

Reflections on Socio-economic Evolution

Laurance Labadie

Aside from various forms of robbery, legal and illegal, there are three methods by which others—parasitism, humans get sustenance benevolence, in their relations with and reciprocity.

Parasitism is the inescapable relation between mother and child which is absolutely essential for the prolongation of life. It is characterized by consuming what one has not produced. The urge for the furnishing of sustenance on this basis is love. The process of maturing is to depart from the getting of something for nothing and to be self-supporting as soon as possible.

Benevolence is a species of action motivated by sympathy—the ability of putting yourself in the other fellow's place. In this form of receiving without giving there begins to emerge the calculation of whether the recipient is deserving. Also does the expectation of reciprocity begin to appear. These judgments are made by, and are the sole prerogative of, the giver. Benevolence loses its beneficial features when it is organized, when it is compulsory on the part of the donor, and also when the attempt is made to try to incorporate it by indoctrination into the mores of a civilized order.

Reciprocity is the natural and normal relation between sane adult human beings. It depends upon a calculation of the efforts and benefits involved. These calculations are the very aim and essence of a market economy, the object being the attainment of equity via competition. In these three forms of human relations we see being developed transfers of physical benefits, and mental attitudes, corresponding to the growth out of complete helplessness toward a condition of relative self-sufficiency.

In terms of social evolution, robbery may be considered a form of maintaining sustenance in certain stages of human development, but as productivity and foresight advance it proves to be an uneconomic method of human relations.

Robbery cannot, legally speaking, be generalized as an economic principle. Neither can parasitism or benevolence. Each of these leave out the paramount essential of economic life, viz., production.

Economics is the study of the relations which arise in the course of men cooperating in satisfying their desires. Robbery, parasitism, and benevolence are necessarily left out of consideration. An economics of non-producers is an absurdity. Non-producers, in any society, must get their living from someone else, and it makes all the difference in the world whether the recipients are the objects of voluntary and spontaneous actions of their parents, relatives, neighbors and

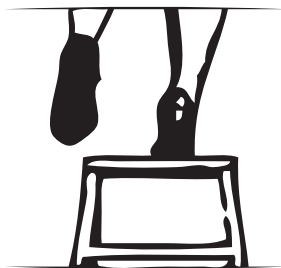
friends, or whether the satisfaction of their consumption needs is to be incorporated into a social system by force (as with the State).

When all forms of private property are abolished, exchange hampered or prohibited, competition wiped out, and money forbidden, the liberty and independence of the individual is gone and there remains a tyranny as totalitarian and despotic as can be imagined.

When people begin to understand that the State originated for predatory purposes and for conquest, and realize that its underlying aim ever since has been to camouflage what in reality is its essential feature of controlling people so that it can arbitrarily rob some for the benefit of others, they will begin to understand the motives and effects of State activity in every quarter of the globe. They will begin to ponder on other alternatives for solving their problems than resort to the State machine. Such a recourse is today almost completely absent from the minds of reformers and revolutionists. In fact, subtract the idea of the State as an implementor of social policy from the minds of nearly all those bent on reform and their thinking processes would be immediately halted.

Likewise, take the ideas of parasitism, benevolence, and (legal) robbery from just about the same minds and they can hardly conceive of a workable social order. Such is the condition of reform today that hardly any of the reform element think in terms other than "social security" achieved thru the operations of the paternalistic State. In terms of psychology it points to various stages of immaturity, to minds incapable of thinking objectively of the conditions and imperatives necessary for a sane society. The lack of mature thinking is bringing us to the brink of catastrophe.

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Economics of Liberty and *Reflections on Socio-economic Evolution* were hand-composed and first published on a single sheet of paper resembling newsprint cut to twice standard (5½x8½ in.)

book size, utilizing only the inside, thus blank both front and back when folded in half, Laurance signed both these essays, but they are not dated. When asked as to the approximate date they were done, he could not remember, but thought he may have done them in the mid-1940s, or earlier. Reprinted in *Laurance LaBadie: Selected Essays* (Libertarian Broad­sides), James J. Martin, ed., Ralph Myles Publisher, Inc., 1978.

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