ruled for about 10 years, but continued the monarch's extension of their powers over the other regions of the, of what was then Britain.

Some of the anarchists' fears were almost prophetic. In 1920, three years after the Russian Revolution, Kropotkin said that imperial Russia would never be revived. He also said that all attempts to unite the elements of the old empire, such as Finland, the Baltic states, Ukraine, Georgia, and the others, were I quote, 'doomed to failure'. That's Kropotkin's own term, own phrase, used in 1920. Today, among all the regions which Kropotkin listed, only Siberia is still part of Russia.

In our time, well we could see any number of examples of cooperation between states. The United Nations is the biggest and most obvious. But the European Union, the African Union, the Organization of American States, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, are only, they're, well, only some of the better-known ones, and [engage in] international cooperation and dispute resolution, on everyday matters without which the human world as we know it might all but cease to function.

But - an anarchist response could be that all of those bodies depend on their member states, and that those bodies are also at the mercy of the most powerful states within them. We don't have to look very far. The United States [United Nations], founded in 1945, has a Security Council with five permanent members; only the five permanent members have a veto. So the anarchists have got a very strong point - that there has never been, for example, a single UN intervention in any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, not even in the terribly troubled British province of Northern Ireland, and not at all in the United States despite severe and persistent, lasting racial segregation and discrimination. In addition, there have rarely been interventions in countries which the five permanent members protect in favour unless those countries are threatened or invaded.

Even the European Union, which is probably the most successful example of international cooperation, since where the Peace of Westphalia since 1648 shows the problems the Westphalian idea of the nation state creates. The public perception of the EU in almost all its 28 member states is of a remote, secretive authority, which tells 510 million, perhaps more, how to live their lives, down to specifying food ingredients and standardized road signs - and that's the

public perception, that the EU is telling us what to do, with remote, distant, faceless bureaucrats somewhere in Brussels, because that's where the administrative and law-drafting branch the European Commission is based.

That's the public perception of it. But the EU's supranational powers, powers to override Member States - which are which are over and above member states' - are much more limited than many realize. Critics of course rightly points to areas where the EU has steadily expanded its powers. But where the EU is secretive and remote from the public, it does not act very differently from Member States themselves. The governments of the member states draft almost all of their own laws in secret. They may then publicize them for as a matter of public debate or consultation before they put them into their parliaments, or before their Parliament's debate them, but nevertheless, drafting is almost done entirely in secret, occasional leaks of course can be very controversial, but the EU is no more secretive than Member States themselves.

And anarchists would have a further point given the extent to which the major corporations, global corporations, based in in European Union, influence the drafting of EU law by the European Commission. That's a significant and often under examined issue but it gets some attention in some of the academic literature.

The European Parliament in theory has powers under the Treaty of Maastricht to reject any or all EU legislation put to which by the Commission. In practice, it very rarely uses those powers; it can also sack - dismiss - the entire Commission, but it has never had to do so, and most of the time, Parliament uses the much weaker consultation procedure, which means that very rarely is EU law significantly redrafted by the European Parliament.

It does occasionally happen over things like the licensing of highly toxic fertilizers and pesticides, or fertilizers and pesticides which are additionally highly toxic, but those parts are relatively rarely used and seem to be used in response to extensive lobbying from public, the publics of the various European Union states.

But in general the anarchist argument, particularly Bakunin's, Mikhail Bakunin's arguments against the state and against associations of states are supported by current evidence. Baconian said, in 1867, said a United States of Europe could never come about under the given states as they existed at the time. He said the enormous disparities - that was his own phrase - the enormous disparities between them, and the extent of internal centralization within them, made such a development impossible.

So did the scale of each state's militarization. According to Bakunin, the state's own constitution, will always amount to an explicit or implicit denial of domestic liberty, and it would necessarily imply a declaration of permanent war or a permanent threat to the very existence of neighboring states.

