Apio Ludd
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Why I Am Not a Communist

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These are funny times. If some old, obviously doddering anarchist (if they weren't doddering, they'd *never* do this!) dares to use the word "libertarian" the way it was used for well over a century, the way it's still used in many parts of the world, the hip, young anarchists will look at her aghast, all because about forty-two years ago a few pathetic pro-drug, pro-sex, pro-capitalism goofballs decided to stick that name on a party. And, no, is wasn't a keg party or a pot party or even a tea party, it was that most tedious kind of party – the political party. I could understand why these youngsters don't want to use the word if it weren't for one thing. A lot of them have no trouble at all calling themselves *communists*. As if there haven't been communist parties since the mid-nineteenth century. As if such parties hadn't begun holding power here and there starting nearly a century ago. As if Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, and that whole gang of bloodthirsty dictators for the gospel of communism had never existed.[1] I know which word I'd tend to shy away from first!

[1] Marx, himself, was a pretty nasty character, but fortunately the biggest thing he ever got any power over was the First International.

I'm aware that anarchist communism, *libertarian* communism has a history nearly as old as the first communist party. But those old anarcho-communists[2] were careful to make sure you knew they were anarchists. Their communist label never went out on the town unless adorned in its seductive anti-authoritarian finery. Most even seemed to recognize that individual autonomy was the primary aim of anarchism, though they often forgot that it's also the primary practice.

Many of the anarchists today who yabber on lovingly about communism seem to reject the possibility of individual autonomy… or even of the individual. Whether naive nihilists tantalized by Tiqqun's metaphysical twaddle or ultra-theorists ultra-excited by the ultra-left squabbles, most of today's young "insurrectionary" communists believe that you and I don't really act, but are simply the puppets of *invisible, bodiless* actors like society, social relationships, movements, various collective forces that apparently come out of nothing but themselves, since if you try to bring them back to an actual source, you have to come back to *individuals* acting in their worlds and relating with each other. And that won't do, because then you'd have to recognize not "the commune," not "human community," certainly not that mystical absurdity "species being," but yourself here and now – a unique individual capable of desiring, deciding and acting – as the center and aim of your theory and practice. And a whole lot of the theorizing that communists carry out seems to be aimed precisely at *avoiding this*.

But here I am making fun of the communist babbling while I babble on myself. I suppose it's time to get to the point (in my roundabout vagabond way). Why am I not a communist? Couldn't I come up with a *communism* that's *my own?* Such a daffy dadaist absurdity could be a delightful experiment, but I

[2] They still exist in certain exotic parts of the globe like Europe and the eastern part of the United States.

have better games to play. You see, communism has a history, and it's not at all a pretty one. If I'm gonna turn it on its head, it will be in my own way, not to "take it back" – I don't want the damn thing – but to use it as a verbal weapon. It's time that the label "communist" became as much an insult as "capitalist" among those anarchists who recognize that no rule means no rule over *me;* no authority means no authority over *me*; no government means no government over *me.* And the immediate practice of these negations is *individual* autonomy, willful and aware *self*-creation on my own terms.

If I am to create myself and my life on my terms in each moment, the established, the permanent, the absolute, is my enemy, so I can't favor any sort of *permanent* collectivity, community, or society. Any permanence that permeates me, petrifies me so that I am no longer able to create my self on my terms. I can only try to adapt myself to the permeating permanence. So in insisting upon creating myself on my own terms, I undermine all collectivity, all community, all organization and all society, even those temporary associations I choose to make for my own purposes, since once they no longer serve my purposes I pull myself out and let things fall where they may. This is why my egoist elegance prefers desultory duos, transitory trios, and ephemeral ensembles to permanent partnerships, solidified sodalities, and calcified collectivities.

Communism requires a *permanent* community. If this isn't its aim, the word is meaningless, nothing more than the babbling baloney of blowhards battering for their share of revolutionary cred.[3] A lot of the current commies have lost faith in the Gospel of Marx and its promise of predestined communism (of course, no *anarchist*-communist ever put faith this pious promise, right?). But even the cornballs who conceived "communization" – the idea of communism as an ongoing movement *toward* community – don't get away from this goal, be-

[3] Of course, a lot of commie theory sounds like just that.

cause communization is still supposed to be a movement toward that universal (and so, permanent) human community. And what is permanent and universal is anti-individual, anti-*me*, my enemy.

Communism requires this all-permeating permanence, because it needs an *establishment*, a state. In the Gospel of Marx, we read: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."[4] For Marx, that pious prophet of atheistic providence, this communist mode of *exchange* was to be the inevitable outcome of history; for anarchist-communists who took this sacred scripture to heart, it become a moral ideal to realize. My selfish and arrogant heart has no use for either the despotism of historical determinism or the encumbrances of ethical edicts, so I don't hesitate to bring up the question such a *rule* raises: Who is to determine the abilities and the needs of each? Only by reducing individuals to what is most abstract about them – their humble and harmless humanity – can their be a "universal" determination of needs and abilities, because then these needs and abilities are also mere abstractions. Without this universal determination, I could claim that I *need* a Rolls Royce or a 60-room mansion, and no one could contradict me, because there would be no universal standard for comparison. So to establish the *status* of each one's abilities and needs, a *state* would be necessary, i.e., certain individuals would have to be in the position of deciding what everyone's abilities and needs were. Left to you and I as individuals, we'd probably tend toward the every day egoist form of exchange that tends to be practiced among friends: "From each according to their willingness, to each according to their desire." A practice that can outwardly *appear* much like the communist ideal, but that has this difference: The communist ideal implies that the *able* owe something to the *needy*, and so involves a duty; in the egoist practice, there is no duty, because no one is

[4] *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Part I.

expected to do or give what they are not willing to do or give. Their love for (i.e., their *interest in*) the other is the reason they would give. Egoistic mutuality is the lubricant of this flow.

In conclusion, I have some good news and some bad news for my communist friends. The good news: *Communism is already here*. Capitalism is simply *market* communism: "From each [worker] according to her ability, to each [capitalist] according to her need." Thus, capitalism imposes service to the common good (i.e., to the ruling elite who represent "all") on all those willing to remain slaves to a higher power. The *community* of capitalism surrounds us as a system of imposed relationships, and like all permanent communities, it feeds on the life blood of *individuals*, so long as those individuals succumb. And this brings me to the bad news for you commies: I *am* your enemy… for the same reason I am an enemy of capitalism. And don't be fooled if I appear impotent to you. In *my* world I am the most important and impishly potent entity, and I am an implacable enemy of capitalism and communism.

My Own is a publication of anarchist, egoist, individualist ideas, literature and analysis coming from an explicitly anti-capitalist, non-market egoist perspective aimed at encouraging the interweaving of individual insurrections against all forms of authority, domination and enforcement of conformity.

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