

ALTRUISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Altruism, the ethical concept which requires the individual to live for others, is the moral keystone of Christianity. It is precisely the moral injunction against self-interest promoted by the altruist ethic which permits, and in fact, fosters the rise of authoritarian collectivism. The dislocation of authority over one's own life to some "higher" and incomprehensible authority such as God and the attendant transfer of real power to other persons has been keenly understood by the priest class since ancient times. The same mechanism of power transfer - that is taking away the authority of the individual over his or her own life by the use of an incomprehensible, non-objective concept, such as social welfare-is universally employed by governmental bureaucrats today.

Once the individual is made to feel moral shame for the pursuit of self-interest, there is no end to the ways in which the altruists and collectivists can milk him for his product. The natural and healthy tendency for individuals to act in their own self-interest surfaces in the individual's creation of value, however, in an altruist-collectivist culture, the individual is made to feel shame and guilt for this.

In a vague way, most individuals have been made to feel that they should live for others - that the highest form of moral action is self-denial. The ultimate expression of this belief is epitomized in the crucifixion of Christ, who is supposed to have died for "our sins". Although it is self-evident to a rational being that it is impossible for one individual to live in place of another; millions of Christians persist in the belief that this is possible. Discreet individual identity can be the only basis for moral accountability since moral choice is the conscious, and purposeful distinction between values, thus logically, requiring a single and separate (discrete) choicemaker.

The contradiction lies in the attempt to make the individual responsible for the lives of others and by inference for the actions of others, while at the same time requiring the individual to be responsible for his own actions. This is logically impossible.

Essentially, the altruist commandment to live for others, being your brother's keeper, requires that one be responsible for the actions, non-actions and misactions of others. Not only is this impossible, it is undesirable. Assuming that the altruist commandment were adhered, everyone would be collectively responsible for everyone. Once identified, the altruist premise is obviously absurd but in fact, the concept of collective responsibility is fanatically reiterated and unquestioningly accepted in a myriad of forms.

It is not too difficult to understand why some persons find the altruist ethic desirable when the actual practice resulting from its application is examined. First one must understand that when everyone is responsible for your life, you lose responsibility over yourself, and thus authority over your choices. Theoretically, in such a system everyone has authority over others but not over themselves thus, in effect, everyone is morally enjoined to live other peoples lives but not their own. In fact, what does occur, is that relatively few individuals have tremendous authority to control the lives of others. Although many are not willing to be responsible for their own actions; there are those who covet authority over the lives of others.

Christianity, and in fact, most other forms of mysticism, gloss over in an act of faith, the unbridgeable logical chasm which exists between collective responsibility and individual moral choice. Thus, what results in the actual functioning of altruist-collectivist society in which the mystical argument from authority is translated into secular law and custom, is the enforced retention of full responsibility by the individual with nearly total divestiture of individual authority. Essentially, the altruist-collectivist system wants you to live and produce as long as it is not for yourself.

Logically, altruism means that the individual is to live for all other persons but himself. Under this system the concept of self-ownership, and thus property, cannot exist, since the individual has no moral right to his or her own life - much less a right to the products of that life.

In being required to live for others it logically follows from the doctrine of altruism that one does not relate to others on the basis of objective merit but on the basis of need. Trading value for value which requires determining the objective merit of the individual's product or service implies self-interest thus contradicting the essential meaning of altruist doctrine. Need, rather than merit, becomes the moral coin in the altruist system. An individual gains in moral stature to the extent to which he or she is in need, but paradoxically, the individual who can and does provide for himself or herself falls from grace.

Altruism in itself would appear to be a logically impotent and thus harmless doctrine - at least one which would not appeal to rational human beings and one which would affect only a small cult of masochists. One would expect this to be so in a free society but this is not the case in present world society. There are well over a half billion Christians who adhere, if not explicitly at least implicitly, in their unquestioning second-hand acceptance of self-denial and self sacrifice.

Altruism and collectivism in their various forms permeate every society on this planet. Every individual is to some extent a victim of the injustice perpetrated under this system. The birthright to live one's life free from coercion of billions of individuals for thousands of years has been stolen by the witch doctors of mysticism and the Attilas of State power. And yet, masses of individuals continue to march obediently to the slaughter of their lives. The reason for this obedience and docility lies in the enormous indoctrination process. From infancy the individual is taught to accept the values of the group and to avoid independent thought. All mediums of cultural expression employ the royal plural "we" or the royal possessive "our" as if everyone had an implied involvement and obligation in the affairs of the "race", "society" and the "nation". One rarely, if ever, hears "speak for yourself - not for me" or "by what right do you speak for anyone else".

