

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



# Psychological Motives Behind Collectivism

Laurance Labadie

Laurance Labadie  
Psychological Motives Behind Collectivism

Retrieved 1/4/2023 from <https://c4ss.org/content/57869>  
As per archivist's update, small spelling and grammar fixes have  
not been noted.

**[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)**

Collectivism is a doctrine of the “crowd mind”, a philosophy of incompetency. To those who have ever been the losers in the unequal, privileged, and despotic struggle for existence, who have not felt the glory and satisfaction of conquering obstacles and the achievement of aims, the thought of peace and security is soothing and endearing. Nevertheless life is essentially a struggle, and peace, in a sense, stagnation and death. We say of the dead that they are at peace. The desire for peace is motivated by fear and lack of confidence. The social problem is to set the stage for an unprivileged struggle. Responsibility is vastly preferable to the peace of paternalism which is nothing but the fostering of unfitness. “Brotherly love” is often motivated by crowd mindedness and mutual aid conceived as the nursing of incompetency. These are the shibboleths of the “everybody has a right to live” and the “what about poor me” man, the man who lacks confidence and aggressiveness and is afraid to stand out alone but prefers to be one of the crowd. He loves doles, old age pensions, and unemployment insurance, stupidly putting charity in place of justice, knowing very little of ei-

ther. Of the joiner type, he dreads liberty because of the responsibility and vigilance it entails. He has antipathy toward a Nietzschean philosophy with its “war of all against all”, the free clash of opinion against opinion, the competitive battle of wits and endeavors. Instead of innumerable attempts, successes and failures, achievements and defeats, made by responsible parties, he prefers the “we must all hang together” philosophy. But paradoxically, this war of all against, all, this clash of opinion against opinion, contrary to popular belief, helps the very ones whose opinions have met defeat by their rejection by society. Competitors are cooperators who are endeavoring to find the best and most efficient methods of social service, leaving the public, or any portion thereof, with its voice as patronizer, be the arbiter to accept or discard as it wills.

The kinship between the words compete and competent is obvious. Hence the communist, a hater of competition, proves by his emotional antipathy his admission of incompetency. Psychologically, communism is founded on the inferior man’s fear and hatred of the superior. This is probably an atavistic attitude coming from the time when scarcity promoted strife in the acquirement of the then insufficient necessities. All communists are actually incompetents, however, their incompetency may consist only in their failure to see that the implications of their philosophy are based on a pernicious inversion of the truth. While there may be several social enterprises especially adapted to common ownership, this fact is, in the nature of things, as much to be rued as rejoiced over. The *raison d’être* for property is the fact that concrete things can be used only by one person at one place at one time. Justice prompted men to agree that this person should be the one who produced it and that no other person should have the right to take it without his consent. It is not the fault of property that its influence has been made to extend to things and under circumstances over which it logically should not apply.

Libertarian communists make such beautiful (and meaningless) declarations as, “All belongs to all”, “No one knows what a man pro-

duces.” “I am not free when my neighbor is a slave,” etc. which seem very fine to people with empty heads. I know that the prospect of doing whatever one pleases with the opportunity of taking one’s “needs” from the public trough is an enticing thought. But opposition to the State on the grounds that it prevents such indiscriminate helping- one’s self is very puerile indeed.

When the question of exploitation by the bureaucracy comes up, authoritarian communists think they have solved the problem of purification of government by the abolition of private property. No one has property, how can anyone exploit,” they adroitly reason. We have no rulers only directors,” and such finangling with words deluding no one but themselves. “One man can only eat and wear so much.” they triumphantly exclaim to their questioner though what this proves is difficult to see. It surely applies as well under the present regime. Such individuals seem to limit man to just a consuming apparatus to be delivered enough fuel to keep up activity, a sort of phallus appended to an alimentary canal. Will despotism cease because of a possible (though not probable) forcible equalization of incomes? Is it not idle to discuss with persons to whom the concepts justice, freedom, and honor are incomprehensible and “metaphysical.” These they sneer at as “bourgeois” ideas. They change the terms of their moral code, Bourgeois meaning “bad” and proletarian “good”. To those for whom everything in life is expressed in sex and food – prudence, curiosity, the will to power, the will to knowledge, and a genuine social consciousness are meaningless. One has but to note that the greatest gourmands and the most sensual have offered very little to progress and that the greatest thinkers and humanitarians were generally most temperate and even ascetics to confute this pig philosophy.

The motives of men cannot be assumed to be consciously directed for social betterment but for individual betterment. Free competition becomes a beneficial force unconsciously, and the affluence it will bring automatically eases the struggle for mere

existence thereby giving opportunity for self-centeredness to relax and sympathy and neighborliness to express themselves. But whether the motives of men competing be that of hate or love, the results are the same. What a man's motives are is not always important. It is the effects of his actions that count. Socialists and communists are certainly humanitarian in motive but, unfortunately, their methods would effect the worst form of bureaucratic tyranny this awry world has ever witnessed. For such would be the effects of centralized authority backed by arbitrary power to enforce its commands.

The futility of trying to reform the world by preaching and exhorting men to be good should be obvious by the failure of nearly 2000 years of Christianity. True, its interpretations have been mostly bogus and hypocritical but it essentially remains a "brother's keeper" creed. This will have to be replaced by the ethic that one must not prey upon his brother but let him discover his own "salvation". But even this is not enough. The realization of the fundamental law of self-interest must replace the false and weakening beliefs in the paternal interest of external agencies. Sociability cannot be forced, it must come from such an economic change as will promote it. "Sociability" achieved in any other way becomes hypocrisy.

Perhaps it will be illuminating to get a close-up of the marvelous effects of competition and liberty without which progress is retarded and slavery results. Let us therefore survey the results of applying them to different phases of social life.