

Anarchic Collectivism

Its Scientific Basis

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Publisher's Preface

At the end of the last century [19th], with Anarchists on one side, and on the other, the faction of Libertarians at the heart of the Spanish workers movement, belonging to the International [workers movement], ideologues vehemently advanced critiques of diverse socialist tendencies, so as to set down in the form of a manifesto the advantages of their favored social compact. The concepts of Collectivism and Communism were largely those which polarized the currents of opinion.

At that time, many fine things were said in support of both ideological tendencies. All this cultivated interest, and the energy of militant workers was channeled into the noble conflict, generations of laborers were educated in the struggle for emancipation, the zeal of studious revolutionaries was powerfully incited, and ultimately, new horizons were revealed to the working classes in their longing for emancipation.

Some of the texts which summarized their principal teachings are still preserved; but, since time has dissipated the uproar of those oral tournaments, we cannot animate them with the same heat of the noble passion which their authors expended. Nevertheless, they preserve their doctrinal value, demonstrating and proving their fecundity, and we should take advantage of them.

This rhetoric has been excluded from our media for some time. The 'Libertarian Movement of Iberia' proclaimed itself mainly in favor of Libertarian Communism [non-state, decentralized, voluntary]. Thereafter, Collectivism had been relegated in regard to theoretical formulation. In practice, however, Collectivism took its revenge on Communism in the previous decade [1930s]: When Franco's military coup of 1936 gave rise to the July 19 revolutionary movement, and with that a wide field of experimentation was initiated, we saw that the majority of the partial attempts at socialization were spontaneously created in the mold of collectivism.

We are not trying to bring this argumentation back to life (although it wouldn't hurt if it left us time for other activities), nor to take the side of one determinate ideological tendency. In now offering this magisterial study from Mella, our intention is to provide a work of edification; as we will later do in offering works of other ideological tendencies.

We are convinced that social transformation will not function by automatically replacing the timeworn capitalist system with some other of rigid uniformity. We believe that the experiments will be multiple and multiform, and, moreover, we think that there is magic in the harmonic variation.

For that reason we offer, as one more variation, this essay presented by Ricardo Mella at the Second Socialist Competition, organized in Catalonia by some anarchist groups there in 1889. The theme, 'The Scientific Foundations on which Collectivism is Based', had been proposed by the "Grupo Cosmopolito" of Buenos Aires. Ricardo Mella and J. Llunas presented works on this theme, the first getting the award.

The topic is always timely, like all those which discuss the norms of a social compact with greater fairness and freedom than those which govern the system that we currently endure. It is much more timely in finding ourselves in a period of upheaval, generating social transformations which can be far-reaching, if the will and intelligence of workers are applied to it.

Argel, August 1945

Forward

The importance of the troublesome issue that I am determined to discuss is not unknown to me. I know that my inadequacy will produce an incomplete, perhaps useless, work. Naturally, I would like to possess the scientific knowledge pertaining to the subject so perfectly that it would make the work coming from my hands a veritable source of radiating light, the messenger or missionary of conviction and universal acceptance of the truth. But notwithstanding my scarce capacity, I don't have enough will-power to resist a theme of my personal preference.

Like many other convinced revolutionary socialists, I find myself entreated by two distinct, and even contrary ideological tendencies, and in my aspiration for harmony between both such tendencies, neither one in itself has the power to pull me into its faction. This resistance of mine is not the result of a blind passion or preoccupation; it is, on the contrary, in my concept, the result of an analysis, if not sufficiently logical, at least sincere and honest.

For that reason, I am extremely pleased that the primordial idea which serves as the basis of one of the solutions to this complex social problem had been introduced into the arena of discussion. I am even more pleased that this idea is the same as what, in my opinion, establishes the harmony of both tendencies previously indicated, and my enthusiasm for that idea or principle persuaded me to take part in the competition.

With the plain title of, "The Scientific Foundations on which Collectivism Is Based", there is realistically taken into the public square, if not that social problem in totality, the most important part of it, as doubtless the fraught issue of ownership is. Of course, judgment on such an issue remains premature, at least in reference to its current form, in the content of the theme submitted to the controversy. A special mode is asserted in it, a total economic organization radically opposed to other known forms, and nothing more is asked for than its fundamental scientific bases. This might seem to reduce all work to a brief review, but in reality it is not that way. Without prior discussion, without precise analysis, we would not be able to methodically and rationally arrive at discovering those fundamental bases, and for that reason, the discussion and analysis of said issue are understood in hypothetical presupposition.

