

Anarcho-Pessimism



Laurance Labadie

Stirner!

There are not very many people who can intelligently understand Stirner. The reason is the 'Judeo- Christian ethic" which dominates the viewpoints of people in the western hemisphere. They are nothing if not moralists. Whereas Stimer is primarily an amoralist. The basic thesis of his viewpoint on the motivation of humans is self-interest. And self-interest is for the most part an amoral impulse. It is intrinsically a philosophy of expedience—one does what the circumstances call for in the enhancement of one's will-to-live. This may or may not conform to some moral abjuration. And no amount of moral indoctrination is going to deter the individual from taking advantage of the circumstances which confront him. Let others do likewise.

It is only on the idealistic plane that "Society's" interest coincides with the respective interests of the individuals who compose it. Elemental use of one's intelligence suggests that on no other grounds can the course of history be understood. Nor can any of the common crimes be explained by any other criterion. Deception, bluff, coercion, robbery, and murder—either on a small or large scale—are always motivated by the impulse to better one's self. And the physical, mental, and "spiritual" incompetent is the first one to look for some transcendent power to take care of him (the God ideal). And while common sense should suggest to anyone that if power be given to some "authority" to take care of one's self, it is a foregone conclusion that such power will be used in the first instance to aggrandize the well-being of the power-holder.

We believe that man is evil, and yet elect some to rule over others. Who other than an indoctrinated boob will subscribe to such a scheme? And yet we find the practice a virtual world-wide phenomenon!

In the face of this almost universal superstition, the voice of Stirner comes like a breath of fresh air. It is because this admonition to take care of one's self infuriates the superstitious hopes of such herd viewpoints as communism, socialism, and collectivism in general, including the pious frauds who claim to believe in "free enterprise"—moralists all. How could these pathetic creatures stomach or even understand Stirner? The rationale for the herd or collective impulse must be searched for on other grounds than individual self-interest. For there is a rationale.

Notwithstanding that Stirner stressed the fact that the “ego” was not an abstract generality, that there were as many “egos” as there were individuals, and that each ego was different—socialists even of the Marxian variety had to insist otherwise in order to dismiss Stirner as a metaphysician. Marx, who was a theologian if ever there was one, had the disreputable knack of pretending to hold the ideas of his opponents, and then to use these ideas to confute them—thereby imputing to his opponents the exact opposite of what they believed. This is the role of the ideological trickster, often unbeknownst to himself.

What goes into one man’s stomach does not nourish another man, and in a circumstance of absolute scarcity morality goes by the board. Men’s interests conflict and a scramble results. It is inherent in the situation, and Christians and communists, moralists both, are confronted with a situation wherein their nicely-spun “commandments” go fluttering in the breeze. And they are just as much victims of a situation as anyone else. As a matter of fact the greatest amount of wholesale slaughter has been committed by Christians and communists. What communist didn’t believe that his idealistic utopia didn’t have to come about after a revolutionary holocaust in which the bad guys had to be eliminated by the good guys? It is in this context that the present violent confrontations and impending mutual slaughter find their rationale. Man is a victim of habit and institutionalism.

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Labadie is referring to *The Unique and its Property* by Max Stirner

Scribblings

Although I am old, a recluse, “way out” in my convictions, off the beaten path, and probably haven’t much longer to go, my observations on the scene around me and all over the world are certainly such as to promote paranoia. Some of my thoughts have been published, but they no doubt have been considered by those who read them to be so improbable and absurd as not to be taken seriously. But I feel certain that in a number of places on this globe the mere expression of them would be exceedingly dangerous.

It is rather trepidatious for me to observe that those who have been instrumental in having some of my ideas published have been careful to absolve themselves from being considered responsible for holding

the same ideas. But if they can become heroes by proxy, so to speak, they are quite willing to be on hand if by chance some credit or credibility be in the offing. After all, everybody and his brother is a sociologist these days, and the lowliest recipient of governmental dole can rattle off criticism and complaint with the best of them. Anyone who would in the least suggest that this is the best of all possible worlds would be laughed to scorn and considered detestable. Indeed, the number is growing who believe that it is only a matter of time and occasion before Gotterdamerung is upon us.