Well, in contrast to people like Bakunin and in contrast to the existing groupings of states, the main anarchist philosophers see regional affiliations and identities as offering an altogether better range of possibilities. The European Union is a confederal body, and member states can leave; my own member state, the United Kingdom, is still deciding whether to leave or not, in an extremely bitter and conflictual and divisive period, which has now lasted three and a half years and seems not to be about to end any time soon. Bodies - member states - can leave and there are procedures, generally straightforward procedures, for it even though the technicalities would take a long time to implement.

But, we must remember also that almost no individual state in the world allows regions or provinces to secede. Secession is relatively rare and it doesn't seem to make any difference how the state was created or founded in the first place. Politicians in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu openly and persistently demanded secession from India, that is the Indian Union, after India achieved independence in 1947.

At that time, the state was called Madras - it was part of what had been the larger Madras Presidency, but became Madras state in 1947. The demands for secession only stopped in 1963, when the Union Parliament outlawed secession with an act of its own. In Pakistan, leaders of the province of Baluchistan did not want to be included when the new state of Pakistan was created in 1947.

In addition, successful secessions have often been preceded by terrible civil wars. The secession of East Timor from Indonesia brought a response of attempted genocide by Indonesian troops. The secession did take place; it was ultimately overseen by UN troops, and their presence prevented even worse slaughter. Now, this has been written about by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, in his political memoirs. He has pointed out that even some of the generals ruling Indonesia at the time were shocked by the conduct of their troops in what was then East Timor, and agreed to a UN mandate for troops to be sent in to preserve the peace while East Timor - now called Timor Leste - seceded. If I am not mistaken, the troops involved came under the UN ambit, the UN aegis, but they came from Malaysia and Australia, if

I'm not mistaken.

Well there was another secession that we can think of more recently than that. The secession of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011 also occurred after a brutal civil war; as so often access to natural resources, in this case, the South's oil reserves, may have worsened to the war and this may even have been the main reason war started.

Now in view of the brutality of today's states - not just today's states - and in view of what anarchists might well call the utter bankruptcy and chaos into which we have been led by states' attempts to maintain their power irrespective of ideology, in view of all that, anarchism might well offer something better, something altogether better, and something which is much more likely to be on a recognizably human scale.

Anarchists do sometimes seem to think that reasoned discussion can resolve all conflicts and disagreements, but that confidence in ordinary people's capacity for decency and kindness could well find confirmation in the way ordinary Europeans, even at great cost themselves, have welcomed and helped refugees fleeing terrible turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa. Anarchist thinkers have also had much more impact on the ways we as ordinary people do things than those who run states or mighty private corporations or the writers of ideologies may wish to accept. Whatever else anarchists no mere utopian dreamers. We can add some historical, some recent historical material, to update the response of European Union countries to refugees in fleeing the Middle, mainly, the Middle East and North Africa. Yes, there have been tensions and certainly, the overall position is deeply confused with the press, the media themselves playing a part in this; social media also played a part in this.

Italy has complained to the European Union and to its various allies, various other allies, that it's had very little help even though it is one of the main points for refugees to enter the European Union; if I am not mistaken, the south-western tip of Italy is only about 30 or 40 miles away from the coast of Libya. Secondly, Germany did open its open its borders to refugees fleeing particularly Libya, after the imposed attempt to impose a change of regime and of course, fleeing Syria, where the Civil War has already lasted seven or eight years and appears no nearer to a solution than it ever was.

But it is also the case that for the European far-right movements, such movements of refugees into Europe were, were a great gift - and they've certainly exploited them very successfully. This goes back to things, for example, which we saw in the concluding analysis of Marx; the

contemporary response, as the *Economist* notes, has not been greater solidarity, but populism; and the *Economist* could have said 'hard-right populism'.

Nevertheless, anarchists have had more of an impact than we realize, in the ways we often organize local matters and services and certainly in most education systems, particularly at junior level, in the industrial world and increasingly in well-established democracies such as India. Anarchists are not mere utopian dreamers, and we'll we will see some of this in our discussion which follows the topic.