To my mind, another important point also remains understood as presupposition. I refer to the indispensable basis of any human organization: freedom. To assume an equitable and egalitarian order of things outside of absolute freedom would be a contradiction, a complete aberration, and I will examine the subject in this way by binding myself absolutely to that condition of unlimited freedom, without however entering into an examination of such and so necessary condition, unless incidentally.

Even now in the field of science, as well as in that of philosophical speculation, it is only too evident that the most liberated procedures of association must replace the diverse forms of social subordination. A critique of political systems is now definitively complete, and everyone, somewhat more, somewhat less, asserts freedom as the condition 'sine qua non' of social organization. Frequently missing in science and philosophy is the indispensable supplement of free association, because their eminent representatives have not ventured into the economic problem as decidedly as into the political. Such a supplement is essentially equality of conditions, and at the present time it is left entrusted exclusively, or almost exclusively, to the working masses who, deprived of influential men of science, are seen dedicated to the long and arduous work of diffusion and propaganda.

A Proudhon and a Spencer, confronting the problem of ownership, would resolve the matter on scientific and philosophical grounds in the same way as they resolved it insofar as the political problem is referred to. Being that both philosophers were much more definitive in the criticism of the social order than in the economic order, much more forceful in the analysis of authoritarianism than in the analysis of inequality, they produced a deficient work, having nonetheless to keep in mind that the first was, out of all the publicists of our epoch, the one who struck the harder blows against ownership, and the only one who formulated a rational solution to the problem, leaving aside the solution of an antiquated and discredited communism.

But as long as we lack the participation of men of science, or at least the most eminent, we must take up our work with more determination, and supplant their silence by launching our modest studies and works of propaganda into the winds of publicity.

My justification [for being here] is rooted precisely in what was said in the previous paragraph.

I know very well that among all of you here, I will have to fight against those who, from the viewpoint of voluntary communism, consider our solution to the economic problem as not being radical enough, or, according to certain ideological tendencies, our idea of collectivism as being overly systematic. I know very well that both schools, in Spain the same as abroad, count on great men and superior intellects who naturally bring sufficient benefit in propaganda to us all. But, whatever the case, this is an incentive which inclines us to the fight with greater determination, owing to our conviction, and the love of what we believe to have greater fairness, and is more in harmony with freedom and human nature.

For those reasons, the enterprise that we have in our charge is great; insignificant and worthless those who endeavor to attack it.

Be bold, be bold, and always be bold!

Analysis of Ownership

To analyze ownership, such as it is now constituted, is a chore little more than superfluous. Its justification has yet to be formulated; nobody has ventured to defend it as anything more than something necessary. Conversely, attacks on ownership are countless. Publicists who work outside of conventional ideologies have dealt mortal blows to that institution. Few have frankly dared to attack it directly, many more keep undermining its foundations little by little, and it is understood that, with no great effort, it soon will collapse, along with other no less sacred institutions.

From our side we note that the working class is mainly turned against ownership. For us, it is beyond doubt that as an institution, it is a simple organized plunder by the privileged classes against the classes of the dispossessed. Monopoly and exclusivity are its general characteristics. Larceny, exploitation, and illicit speculation are its immediate consequences. It excludes a part of the citizenry, doubtless the greater part, from the enjoyment of the general wealth, and this is enough to condemn it.

Everything that has no characteristic of inclusive generality, everything that tends to exclusivity in the domain of a right, is irrational and unjust.

