

Egoist-Communism: What It Is and What It Isn't

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“Throw away holiness and wisdom, and people will be a hundred times happier. Throw away morality and justice, and people will do the right thing. Throw away industry and profit, and there won't be any thieves.” – Tao te Ching, Chapter 19

Across my career I have been something of a strange beast, few and far between quite knowing what to make of me: the gonzo-aficionados love my prose but are confused by offerings left at the crossroads and endless references to Stirner; the Anarchists and Insurrectionists love my theories but are perplexed by my trafficking in spirits and identification as a journalist; the Occult crowd adores my sorcerous inclinations yet seems puzzled by my near-addict level of political consumption entwined with my nihilistic desire to destroy society.

What kind of wizard would I be if I could be explained easily, much less my political inclinations? Still, as sure as wildfire season will choke the skyline of many a Florida town this summer the need to explain oneself will arise.

Take the recent email I received:

“I'm an egoist as well, I'd also identify as a post-leftist. I'd say that part of leaving the left behind is leaving behind communism as well. I agree with Wolfi Landstreicher's critiques of it mostly.

I see communism as an ideological spooky political program. You have works like “The ‘Right’ to be Greedy” and “The ‘Right’ to be Lazy” but I feel personally trying to combine anti-work sentiments with an idea that is at its core an economic way of production is a little strange. And when most people think communism, they aren't thinking about it in the way the “The Right to be Greedy” folks were, most people would attribute lofty spooky ideals with communism like capital J “Justice and capital H “Humanity.” Sacrifice for the good of all!...

What are your thoughts?

I find it interesting to that you address yourself as an egoist-communist but not as an anarchist in particular. Just found it odd you went straight for the communist label but I can't really find in your about me where you explicitly say you're an anarchist.”

In-between labored attempts at meditation and Qigong to heal my damaged liver, I penned a response I figured was strong enough to become an article and with it perhaps a definition of a politics few have heard of.

Firstly I am an Egoist, and call myself one even before an Anarchist. For me Egoism surpasses Anarchism, takes it as a standing point and goes a step further: no hierarchy is above me, however it might dress itself up. This includes the State of course but also the very concept of Law; this includes Capitalism but also the very notions of right and wrong normally lobbed against it as criticisms. All things are indeed nothing to me, all relations exist at my behest. Society is nothing more than a big idea, a game of pretend that's taken itself far too seriously and I do not intend to live my life on this planet beholden to it.

Sorcerers and witches usually live in this space, forever outside the rules and customs of the Waking World. Take a heroic dose of mushrooms, douse yourself in Black Arts Oil, then spend the night at your local cemetery and you'll see why. This existence is one among many, and once you learn that most of human politicking ends up looking like a cruel joke.

I am imprisoned. So are you. I aim not to make our prison "a better place" but advocate its entire destruction. I in no way intend to make the whip on my back "the people's whip" or put it in new hands. I do so without any religious belief that my own burning world is a sure thing on the horizon. I fight, I loathe, I spit venom at a world that seeks to destroy me because it is who I am. The way this system harms others only further incites my rage, the shame of vulgar slavery that surrounds them filling me with righteous fury. I am following me, my own inclinations; my own song that only I can sing.

So why the Communist bit?

As Novatore said *"because we — violent cerebralists and passionate sentimentalists at the same time — understand and know that revolution is a necessity of the silent sorrow that suffers at the bottom and a need of the free spirits who suffer in the heights."* I cannot be free as long as I am owned by Capital and I cannot truly enjoy myself while the screams of the enslaved ring in my ear. I want freedom for me and for you, that we might enjoy it together. When I'm speaking about Communism I'm talking about the original definition: a classless, stateless sense of being. This rules out any "transition" period.

If workers remain workers, producing in separate enterprises, dependent on their relation to that workplace for their subsistence, and exchanging with other enterprises, then whether that exchange is self-organised by the workers or given central direction by a "workers' state" means very little: the capitalist content remains, and sooner or later the distinct role or function of the capitalist will reassert itself.

Markets of any kind mean money, however the Left may try to dress it up. Because of its ease to measure, currencies will always become the sole measure of value (how much you did today, how much this thing is worth) so *all things end up being measured by this stick*: an apple is no longer a treasured gift from the garden, a being unto itself, but a commodity; the family dog isn't your best friend, but simple "property" with a monetary value.