Thus, the individual learns to bear the burden of collective responsibility and more often than not, collective responsibility is wielded to intervene coercively in the life of others. There is no moral barrier to initiating force as long as it purports to be for someone else's good.

Most altruist-collectivists, however, do not confront their victims directly, but increasingly resort to the agency of the State to infringe on the rights of others. They feel that a crime is somehow absolved if it is perpetrated collectively through the will of the majority - through "democratic procedure". Having

relegated higher decisions to faith and being stung by the resulting failure at all levels of their lives, and hounded by indefinable anxieties, the A-C personality develops a herd mentality. Having little confidence in their own judgement, they watch for new "trends", "styles", for what is "in". They listen cautiously to "opinion formers" and avidly watch "trend setters" before acting.

On the interpersonal level, the A-C personality is manipulative and coercive. Relationships tend to be based on implied and tacit obligations rather than explicit understanding. Weakness, dependency and "need" are stressed rather than strength, independence and productivity. Personal insecurities are covertly traded for veiled desires to dominate. Security is gained by enslaving someone through collectivist legal and social pressures, as well as by altruistic bonding and implied obligation to children. The irrationalities of A-C family life form a microcosm of A-C society and the coercive State. (See "Breaking Up the Altruist-Collectivist Family", QUEST, April/May 1975).

Intimate relations between A-C personalities are not based on rational self-interest or on free competition, rather they are attempts to ensnare and control another person. This is reflected in the proscription of having sexual relations with other partners. The essential psychological poverty of the A-C personality is reflected in a general inability to maintain several simultaneously intense relationships. This is not very feasible when one considers that intimate relationships between A-C types are essentially that existing between a beggar and a master. Beggars can rarely afford to be choosy.

Altruism as an ethical premise is based on an anterior metaphysical premise that human nature is essentially evil. Remember that the "original sin" derives from having tasted the fruit of knowledge. Essentially, in biblical terms, the greatest evil consists of gaining knowledge to take command over one's own life for one's own purposes. For only God (and his priests) can know what true purpose one's life is to serve. Thus, the essential evil in Christianity is the human desire to know. This is not surprising in the light of altruist doctrine.

Christianity openly demands the replacement of reason with faith. By definition, faith means belief in the unproven or undemonstrable. Psychologically, and of course intellectually, this reduces the individual's ability to claim authority over his own life or his desire to be responsible for his actions. Thus reason based on logic is reduced to a narrow "common sense" for less important matters; whereas, value choices of the highest order are left to blind faith. As contradictions resulting from the loss of integrity in values mount to overwhelming proportions in the life of the individual, the tendency is to further evade rational conceptual thought and to resort to faith.

Christian altruism breeds a way of life based on weakness, despair and violence. It is a tragic view of life which produces its own self-fulfilling tragedies. On the emotional level it fosters a tendency to blame others for one's own incapacities. "After all", goes the implied rationalization, "I wouldn't be the kind of person I am if my needs had been met". Thus, under the altruist ethic an individual is predisposed from childhood to shift responsibility to others. But paradoxically, the altruist code leads one to claim increasing authority over the lives of others, especially over others who are productive. Claims are advanced to an ever-widening ring of implied obligations to which other individuals are implicitly bound under

the altruist ethic, not only by individuals, but by large groups. The tendency is to make ever-expanding claims over the lives of other individuals.

The psychological tendency produced by altruism to depend on others for one's self-esteem, to make false and unbased claims on others for one's own failings has significant ramifications in the way in which **individuals operate together** in groups. The altruistic personality which will be referred to here as "altruiform" (molded in altruism) is strongly inclined to function under the collective cover of a group. Aside from the fact that enormous pressures are generated in the structure of A-C society compelling the individual to seek self-validation, physical support and protection and expression in a collective context; the ultimate force perpetuating this system is generated within the psyche of masses of individual altruiforms.

The altruiform, unable to formulate a consistent set of values is ultimately unable to make consistent decisions especially on important questions of morality. This is relegated to convenient centers of authority which are beyond his developed level of comprehension. The altruiform lives with a sense of furtive guilt and a sense of unfulfillment marked by an anxious restlessness. The altruiform vaguely senses the lack of an objectively knowable basis for his or her self-esteem, thus their lives are marked by a desperate need to find external validation - to gain self-esteem in the eyes of others. Obviously this leads to a false sense of self-esteem (which in a healthy individual - can only come from the individual's own capacity to evaluate him or herself consistent with reality) and more often the altruiforms find themselves arbitrarily judged on the basis of unexplained or unexplainable premises, or in fact on no premises at all. Thus, the altruiform drifts further away from an internal ability to reason into what is perceived to be a world of unresolvable personal abuse and violence. In most cases the altruiforms resign themselves to 'going along' with collective opinion.