The scientific aspect of the issue will clearly prove it to us. In the natural sciences, the theory of evolutionary development is already in evidence, and is no less so in sociology. Darwin and Spencer, each completing the other, have universalized this law, satisfactorily explaining

the phenomena of nature the same as those of life, by the simple process of evolution. Evolutionary development in the social order has that characteristic of inclusive generality which I previously mentioned. This right has continued to become more popular by the day, and universal participation, with its benefits and entitlements, has replaced exclusivity. The political tendency is increasingly favorable for all individuals of the community to take an active role in the government, in the appointment of representatives, in the administration of justice, etc., an evolution which has doubtless made clear to our mind the concept of total freedom or autonomy, by means of which inclusive generality reaches a maximum by the elimination of government and legislation. Likewise in the economic order, the tendency is represented in the proposition of extending ownership to all members of society. Each turn or change of the system goes accompanied by a liquidation which extends and diffuses ownership. It is certain that, on the other side, the habit of appropriation is resistant to this movement and tends to concentrate ownership, but this is precisely the force opposing this evolution, as in the political order it is centralization by the State, and says nothing against the hypotheses that we keep demonstrating. A right, in its highest expression, is developed in social life by force of inclusive generality, and is extended despite all resistance. Any privatization of a right, any exclusion to its entitlement, is contrary to the advancement of society, and ownership in its current form of exclusivity and monopoly is necessarily irrational and unjust.

But otherwise, is it admissible to formulate a judgment of condemnation against ownership 'per se', as philosophers say? Wouldn't it rather be that what we understand by ownership definitively amounts to qualities which are arbitrarily assigned?

The word ownership is generally used in the sense of exclusive possession, and we have just seen how the evolution of the right goes openly and decisively against that. Ownership, outside of the qualities that the dominant ideas and laws attribute to it, is reduced to simple possession of a thing. And so as evolution proceeds in opposition to exclusivity of ownership, for that same reason it can be asserted that evolution favors the tendency toward possession. For the individual, possession is, in effect, any act by means of which one enters into the usage of a part of the general wealth; and for society it is the distributive function of the general wealth, and in this way there is no idea or school which does not see itself obliged to recognize, voluntarily or by force, that possession is as much a natural fact as a universal right for the human race. Possession is a principle common to all economic systems. From this principle, individualism deduces ownership such as it is now constituted. Communism reduces the principle to the precise moment of consumption, but even in this perspective, possession exists as a fact and as a right, because any individual consumption presupposes an absolute possession by a person for that intended function.

If the issue is examined outside of any kind of system and according to a strict principle of freedom and equality of conditions, then ownership in its possessive form is imposed on the intellect as an indispensable condition, without which the integration of that right would turn out to be illusory. Said one illustrious collaborator on 'The Alarm' [an anarchist newspaper published in Chicago], "To deny me the right to possess what I had produced, would be a negation subsequent to the fundamental principle of freedom and a blatant assertion of governmental intervention or rule."

It is necessary, then, not to be deceived about the meaning of words. Ownership insofar as it means an exclusivity, a privilege, and a monopoly of things, is outside of any right. It is much more so when it is applied to what we could call the natural and societal resources. Ownership,

when it means possession of what is produced, is unassailable; it is the decisive consecration of the right when it amounts to the common or general utilization of the natural or social resources.

In the same way that it is necessary to distinguish between ownership in its current sense and ownership 'per se', that is, possession, it is likewise also necessary to take into account the very notable difference that exists between appropriation of the natural or societal resources and the appropriation of a created product. All our differences are derived from the confusion between these two terms. Unquestionable is the right that resides in 'everyone' to the beneficial utilization of the natural resources, and of what has ended up being called the social resources by its characteristic of inclusive generality. Unquestionable is the right of 'each one' to freely dispose of his work, of his productions, how and when it might please one, under penalty of curtailing personal sovereignty. To persist in demonstrating the social reality or the individual reality in isolation is a futile intention. Nature is not unitary, it is essentially a duality. The schools of individualism and communism, do nothing more than follow metaphysics in their pedantry concerning the unity of Being. Individualism finds this unity in the person. Communism, more metaphysical if possible than individualism, finds unity in the agglomeration of people, or society, in the same way that some philosophers reduce the universe to the unity of the Cosmos or to the unity of the Idea.

