

The Left-Handed Path of Repression

Crocus Behemoth

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The pleasure police don't always wear uniforms. They wear ideologies — rigid, theoretical constructions in their heads. And their heads in turn rule over their bodies and oppress them.

— *Smirk #4 (Post-Leftist Pleasure Politics)*

In spite of its abysmal, largely totalitarian history, the various political tendencies that comprise what we call the “Left” are attempting to make a resurgence in North America — basically by trying to exploit situations like the war in Iraq and capitalist globalization as new opportunities to promote their hopelessly outdated and downright ridiculously statist programs for “change”. It would be easy enough to just ignore these socialist champions of duty and sacrifice — these would-be world-betterers who tilt at the windmills of established power and ultimately accomplish nothing — were it not for the fact that they've infested the anarchist movement with their authoritarian, guilt-ridden politics and are essentially waging war on the free exchange of ideas between radicals and dissidents. Cloaking themselves in “concerns” about racism, sexism and homophobia, these anarcho-leftists seem primarily interested in impeding the development of revolutionary theory *and* revolutionary action, by setting rules about what can and cannot be said (or even *thought* by those who are interested in examining the *totality* of the System we live under.

When they're not trying to lure anarchists down the dead-end path of “identity politics”, these self-styled “experts in oppression” are working overtime to impose new “politically correct” moralisms and constraining codes of behavior *on other people*, adding new layers of repression to an already unbearably repressive and artificial situation, i.e., modern civilized “life”. In a world where virtually every aspect of our lives is governed and controlled, where the majority of our “choices” and “options” are false, manufactured ones, and where our every instinct and biological impulse is stifled by an authoritarian order, the Left proposes *more* (or at least, *new*) rules and regulations as the solution! Like the genocidal Catholic missionaries of the Columbian invasion or the grim-faced, anally-retentive Puritans of New England, these internally tormented Leftists want to *universalize* their own inhibitions and psychological hang-ups, by creating a new governing structure that mirrors their own fears and personal misery.

The personal is *very* political when it comes to the *Left*, as your typical leftist is neurotically obsessed with how others live, what they eat and consume, and most alarmingly, with the words and *thoughts* that stray from the Left's approved range of opinions. The main difference between the Left and the “Right” is that the Left's intrusiveness into other peoples' lives is justified on *political* grounds, while the “Right” generally justifies it on Biblical or religious grounds. In either case, we're dealing with *morality*, with external codes of conduct and behavior that some self-appointed “superior” believes is the prescription for a more tidy, orderly and efficient society.

At this point, it's worth asking: What deranged emotional disorder leads to the formation of such authoritarian tendencies in the human personality, and what aberration of the psyche convinces the Left that it has the knowledge and the right to refashion and reprogram other people into its new morality? We believe that the research of Wilhelm Reich provides invaluable insight into the “mass psychosis of Leftism”, and the remainder of this essay will explore Reich's theories of “character armoring” and how it applies to the Left as an inherently authoritarian political current.

Sexual Repression: The Root of All Social Control?

The person afflicted with the emotional plague limps characterologically. The emotional plague is a chronic biopathy of the organism. It made an inroad into human society with the first mass suppression of genital sexuality; it became an endemic disease, which has been tormenting people the world over for thousands of years. According to our knowledge, it is implanted in the child from the first days of life. It is an endemic illness, like schizophrenia or cancer, with one notable difference, i.e., it is essentially manifested in *social life*. — Wilhelm Reich

Wilhelm Reich was a radical psychotherapist (and former student of Freud) who, in the 1920s, began to make observations about human sexual repression that we believe have a lot to contribute to the anti-civilization critique. The linchpin of civilization, the defining process that holds it all together, is *domestication* — the suppression and restructuring of what was once wild and free. In the human animal this translates into the repression and bludgeoning of our natural instincts by outside social forces. Reich believed that human beings formed what he termed “character armor” as a chronic result of the clash between instinctual demands and an outer world ‘which frustrates those demands. This “character armor” is formed when the ego undergoes a structural change in order to carry out the inhibition of instincts demanded by the modern, civilized world and to be able to cope with the energy stasis which results from this inhibition.

Reich described this change in the human psyche as a *hardening*, a cementing of civilized repressions that take on a chronically operating, automatic character, as if the affected (repressed) personality has developed a hard shell around itself to deflect and weaken the blows of the outer world as well as the clamoring of unfulfilled inner needs. As a protective psychological formation that has become chronic, Reich felt that this character hardening merited the designation of the psychic mobility of the personality as a whole. The maintenance of this character armor always proceeds according to the pleasure-unpleasure principle and consists of multiple, interrelated layers that serve to ward off the most deeply repressed impulses.