However, in many instances, the altruiform personality resorts to violence - after all there are no rules or at least no way of knowing - thus force rules. **Might makes right.** Thus, the appearance of strength of one leader or of organized masses assuages the personal insecurity and lack of self-esteem which the altruiform feels about his or her life. The altruiform comes to depend on groups for all meaning in life. In point of fact, the altruiform is alienated from himself or herself from his or her own discarded or never developed faculties of rational judgement.

Thus, when one dissects the affiliations of an altruiform one finds dependencies on numerous collective categories of sexual, racial, ethnic, political, geographical, astrological, chronological, and morphological nature but no reference to an integrated conception of self. Although a healthy individual might employ any or even all of these as descriptors of secondary or tertiary consequence in communicating his or her values to others; the primary core of his or her "self" would be presented as a conscious, purposive and independent identity.

In the social sphere, the dependence on collective identity leads to terrible consequences. This leads to a situation in which an increasing number of persons feel that the world owes them a living and are willing to coerce others into "sharing the wealth". Historically and intellectually, Christian altruism has induced and complemented the rise of collectivism and authoritarianism. Collectivism is the generic term for variant forms of totalitarian authoritarianism such as communism and national socialism. There is very little difference between these forms of collectivism - they all sacrifice the right of the individual to some other entity such as

Society, the State, or the Race. An individual's right to life and property is always secondary to a 'higher' good, however that may be conceived.

Thus "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" which embodies the essential concept of the economic redistribution of value in communist society, is nothing more than the application and enforcement of the Christian altruist ethic. Being morally bound to be your brother's keeper is in reality being your brother's slave. Once one accepts the altruist ethic in principle, that one's life is not one's own to live, then whatever liberty and happiness one enjoys is the result of historical accident and not from the application of consistent principle.

In historical terms, the ideological progenitor of modern collectivism, Marxism, came about as a reaction to the only rational system of political economy ever created by mankind - capitalism. Essentially, free market capitalism never existed as a pure system, but elements of economic rationality which vastly increased the standard of living in the world, were the result of the rise of philosophical reason during the Renaissance. However, it was Christian altruism and the reaction of conservative intellectuals such as Hegel, Kant and Marx which aborted the rise of an integrated moral philosophy based on individualism and reason. Christian altruism provided the moral rottenness which permitted the acceptance of Marx's perverted thesis advocating the looting of individuals by class. Once the individual accepts, even in principle, that he has no right to live his own life for his own sake, then it is logically impossible to repudiate the idea that he should be living his or her life for "society". The past hundred years is mainly a historical magnification of this fraud.

Thus, it is not surprising that many clergy are in open sympathy with the socialist movement or at least its "ideals". The only real difference of opinion, centers on whether one should sacrifice his life for others because of God or the State. In any case, all agree that selfishness is the vilest of evils.

Over the last century, a fusion of elements has taken place between Christian altruism and various secular forms of collectivism. Whereas altruism more specifically tends to promote deep afflictions in the intellectual and emotional areas of human life; it is complemented by collectivism which translates altruist premises into economics, law, politics and geopolitics.

Thus, the complex of altruist-collectivism in various forms dominates the world today. No society or polity presently exists which is founded on the principles of non-initiation of force and self ownership. There are countries such as Switzerland which tend to recognize individual property rights on certain levels more than others but all are based on coercion and involuntary servitude.

Among the most commonly practiced forms of involuntary servitude are: **taxation**, military conscription, compulsory school attendance, and eminent domain. The basic moral premise validating these acts of aggression committed against tens of millions of individuals is altruism.

It is the tragically wrong idea that the individual has an implied obligation to other individuals - an obligation that has not been accepted explicitly and voluntarily - which is the main cause for war, poverty and injustice. It is only **necessary** to look at the contemporary United States to demonstrate the relationship between the institutions produced by altruist-collectivism and the troubles afflicting its

citizens.

Involvement in the Vietnam war was based on the premise that individuals living in the United States had a collective obligation to intervene in the affairs of the indochinese people. Moreover, the war was carried out through the use of massive slave labor through military conscription and taxation. No government could carry out this war of foreign involvement on a voluntary basis or more fundamentally without the deep-rooted and pervasive psychosis of altruism.