As in the universe we observe general laws and particular laws, forces of attraction and forces of repulsion, movements of rotation and movements of relocation, so in humanity there coexists the general and particular, love and aversion. progress and reaction. With the same grandeur of anything cosmic, the social totality, the community, is imposed on us. The same infinite plurality of the universe is shown to us in the plurality of individuals. If you try to plumb this mystery of the whole and the part, reason is lost because its relations as 'noumenal' are and will eternally be unknown to us. Only the phenomenal is accessible to us. And a phenomenon in human life demonstrates to us that, individuality and generality, person and community, have their own spheres of action, of life and of movement; that the particular existence of the one does not necessarily imply the abstraction of the other, that the interests, ends, and functions are essentially distinct between both orders of things; that, in summary, humanity, like the idea, the sentiment, the natural order, is anti-nominal, a duality [as abstractions of particulars(?)], and only by the harmony of the contrary terms, necessarily coexistent, can it arrive at a rational solution to the tremendous problem that they posit.

To persist in demonstrating that all work from the individual is absolutely a product of the collective is as useless as the intention of proving that all social works originate exclusively from the individual. There is a certain point at which our efforts are dashed. In all work from the individual there is certainly the participation of the community; all work of society doubtless originates from personal effort and impulse; but, not in such a way that this reciprocal intervention allows us to decide the issue in one direction or the other, we can always observe that all work from the individual bears as many personal as social characteristics, and reciprocally. It is always an individual who, in opposition to the dominant trends in the community, initiates a reform or asserts a truth until then unknown. It is always society which furnishes knowledge to us and the means of conceiving a new principle. The individual and the community will always coexist within their own spheres of action, each one claiming for itself its right and freedom. Reduce the one to the other and you would immediately have rebellion.

Give to Caesar what is of Caesar and to God what is of God, Christ said. Give to the individual what is of the individual and to society what is of society, is the motto of modern socialism.

In this way, natural and social resources are the right of 'all'; the created product is the right of 'each one'. Let possession, ownership, be realized within that right, and the problem remains resolved.

The principle of individual and collective autonomy, the essence of freedom, demands neither more nor less.

Against the privilege of ownership, with all its consequences of subdivision and monopolization, the right of society powerfully arises to reclaim the integrity of society. Against usurpation by the community, the right of the individual arises in rebellion, to resist abdicating the prerogatives of the individual.

And regarding this natural dualism, I limit myself, in the interest of the superior principle of freedom, to asking: What does man need to be free? And I reply with the very same words utilized in the instance of a similar study:

“We will resolutely reply: to be free, man needs ownership.

“Perhaps an exclamation of surprise might leave the lips of our audience on hearing this apparent heresy of socialism; but there is no reason to be surprised; we will endeavor to demonstrate our proposition.

“Any basis of the social question amounts to reclaiming property currently retained illegally by the monopolists and the privileged. The Revolution, in fact, is no more than in this: give back to everyone the ownership of his work. Each worker who protests and remonstrates, each socialist who fulminates against the current situation, each revolutionary who heroically fights for new ideas, each one and everyone at the same time does nothing else but fight so that his product, his work, should not be stolen by anyone. The principle of reform, exception made for doctrinal preferences, is no more than this.

“The masses by intuition have a clearer view on this subject, as on others, than the firmest of intellects. Justice for the masses goes no further than this thought: leave my ownership to me and I will be free; my ownership and my freedom are all that I need to develop myself for myself.

“The free man wants to have absolute dominion over 'what is his', and he would consider this 'his' in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical orders. Only in this way is he truly free. If he can not dispose as he would like of 'his' thoughts, 'his' feelings, 'his' works, he can not be said to be free: an alien force, getting between subject and object, would annul his freedom. The subject is man, the object ownership, and the solution to this natural dualism: man and ownership in the logical and philosophical unity of the social being in the plenitude of all his powers.

“When a man loves, he loves because of the possession of the being loved; when a man works, he does so for the possession of his product; when man studies, it is because he covets the possession of the knowledge. The same occurs in a woman. Only in possessing each other mutually, can love arrive at its culmination, the conjugal pair. Likewise, man and product identify and own each other, the student and the science, amalgamating into the synthesis of the physical function and intellectual function.

“If a man can not possess and be possessed in spirit, if he can not physically own and be owned by his work, if he can not take control of knowledge and knowledge of him, his freedom remains limited, we prefer saying, negated.

“These three modes of possession, physical, spiritual, and intellectual, comprise all the life of a man.

