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Laurance Labadie
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Infantile Radicalism

Laurance Labadie

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A mature person is one who has outgrown childish emotional impulses. He has learnt about himself and his environment thru personal experience, and has become able to control his emotional feelings in a rational manner. He has emerged from the sheltered dream world of childhood and been weaned to face reality. His reactions to people, situations in life, and ideas become reasonable, reflective, contemplative. He has, as we say, grown up, become an adult.

Retarded or stunted development caused by pampering childishness, the instilling of delusional hope and fears, or by too abrupt facing of life's obstacles result in a reversion to the safeties of childhood, to a psychic condition psychologists call infantilism.

When we contemplate the fact that everyone instinctively aspires to a society in which he imagines *he* will be secure, we may readily understand man's utopias, and his impulse to "abolish" everything he does not understand. We may discover the root of the aspiration that everyone (this means me) will be "free" to do as he pleases, and "free" to supply his "needs" from the "society" of which he is a part.

In light of the foregoing, the highly charged feelingful reaction of most socialists and communists at the suggestion that liberty contemplates private property, exchange, competition, money and wages is highly significant.

For what do these signify? Private property grants the individual the right to independence. Exchange implies reciprocity and equity (in contradiction to maternal and paternal benevolence). Competition is the freedom of choice to cooperate with whomever serves one best. The significance of money is that one pays for what he gets. And the meaning of wages is that one gets paid for what he does.

In contrast to these aspects of maturity, collectivists of all shades aspire to abolish private property, because of the aversion to assuming independence. The communist abhors exchange, because it implies a calculation of benefit proportional to effort. He detests money, preferring "free distribution," out of the common pot. He abhors competition, because it implies a comparison of effort of different value. He dislikes wages, because he demands a living on the strength of being human, not in accordance with what he produces.

The communist motto is: From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs. What is this but the aspiration to live off the efforts of the able, emanating from the feelings of inadequacy of the childish? Why the aversion to having calculations of benefit proportional service? What prompts reversion to the economies of the family, wherein the helpless infant has all his needs satisfied from its parents?

Now communism, or the complete divorce between ability and effort and corresponding benefits—and the benevolent paternalism of authority—is the necessary relation between parents and children. The very life of the helpless child depends solely on benevolence and love. The process of maturing consists in gradually reversing this relation. And the rational economic relation among adults is reciprocity, equity, the exchange of service for service, under the selectivity which

promotes individual responsibility, competence, and personal worth.

The child is incompetent and irresponsible. Weaning consists in overcoming these deficiencies. Thus the antipathy of the communist-minded to property, exchange, competition, etc.—that is to conditions thru which, or under which, calculations tending to uphold the natural relation of benefit proportional to efforts—is purely a feelingful response against responsibility. The subject has not completed the weaning process. Repression resulting in complexes and neuroses has stunted and warped the psyche and prevented arriving at adulthood.

The analogy between child life and the aspirations of communists becomes obvious. Society is to become the group mother from which the individuals are to obtain sustenance thru benevolence. The authority of the State is analogous to the father.

It is startling commentary on the educational influences which the child confronts in the family, the church, and the school, to observe the prevailing alacrity which our society displays in reverting to charity and the supposed benevolence of the paternalistic State for surcease from its aches and pains.

What is one to say, then, of the emotional antipathy to individualism? (The more "scientific" our reformers and revolutionists claim to be, the more apparent becomes their deeply seated feelingful hopes and fears.) How can it be other than arrested emotional maturing—infantilism—a childishness dangerous because it inevitably culminates, whatever be the aspiration, in the authority of the supposedly benevolent Society (the State)? What is the psychological foundation for the universal superstition for the necessity of the State machine? Why the stampede to elect new and better papas to care for us? What are Monarchy, Democracy, Socialism, etc. but evidences of the universal usufructs of an effete "civilization"—the infantilism of the herd gone rampant?

How could these various political and economic mumbo jumbos be taken seriously were it not for the fact that prevailing economic insecurity throughout the world has invoked reversion to the youthful hopes and dreams of the multitudes? The family, the church, and the school—do they not conspire to make the child obedient and docile? Are they not the instruments by which the immature are conditioned, imposed upon, and subjugated in mind. Are they not really the propagaters of that communism which causes mankind to seek solace supinely from those monstrous joy killers—God and the State, and their later counterparts, Society and the Community!

Communism is the childhood of society; Individualism is its coming of age.

Additional Note.

Elaboration and clarification is hardly possible in the brief space of my article. Thus it is wide open for misinterpretation and of course criticism. But even aside from this difficulty, the different factors and problems involved are so numerous and complicated as to keep the pages of *Resistance* filled from now on! I guess the editors don't want to indulge in anything like that. So I wish to append this additional note.

I consider communism, whether authoritarian or free, inherently destructive of individual responsibility. Authoritarian communism, like the Russian variety, deliberately denies the individual such an independent activity as would assure his reaping the natural consequences of his action (the only root for real responsibility) and makes the individual responsible to the fallible and arbitrary whim of the bureaucrat.

So called free communism divorces effort and benefit, *as far as the individual is concerned*, that it would disperse responsibility in a way as to weaken it altogether. The concept of responsibility, in fact, is given a moral and religious flavor, as if it were something an individual *should assume*. In this it bears a close resemblance to the concept of duty.

Any attempt to evade the law of consequences, *as it pertains to individuals* (as distinguished from group responsibility) would inevitably lead into authority in order to make an economy workable at all. I think the experience of nearly all [attempts] to establish communistic colonies proves the truth of this latter statement. Nearly all went to pieces because of *internal* disagreement. They had no modus operandi for coming to agreement in making decisions. The reason is that such a modus operandi cannot be found, because none exists, short of coercion.

Thus, to my mind, irresponsibility is *inherent* in communism as in all collectivisms and political systems. The very relationship implied in communism, by spreading responsibility in an indiscriminate manner, would tend to hinder its growth in the individual and would promote a parasitic attitude (infantilism) even if it did not exist priorly. But speaking of infantilism as a *consequence* of communism, instead of an instigating *means* of attaining, is highly speculative and beyond the scope of my article.

Please keep in mind that the title of my piece is "Infantile *Radicalism*." It does not include infantile conservatism, infantile reaction, and every other species of infantilism. It is merely a contributory plea for outgrowing infantile thinking wherever it may lie, with special emphasis on the value of keeping one's own house in order.

Self-styled "free enterprise" people, gathered in propaganda institutes and foundations subsidized by business and financial interest, *insofar as they are sincere at all* and not mere prostituted hacks, display plenty of childish fear. But that is another story.