Thus we have a world not of individuals but of human resources.

Stirner even points out *"Restless acquisition does not let us take breath, take a calm enjoyment. We do not get the comfort of our possessions... Hence it is at any rate helpful that we come to an agreement about human labours that they may not, as under competition, claim all our time and toil."*

So, what's an Egoist to do?

Co-operation is a need of human existence but it doesn't need to divide us into classes. We can procure what we require and what we desire without focusing on buying and selling. Such Unions of Individuals working together so that each may benefit more closely follow Stirner's definition of a "*sword with which you sharpen and increase your natural force*" rather than anything the Soviets put out, and roam even closer to Nietzsche's concepts of "unions:"

"My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (-its will to power:) and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement ("union") with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power."

I am looking to conspire with others for power so that I am free to pursue my desires, desires Stirner pointed out will always be neglected when Capitalism reins supreme:

"What is most useful is open to argument. And now, sure enough, it turns out... that in competition, not everyone finds his profit, his desired 'private advantage,' his value, his actual interest."

When I speak of Communism I'm *not* talking about the surrendering of property to some spooky and religious "Us" that dictates our behavior. I'm talking about the goal of communization: existence without exchange, money, commodities, etc. I'm talking about the working class itself *ceasing to exist* as the working class. This is Communism by the people involved with it for *their* benefit, a system the Pirates of old utilized:

"Pirate ships operated on a 'No Prey, No Pay' basis, but when a vessel was captured the booty was divided up by a share system. This sort of share system was common in mediaeval shipping, but had been phased out as shipping became a capitalist enterprise and sailors wage labourers. It still existed in privateering and whaling but pirates developed it into its most egalitarian form - there were no shares for owners or investors or merchants, there was no elaborate hierarchy of wage differentiation - everyone got an equal share of the booty and the captain usually only 1 or 1 1/2 share."

This has nothing to do with "humanity" or what's right. I simply want what's mine. This is communism where we can look out over the horizon and say "*this is all yours, and mine too,*" a communism where we can take care of one another because it pleases us to do so and because it ensures we too shall be taken care of.

"The harshness of life at sea made mutual aid into a simple survival tactic. Pirate articles also commonly included a form of mutual aid where injured shipmates unable to participate in the fighting would receive their share as a pension. Pirates took this sort of solidarity very seriously - at least one pirate crew compensated their wounded only to discover they had nothing left. From the articles of Bartholomew Roberts' crew: "If... any Man should lose a Limb, or become a Cripple in their Service,

he was to have 800 Dollars, out of the publick Stock, and for lesser Hurts, proportionably.” And from those of George Lowther’s crew: “He that shall have the Misfortune to lose a Limb, in Time of Engagement, shall have the Sum of one hundred and fifty Pounds Sterling, and remain with the Company as long as he shall think fit.”

Technology can be harnessed to provide our every need, an entire galaxy awaits our fingertips, so why should our existence be boiled down to buying and selling? Doesn’t that limit our Unique? Can you feed your family alone? Can I? Can we alone provide electricity to our homes and maintain the systems that keeps it going?

If we can’t, shouldn’t we work together? If we still can’t, shouldn’t we find others? And when we find them won’t they desire to own just as much of that property as we do? Why can’t we have individual indulgence with a joyous community life; why not lawlessness with the cause of social justice? I seek the whole me, not a sliver, and to find him I need friends and accomplices to work with. What somebody works ought to be owned by them, plain and simple, and I believe we’d be surprised how much coming together might free up our time for other pleasures.

“In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.” – Marx

Egoist-Communism might be thought of as Mutualism without Markets, a honeycomb of non-hierarchical mafias looking to live life as joyously as they can and free from the false divisions of race, nationality, class, or gender. It promotes differentiation, embraces chaos, and takes gangs of individuals as its organizational unit instead of a manufactured society. It is the abolition of all that limits the Unique and the search for other like-minded souls to increase each other’s power. How you do so will ultimately be up to you.

Don’t let the name fool you, this isn’t some radical new idea. This is what humanity has been doing at parties, after disasters, before funerals, and between sheets since the whole damn thing began. Instead of stealing those moments between “work” and whatever else this techno-hellscape forces onto us, we desire to make it our entire mission.

That is Egoist-Communism, its praxis and its goal: life in the pursuit of life, where individual satisfaction and the enjoyment of others rotates endlessly without form.

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