“Love creates the owner of the being loved, the production of the object produced, the study of the knowledge acquired: its freedom is in all modes. May those in love resolve their conflicts and differences as sovereigns; may producers and the production regulate themselves as they prefer; may the student and the study amply communicate with each other. Prior to anything else, a man is a free being, sovereign of himself, who rejects all imposition, and only in this way can he be so.

“Yet you are shocked. A man the owner of a woman, the woman owner of a man, you say, what a horror!

“Never give words more worth than what they can have. Two beings who love each other, possess each other, and against this natural fact nobody can go further than the fanatics who, in suppressing words, believe to be suppressing facts. A man and a woman who love each other will always have faith in each other, will always possess each other spiritually, in the order of sentiments, never in that other order that would reduce them to things able to be owned. Here ownership is nothing but a reciprocity of affections, and whoever says reciprocity, names a principle of Justice; otherwise, the freest reciprocity of which there is not, and never will be, a force capable of destroying.

“As such, then, our argument remains standing without any motive for being shocked, since whoever is alarmed by words indicates not having a very elevated idea of the things signified.

“For that reason, ownership is what a man needs in order to be free. If he can not dispose of his thoughts and his works as he would like, he can not call himself free. The principle of Anarchy can not declare him free in regard to his thoughts and sentiments, and rob him at the same time of the freedom to dispose of his works as he would like, under penalty of falling into economic slavery.”

Preliminary Outline of Collectivism

Once the right of ownership is demonstrated and affirmed, or what is the same thing, the necessity of appropriation for the individual, which results in integrating his freedoms, through which he can in this way dispose of his sentiments, his thoughts, and his works as he pleases, we can now initiate a preliminary outline of the collectivist idea.

Being supported by the exigency of that right, we assert: [1st] the common possession of the natural and social resources, the free usufruct of the land, the seas, machines or large instruments of work, railroads, etc., and [2nd], we equally assert the private possession of the product individually or collectively manufactured. And in conformance with the universal principle of autonomy, we assert in conclusion, the free functioning of all associations of producers. Such is our synthesis.

It is not necessary to amass reasons in demonstration of the first part of this synthesis. Having made universal the right realized through it is sufficient to deflect being criticized as individualism, and being identified with the synthesis of communism.

In regard to the second affirmation, I will not make much effort to prove that either. Only one adversary from the socialist faction rejects it. And it is necessary to remind this same adversary that, prior to anything else, and above all, a person wants to be free, and we have already seen how this is not realized when his sovereignty goes no further than his thoughts and his sentiments. It is necessary that his sovereignty is also extended to his works. We demand it like this: the inclusive generality in the right [of ownership] that we have recognized in the evolutionary process of society and which is an egalitarian guarantee of Justice. The individual free to produce, will be able to be associated or remain independent, his work will be able to be reserved to himself or given over to the community. If he recognizes that producing and consuming in common results in real advantages, his work will end up at the community. But in this way communism amounts to a primitive proceeding for the individual and for the association, and in this case we will be very much on guard to fight against it. But what it really is a question of is knowing the fundamentals, the general principles on which society is to rest, and in this case communism is a system, a dogma not capable of being associated with our criterion of freedom, because it assumes a universal renunciation of a right, when not already a forced annulment of it. In this way we are to limit ourselves to saying: in this I have the right, fear not the outcome. And the right is that each producer can trade, consume, or donate his products when and how he pleases, that each individual can reserve the result of his work to himself or not, and in this way can, with his ownership, enter into relations of transaction and of friendship and fraternity.

And be assured that there is no reason to be concerned about the overly debated issue of the 'whole product' [of labor, see Anton Menger]. This locution is nothing more than a war cry, with which the collectivist worker indicates that what he wants is for nobody to usurp any part of his work, in such way that, if the salary system should disappear, from that moment we would find ourselves to be in full possession of the product of our labor.

For a reason and for a purpose, we assert the free functioning of collectives. In a state of liberty, 'a priori' determinant formulas have no place, and for that reason we reject at the same time the principle that each individual is to obtain remuneration from his work conforming to his necessities, and the principle from which, on the contrary, he is to receive it from a semi-State, according to the unit of time, the hour of work, or according to the unit of the product manufactured. We do not concede that a commission or administration might tax our work. Such would amount to conceding the intervention of authority, to invoke a system of government in our relations.