And the most deeply repressed impulse in the civilized world, according to Reich, is the natural human need to give and receive love and to experience orgasmic, libidinal gratification and pleasure. But human sexuality had been repressed, claimed Reich, by the compulsory sex morality of the dominant culture.

Reich linked sexual repression to the formation of authoritarian personalities and believed that there are *libidinal* energies, which are employed in the anchoring of the authoritarian social order, as he explained in his 1933 book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.

Reich believed that it was in this anchoring of the social order in the character structure that we find an explanation for the toleration on the part of the suppressed layers of the population toward the rulership of an upper social class that has the means of power at its disposal, a toleration that often goes so far as to affirm authoritarian suppression at the expense of its own class interests. Reich’s analysis of sexual imagery within Nazi propaganda and Hitler’s hypnotic oratory performances led him to believe that Germans achieved some sort of orgasmic satisfaction from their dedication to the *fuhrer* and his *weltanschauung* of sexual repression. Myron Sharaf, Reich’s biographer, commented that, “This intense libidinal excitation, combined with a sense of moral righteousness, was strikingly similar to the atmosphere at religious revival meetings.”

Reich went on to apply his same critique of the Third Reich to Soviet Russia and the Communist Party, and came to the following conclusions:

- Humankind is biologically sick.
- Politics is the irrational social expression of this sickness.
- The character structure of the masses is formed by socioeconomic processes, and it anchors and perpetuates these processes. Humanity's biopathic character structure is the fossilization of the authoritarian process of history. It is the biophysical reproduction of mass suppression.
- The fear of freedom — and the *incapacity* for freedom — of masses of people is expressed in the biophysical rigidity of the character and the inflexibility of the organism.
- Interest in money and power is a substitute for unfulfilled happiness in love, supported by the biologic rigidity of masses of people.

We want to make it clear at this point that we don't uncritically embrace all of Reich's ideas. Like most visionaries, Reich's life was riddled with contradictions, and even as anarchists, we regard some of his later writings as marginally crackpot. And despite his advocacy of "free love" and non-monogamy, Reich seemed to be pretty sexually repressed himself, and maintained throughout his life that homosexuality was a "disorder". Nonetheless, we feel that Reich stumbled upon a "piece of the puzzle", and if we accept that even a *fraction* of what he postulates is feasible, then it revolutionizes our understanding of how both social domestication and authoritarian political rackets work. Human beings as a species have been deeply scarred and traumatized by 10,000 years of colonization, domestication and sexual repression, and no social order that emerges from this collective dysfunctionality/psychosis can offer us anything but more repression. As Reich described it, "The human masses have become apathetic, incapable of discrimination, biopathic and slavish as a result of the suppression of their vital life over thousands of years".

This is an amazingly basic insight, and yet so profound in its implications! If left-wing States and political movements originate in the same authoritarian gene pool as so-called "right wing" regimes, then we can be assured ahead of time that they won't reproduce anything but continued slavery and control. The political Left is nothing more than a *particular form* of authoritarianism, and is, in essence and character, *identical* to any version of statism.

The "progressives" who yearn to install a left-wing State want to use the power of that State to control other people's habits, living patterns, moral conduct and worldview. This has been demonstrated time after time since the 1917 Russian Revolution, yet shockingly, many younger radicals (especially here in Eugene) continue to subscribe the myth that the Left is the good guy in an overly-simplistic cartoonish struggle against the "reactionary" capitalist class. But as anarchists, it's obvious that there can be no cure for the disease of capitalism if the supposed "antidote" (the Left) is itself a carrier of the same virus of control and rigidity.

The Machine as Sadomasochistic Overseer, and Technology as a New Layer of Character Armor

If sexual repression forms an early and major layer of our "character armor", then how many additional layers of domestication are added as human life begins to merge more and more fully with technology? And why is it that all leftist models for a "socialist future" seem to resemble

the workings of a machine? The second question is the easier one to answer, and that answer lies in the fact that leftists have always seen themselves as social engineers and have always had a nearly religious faith in continued linear progress and the limitless development of scientific and technical knowledge. The machine age and the “machine-age consciousness” it promulgates translates into an engineering vision of human beings reworked according to properly mechanical precepts. In the leftist techno-utopia the repressed sexual energy of the “masses” will be sublimated into work, as we all trudge in uniform fashion to the conveyor belts that will deliver us to our dreary, mind-numbing tasks each day, becoming effectively human extensions of the machine.

The cumulative result of all this is clear — more misery and more repression, as technology penetrates our lives ever more thoroughly, creating mechanical patterns to which we are expected to conform.