Since we all have to die sometime, I really don't see why the prospect should be too disturbing, especially since it is quite natural for each and every human being to think of himself first as far as survival on this earth is concerned. The span which each human's frame of reference circumscribes can hardly be more than a lifetime, although those with children or friends of younger age might exhibit broader concerns. But aside from this, each one's concern is for the present, and for a duration hardly longer than his expected lifespan. That is why all humans are quite content to commit any skullduggery as soon as by doing so their own existence is prolonged. I have phrased this phenomenon as a general scavenging situation wherein each person is subsisting like a vulture upon the decomposing remains of a putrefying society. The reader of these lines will of course absolve himself from this general categorization, self-righteously proclaiming to his satisfaction that he is not like other men. Those who are not competent to kid themselves can hardly kid others. Perhaps life itself, or mere existence, is a delusionary process.

But I'm not aware of any of the so-called great thinkers who ever even considered this point of view. Every ontologist, metaphysician, theologian and philosopher I ever heard of felt secure that there was a purpose to the whole phenomenon, and indeed, that he knew what the purpose was. I'll be goddamned if I know of any of these wiseacres who were convincing to me. Every single one of them had an axe to grind—generally in the direction of aspiring to a society in which they (individually) hoped or expected to be secure. Every one of their imagined utopias and heavens were to be havens congenial to their own ridiculous and putrid selves. Meanwhile each of them were busily engaged in filling their pockets from the boobs whom they could get to accept their own particular brand of bullshit.

I have shown elsewhere that politicians, pulpit pounders, physicians, psychologists, lawyers, advertising agents, the military, plutocrats,

bankers, and that vast horde of violence-oriented camorra that may be called the “law and order” brigade—all these pathetically vicious bastards depend on crap and corruption as their *raison d’etre* and the means by which they fill their guts. It should be quite obvious that through the more turmoil and viciousness that exists in this world, the better off economically these professional anti-life creatures will be. Any goddamn fool who expects to find solace or emancipation from this vast and increasing swarm of degenerates has much to learn indeed. As far as the moronic and imbecilic can go in the way of grasping what it’s all about is to latch on to the “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” theory, i.e., become a super-patriot, a huzzarer to non-existent gods, and go out to slaughter peasants throughout the world, especially if they don’t consent to be the conquered slaves of your masters. “Fuck you all”, I say, as I try to keep out of your sight.

March 18, 1968

More Scribblings

My sort of scribbling being unacceptable even to “radical” journals, I bought a duplicating machine in order to make a few copies of stuff to send to friends, then becoming surprisingly aware of how few of even my friends knew what I was talking about. Further, even among self-styled “libertarian” periodicals, including “anarchist”, I either ran up against a blank wall, part of which I considered abysmal ignorance and prejudice, or detected fear and the propensity to wash their hands of me, or throw me to the wolves if necessary. Fuck them; fuck everybody!—including whoever is reading these lines. I scribble now, if I scribble at all, for my own satisfaction—squibs and starts, much of it sophomoric, probably destined for the incinerator.

To my mind it doesn’t make a particle of difference. The forces operating today, mostly unrecognized and completely not understood, either in origin or effect, are so entrenched and accentuated that there is no question whatever that humankind has passed the point of no return, short of some kind of miracle. I see now, what it is almost inherently impossible for humans to realize: that the “course of events” was determined from the beginning and that man is necessarily inept as an observing and thinking apparatus. In fact there is much evidence that man has thought himself into the very meat-chopping predicament in which he finds himself, which he might not have done if he hadn’t inadvertently begun to monkey with his own behaviour, so to speak, or having some monkey with the behaviour of others. I

cannot say that I despise the human race, including myself, as much as pity it—an attitude the kindly aspect of which I gratefully attribute to Schopenhauer.