The threat of thermonuclear extermination is a direct product of the massive authority granted to the State in the United States or as taken by force in the Soviet Union and China. It is the moral validation of altruist-collectivism which provides the false authority under which the bureaucratic leaders of these superstates arrogate to themselves the right to gamble with the lives of billions of individuals. More cogently, it is the passive acceptance of their authority to do so by their subject populations which permits these "leaders" to proceed in such a self-assured manner.

Environmental problems in all economies result from a failure to enforce individual life and property rights and the institution of public ownership over large land areas and air and water bodies. It is taxation which has led to the overconstruction of highways and the artificial subsidies for the automobile industry. In turn, eminent domain, the right of the State to confiscate property in the name of the "public good", has facilitated the monstrous growth not only of highways but of public institutions of all kinds. This has led to deterioration of whole neighborhoods and cities. The growth of public "property" has eroded the productive base of the economy thus aggravating poverty and inflation. Thousands of homes have been destroyed by urban renewal and with it the local character of old settlements.

It is the lack of private ownership over rivers and lakes which has permitted the dumping of raw sewage by public municipal governments. It is the leasing of publicly owned range lands and forest areas which has led to their deterioration by users who have no vested interest in maintaining these resources.

The overbuilding of suburban areas directly results from the forced subsidization of roads, artificial low interest rates enforced by government for new homes, subsidies for municipal bonds, forced property taxes for the building of new schools, sewers, and utilities and artificial zoning destroying the organic development of local neighborhoods. Thus, the problem of "urban sprawl" results as in the case of other major problems, from a bureaucrat's concept of what at one time was to have constituted the "public good" or "common good".

Economic poverty can only be resolved by increasing the efficiency and output of production not by the altruistic redistribution of income and wealth. Collectivists employ the altruist doctrine to scapegoat productive individuals while using the political muscle of the poor to enrich themselves through graft and selling political favors. Poverty is directly attributable to the parasitism of collectivist bureaucrats who squander enormous sums of unearned loot to increase their own prestige.

Unlike "capitalist" entrepreneurs, bureaucrats are under no pressure to produce a profit by competitively satisfying the real demand for goods and services. Bureaucrats create artificial "needs" for "social services" by manipulating the emotions

of the gullible and the frustrated all under the false cover provided by the altruist ethic.

Ironically, it is the poor who have the most to gain by ridding themselves of altruist-collectivism who permit themselves to be manipulated by political power brokers and interest group jugglers. The poor who are often unskilled and less educated are hurt by minimum wage and labor union protective legislation which have the net effect of forcing millions of workers out of the market as a result of the artificial overpricing of labor. This has the triple effect of raising prices for goods and services, reducing the number of jobs and creating an added rationale for more taxes to aid the "disadvantaged".

Unemployment and endemic poverty, created and aggravated by government intervention are used as pretexts for increasing the amount of economic redistribution through various welfare programs. This reduces the amount of capital for investment and reduces the incentive for increased worker productivity as "seniority" and tenure increasingly replace the standard of competitive merit. Under this system more persons are being supported by fewer workers who have less incentive to produce. Fewer and poorer goods and services are produced at higher prices, thus aggravating the cycle of poverty.

The effect of the altruist ethic on crime and police protection has been devastating. The desire to protect the individual from himself and the authoritarian attempt to regulate the personal morals of individuals is the direct outcome of altruism and collectivism.

By attempting to punish victimless crimes, such as narcotics, prostitution, gambling and homosexuality, the law has had the effect of creating highly lucrative black market monopolies run by ruthless organized criminal elements thereby providing them with the capability and incentive to corrupt police officers through graft. Thus, the police who are constantly distracted from their legitimate function of protecting citizens from violence, find themselves increasingly compelled to infringe on the civil liberties of the weak, the poor and the "socially (read collectively) unacceptable". The arbitrariness of the law promotes arbitrary enforcement which protects those with political clout and corrupts the integrity of police forces.

Criminal activity is aggravated by the imprisonment of thousands of individuals in a vain altruistically motivated effort to protect them from themselves. This has created the opposite of the intended effect by dooming large numbers of individuals with the stigma of criminal records, thus increasing their tendency to resort to violent crime as a livelihood.

Thus, the unwitting victims of the altruist system include not only the millions of taxpayer slaves, the army conscripts, the millions compelled into welfare by waste of capital and labor union monopolies but the tens of thousands falsely convicted for "victimizing" themselves. They are all victims of the A-C system!

To be continued in a future issue.

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