Welcome to Eugene, Leftist Capital of the World, or “It’s Starting to Get a Little Kooky Around Here”

Several years ago a leftist “emotional plague” swept through the Eugene anarchist milieu, leaving a trail of shattered lives and sabotaged projects in its wake. The “plague” was introduced into the community by a small group of former or currently enrolled, middle-class college students whose objective seemed to be not only silencing opinions they didn’t like but also *destroying*, both personally and publicly, the individuals who expressed those opinions. A huge preoccupation of this “vanguard intelligentsia” was the imposition of politically correct speech codes and the calculated, manipulative use of certain politically-loaded buzzwords (like “racist”, “sexist” and “homophobic”) to stigmatize anyone who had an “unapproved” point of view.

Hiding behind legitimate issues of oppression (and camouflaging themselves for a short time as anarchists), this nasty, humorless sect promoted a group identity and employed all the hallmark leftist strategies of bullying and browbeating anyone who was too naive to see what was going on. Particularly fascinating was watching this constipated, dour-faced crew attempt to formulate a new, community-wide leftist morality, one that was decidedly anti-erotic, and even *anti-pleasure*. Like most leftists, they seemed to have zero interest in freedom, and actually appeared to be fighting for more pain!

The “administrators” of this leftist plague, the small cadre of self-appointed (and self-oppressed) “teachers” who believed that they — *and only they* — possessed the “superior knowledge”, academic training, and social design to restructure human nature, began to develop a pedagogical style that isolated and demonized anyone they saw as “backwards” and “uneducated” — as well as anyone who desired to have egalitarian relationships with others and wasn’t willing to be treated as a “subordinate”. A new Thought Police began to emerge under the guise of “abolishing sexism”, “smashing racism”, etc., and implicitly sent out the message to stay quiet about the new leftist orthodoxy, lest you become the next victim of a “reputation assassination”. It was a clever strategy, and helped to distract people from recognizing just how devoid these power-tripping socialists were of radical ideas and analysis!

Sadism and masochism seemed to be the psychological mechanics employed to foster group-think, along with “sin” and repentance, guilt, shame, fear of freedom, punishment, unworthiness, and distrust of one’s own thoughts and instincts — in short, the usual reprogramming techniques

utilized by any other cult, from the Moonies to the U.S. Army. The whole “plague” began to take on an eerie resemblance to Catholicism, and fortunately, only infected our community just long enough to serve as a graphic, firsthand example of how the Left wants to *control our lives* through the imposition of new, uniquely leftist, forms of repression.

The Robots Will Not Get Through!

Authoritarians can be most easily distinguished from anarchists by the fact that authoritarians make *their* demands of life not merely on themselves, but, above all, on other people and on *the social environment as a whole*. The person afflicted with the authoritarian plague imposes their mode of life upon others *by force*, and will not tolerate views that threaten their authoritarian, repressed character armor or unmask their concealed motives. The repressed-authoritarian personality fights against other modes of life (and thought) even when they don’t (or shouldn’t) concern them in any way; they are impelled to fight because they perceive the *very existence* of other beliefs and ways of life as a provocation.

Left and Right-wing authoritarians all tend to view the human animal as a flawed machine that can be perfected through the installation of the correct “software” into our hard drive. But the Left is divided amongst itself, and there is significant (and often bitter) disagreement as to what the correct software program is, particularly with regard to human sexuality. Some leftists advocate compulsory homosexuality as a “perversion” and a symptom of the decadence of bourgeois society. Other leftists go a step further and promote an anti-sex celibacy that they see as the solution to problems such as sexism and rape.

But one thing’s for sure, the Left is *very* interested in the sexuality of other people, as are all authoritarians. Leftist regimes — from the Soviet Union to Cuba to communist China — have all (just like Protestants and capitalists) used human mass as an instrument of control and as fuel for their grand human and social reengineering projects.

Authoritarians all have a strong hatred against every process which provokes its own orgasmic yearning (suffering from what Reich called “orgasm anxiety”). This helps explain why almost nowhere in the vast canon of leftist theoretical works are subjects like *pleasure, ecstasy, and self-determination* discussed... maybe the desire for Eros will be *disciplined* out of us by the State over time? We know that sexual repression is only one of many layers of repression placed on the human animal by civilization and ruling elites (the suppression of violence and anger, so brilliantly discussed by Frantz Fanon, will be elaborated on in this Spring’s “Rewilding” issue of *Green Anarchy*) but we wanted to tackle the subject of the Left in a way that brings it back home, into our own lives. We’ve also attempted to provide something that’s conspicuously absent from many of the newer “anarchist” publications, like *Onward* and *Northeastern Anarchist* — a critique of authoritarianism.

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