Scribbling (3)

It is a matter of deep concern to me that very little of the stuff I scribble is encouraging. Judging by the difference between what I think is, and what should or might be, the disparity, and what is of more importance, the prevailing *tendencies* throughout the world, the outlook to me seems bleak indeed. Getting worse, I mean. And even if there were any appreciable amount of intelligence observable, there is no assurance whatever that it is accompanied by sufficient *will* to make it effective—in a chaotic situation it is more likely that individuals will use their intelligence to take care of their individual skins, even though it means cooperating with this degenerating and putrescent society. Indeed, this quite natural impulse might be said to be what the *general* malaise consists of. Just as it is almost wholly true that what goes into one man's stomach does not nourish another man, so also is other people's death of minor concern as contrasted with one's own well-being. A few thousand people being killed in Viet Nam, for instance, may be of much less concern to the readers of these lines than the price of pickles in the supermarket. One needs only to bring up various topics in conversation to find out what interests different people, like some sort of catastrophe to whole villages or towns in various parts of the world, contrasted with say, whether one or the other of two basketball teams won last night. Persons who deal with humans in bunches and swarms know well the "bread and circuses" technique. People in crowds act in manners that to many of them individually would be considered vile crimes.

The American soldier in Viet Nam, for instance, really hasn't the faintest idea of why he's there; perhaps he accepts the reason given him without question. At any rate he does what others are doing.— Which suggests that the "course of events" or "historical development" is about a blind and nonsensical affair, with each of the continuing line of participants thinking only of the moment. The crowning obscenity is that man is the master of his fate, and that his predicament is the result of his own culpability.

March 29, 1968

In a Pickle!

I don't know of any party, sect, or movement with whom I couldn't be ascribed to, not by those in any particular group, but by their rivals. In the same sense, I could not be identified with any group === a non-labeling which fits me precisely. I am indeed a "minority of one", and I prefer it that way inasmuch as I do not wish to be associated with any of the lunacies I see about me.

But as an independent, an alienated and non involved person, who presumably for that reason might be considered more able to see things objectively than most people; a person who moreover who sees the course of human events in an almost fatalistic light === what the hell should I have to offer except pessimism and almost non-action in the face of inevitable cataclysm?

"You are not uninvolved," they may say. "You suffer a certain amount of miseries, and are going to be snuffed out like the rest". "Your disinterestedness and unconcern is a pose. It is only a mask for your inertia and lack of courage." Well, I could not deny this.

But I can say this: Inasmuch as my own ideas are not only contrary and inimical to the powers-that-be, who wouldn't hesitate a moment to snuff me out, they are likewise contrary and inimical to all the movements and sects and parties that I know anything about. And I damn well know, by the flavor of their advocacies, that they wouldn't have any less scruples in seeing me effectively urged into the ash barrel, if indeed they wouldn't help with the heave-to, than the members and supporters of The Establishment.

So you bastards' catagorizing of me as a cowardly dud in effect means that you'd prefer for me to stick my neck out so that you could lop my head off. You damn well right, I am involved. I have a personal interest at stake. And that interest includes such impulses of self-preservation as to deprive you all from cutting my precious throat. I have been around long enough to exude whatever part of my gullibility about the considerateness of "human nature" as to believe that a recalcitrant to any of the schemes of world-fixing so ardently favored by this or the other of the fixers bent to *do me good* means other than haste in having me see my maker. Fuck you!

Laurance Labadie
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You reformers want to “transform” the State from an instrument of oppression, tyranny and infringement of rights into a cooperative agency for subserving the common purposes of Men; anarchists want to abolish the State. As anarchists are not opposed to such cooperative agencies as you mention, obviously the State means something different between us. These divergent meanings have their origin in two fundamentally different ways at looking at the relations between men. One is the collective; the other the anarchistic. One tries to organize society; the other to free it. One looks for a form of organization; the other for a set of principles. If it is the aim of society to discover some form of organization to which it must adhere, then some means must be established to force conformity to that form. To force adherence to organization implies coercion and invasion; to defend a set of principles is not invasive. In a free society many different forms of organization are possible. Anarchy is not a concept of organized society. - 'On “Society”' from the book Anarcho-Pessimism by Laurance Labadie

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