

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



On Man's Thinking

Laurance Labadie

1960

Laurance Labadie
On Man's Thinking
1960

Retrieved 10/25/2021 from http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/labadie/LabadieEssays.pdf
From the original typed manuscript, signed and dated December 26, 1960. Reprinted in *Laurance LaBadie: Selected Essays* (Libertarian BroadSides), James J. Martin, ed., Ralph Myles Publisher, Inc., 1978.

theanarchistlibrary.org

There is a great deal of misconception about the way man thinks. Except in rare instances, men do not think about or have ideas inimical to the way they live their lives. Every individual necessarily has interests, and these interests determine not only what they think about, but also how they think about it, and what their conclusions are. No person can think objectively about anything in which he is personally involved. All so-called objective or scientific thinking deals with things and matters over which man presumably has no control. There is no accident in the fact that scientists are irresponsible people, because in order to do scientific or objective thinking it is necessary not to be involved. And of course my definition of non-involvement almost means non-responsibility. The scientist is not responsible for his findings, since they supposedly inhere in the nature of things, and therefore are beyond his control.

The conclusion stares one in the face that substantially all of what man considers his thinking is merely rationalizing. He rationalizes his desires, his actions, his predicament if it happens to be one which he can cope with or which is advantageous to him even tho it be disadvantageous to others. Man justifies, validates, and excuses whatever he wants to do, or what cir-

cumstances force him to do, or what and where in his opinion his interests lie, whether this opinion be conscious or subconscious.

There is of course nothing new in what I am saying. There are probably thousands of expressions throughout literature which show that what I am saying has been known. Isn't there an expression that no man can see the mote in his own eye? It is the simplest thing in the world to see the faults of others at the very same time that we cannot see the very worst deficiencies in ourselves, or in the members of our circle or group.

A practical point to be derived from the above is the need for considering before listening to or reading what anyone says, to ask: what is his circumstance in life; what axe is he grinding; what is he trying to prove; and why. Who is he; what are his interests; what makes him tick. When we consider these aspects of communication, we are careful not to take any man too seriously. And incidentally it would be well to take into consideration one's own situation in life before assuming that one is able or competent to learn anything from certain other individuals. It is often if not usually the case that two persons are each in such predicaments that they cannot learn anything from each other, even if both were saying the truth.

"What is Truth?" asked Pilate; but he did not wait for an answer, He probably knew damn well what "truth" was to the person of whom he asked the question. There could be ten different "truths" coming from as many different persons, and none of these alleged truths the real truth. As yet man has not invented a truth machine, and perhaps never will, because if the machine has to get its information or data from humans, it already is obliged to work or think with doctored or biased data. By the way, is there any significance to the expression that when anything is messed-up it is said to have been doctored?

Some of the stuff I have written in criticizing the ideas of others was to the effect that, in view of their positions in life, they were unable to or would not think effectively.

Now I want to expose a contradiction, which may incidentally contribute to the gradual understanding of the philosophy of contradiction which happens to be an important aspect of my schemata of thought,

The contradiction is this: that while man cannot think objectively or “disinterestedly” about the things which concern him, neither can he think about the things which do not interest him. He simply is not curious enough about the things which do not interest him. He simply is not curious enough about them to give them a moment’s thought, even supposing he was aware of them; he just does not care about them, feeling that there are things of more importance to him to think about.

Man is thus on the horns of a dilemma that more or less inheres in the nature of things. The things he is not interested in and which presumably he could contemplate objectively he finds unprofitable for him to deal with, Whereas the things which do concern him, and which it he is not an escapist he must necessarily face, he is obviously incompetent to consider objectively, He is thus as a thinking machine almost condemned to a degree of ignorance and idiocy.

My late writings attempt to show that this is so, not merely from a philosophical point of view, but in actuality. I have shown in several places that the immediate interest of most people is such that substantially everyone has a stake in and is almost inevitably contributing to the eventual annihilation of mankind. I have shown that Liberty, under which a tendency toward equilibrium would always be operative, got sidetracked during the course of man’s evolvment, and that institutionalized coercion and violence became established as the modus operandi for the conduct of affairs of humans. And that this contravention of the natural liberty of man, by its replacement by the State, has so changed or obliterated this tendency, that the result has been the arrival at a predicament which is past the point of no return; and that the terminal of this process is utter and mutual extermination.

This denouement is doubly assured because of the fact that everywhere Liberty, instead of being advanced, is increasingly becoming extinguished.

Incidentally, the vision which appears at the end of this longer range or telescopic view can only be obtained by the very sort of integrated and operational thinking which I have been insisting upon, as opposed to the fractionalized, disconnected, compartmentalized and static way of thinking which is characteristic of Borsodi and so many others. With organic phenomena the salient question is function; thinking realistically about it requires an awareness of movement, of tendencies, and of a dynamic point of view. For obviously it is only when we can think in terms of tendencies is it possible to predict the future.

One might almost predict his own actions, which are hardly at one's command, because it is impossible for anyone to decide upon or determine what the influences and circumstances are to be, which any one of us must face. To counter-influence these requires a much more comprehensive understanding and power than any one possesses. And yet these circumstances are going to determine our reactions and behavior, simply because man discounts the future in favor of the present, and perhaps in most cases rightly. He certainly is not going to act in accordance with what is called his free will, if such action means his immediate extinction.

What am I saying, in substance? I am saying that man in the past has inadvertently established a permanent institution which is static in its nature, which tends to resist change, which fundamentally is based on coercion and violence for the specific purpose of slavery and exploitation, the suppressive nature of which has caused the distortion and mutilation of the human psyche, and which has got into operation intangible and inscrutable forces that man is neither aware of nor understands, but of which he is the inevitable victim.

This establishment was inadvertent, not the product of either his immaturity or neuroses, nor of any hypothetical "original sin," but simply because of ignorance and stupidity. For man is neither good nor bad, but egoistic and endowed with an inscrutable will-to-live. Nor can anyone be blamed for ignorance. That criminal institution which we call the State was fortuitous in its origin and devastating in its effects, seconded only in its deleterious influence by organized religion.

Do you for one moment claim that a half or a dozen pompous idiots at a "summit" conference are going to or can reconcile the insane confrontation of which they are the embodiment? Or that this can be true because 2 billion imbeciles believe it to be true, and if only I say that it is not true?

Or that I am mistaken if I say, what I cannot prove, that in this year of our lord 1960 the relations between humans are such—have gone so far in the direction of degeneracy—that any hope for the continuance of life on this planet is quite negligible?

Even if it were granted that the master-slave relationship was inevitable or even natural, and that such relationship be unified, universalized, and complete, the fact seems obvious that the various masters at the present time, on both sides of the cold war and in between, have not and do not seem to agree to unite upon any given scheme by which to hoodwink, coerce, and exploit the masses of mankind.

Without mentioning the others, if the Pope and Mr. Khrushchev, for instance, can come to some agreement upon which they can unite their operations (with of course including other so-called leaders), then it is conceivable that the mass of mankind, who actually believe in slavery of one sort or another, will be spared an atomic holocaust. For the unavoidable outcome of the tendencies now in operation are either the slavery of totalitarianism or complete annihilation.