If it is necessary to evaluate production, if it is necessary to determine the work product of each individual, freedom is what should resolve it. The diversity of labor will produce a diversity of solutions. On one such work product, the individual will prefer communism. On another, an equitable and egalitarian distribution. On yet another, a proportional share, whether demanded by the individual, or agreed to by the association, or whatever the case, freedom of contract.

We can not give you a theory of value such as you might want, because economic science has not arrived at so much. But this very day you can enter into workshops where your companions will give you a preliminary outline of that theory. They calculate, apart from what overhead carries, the cost of each production and the participation corresponding to each individual. Also ask engineers and architects, and they in this same way will tell you that modern advancements

enable them to affirm little less than what is a complete theory of value. Eliminate all of what keeps the revolution from being realized, and surely our differences will disappear.

In any case, if we don't yet have a theory of value, this says nothing against the principle asserted. Up to the present day we don't know more than a hypothesis about the formation of the Universe, and nevertheless, not for that reason is our logic any less in deciding against theology and its gods.

Collectivism is the preliminary outline of a scientific aspiration, and science walks too slowly for it to be able to give us the solution to all problems in one day. Nevertheless, the collectivist principle stands up to the rash attacks of its critics.

Collectivism is more powerful in its logic than communism when it is argued against by the partisans of individualism.

When, on the contrary, the attacks come from the camp of the partisans of community, it is sufficient for collectivism to invoke Right and Freedom. In this way, we have already seen how the obstacles claimed in the valuation of work amount to nothing, because this is equivalent to entering into the field of applications, and what is needed is to show the principle in itself to be erroneous. To those who argue, from an inexcusable triviality, that sick people and invalids, children and the elderly, would not be able to survive according to the collectivist principle, it is enough to point out to them that the issue is a matter of constituting a society of capable men, in the fullness of their faculties and in possession of all their rights. Such arguments don't even deserve the honor of refutation, because they put such little faith in freedom, that, to believe them, the emancipated man would only have to take care of himself. On this road, the negation of freedom can be reached, because the insane person and the idiot would infer the impossibility of living without a government. And the logic of those who refute collectivism is certainly not otherwise. They confuse the general with the particular, the scientific law with the phenomenon, the rule with the exception, the right with the sentiment, justice with solidarity, and in this way they look for the only principle which comprises everything, in the same way that the theologian looks for the one cause that explains everything.

From the moment that the State is assumed to be eliminated, from the instant that society is no longer the source of rights and duties, but a simple association of free men, only freedom is what can resolve the conflicts of the economy, of justice, and of humanity. Whatever was previously expected from a governmental source, will then have to be expected from individual and collective spontaneity. Credit associations, educational associations, mutual insurance associations, will spontaneously emerge in order to realize and complete the work of human emancipation.

Just as in the political field we proclaim anarchy and in the economic field we preach collectivism, so in the order of human sentiments, of universal cooperation, we spread the message of solidarity.

What? Do you suppose, perhaps, that we would abandon the disabled? Do you suppose, perhaps, that we would set aside alms for him? The credit facility for the mutual guarantee of security, the foresight of the individual which through the association shelters one from the unexpected, is not sentimentality, nor charity, nor alms; it is the manifestation of a right, the fruit of liberty, the consecration of dignity.

There are concepts that completely explain an entire order of ideas. In this way our detractors, believing to have resolved the problem, shout: "One for all: all for one!" And this clearly means, in the first term, the subordination of the one to the all, and in the second, that of the all to the

one, that is, reciprocity in economic slavery. What sarcasm from the mouth of the defenders of liberty!

We say, on the contrary, in accord with nature and liberty: "Each one for himself; everyone for everyone else!" And we see in effect that in this way we assert in the first term the integrity of a right and personal autonomy, and in the second term, universal solidarity and the inclusive generality of freedom. Science and nature bring us priceless elements of demonstration. In the progression of human life, these two forces are constantly manifested, for all eternity these two coexistent tendencies: specialization or determination of the individual 'me'; generalization of the social 'me'; homogeneity of the simple element; heterogeneity of the composite total; differentiation of the indivisible, integration of the divisible. In the development of organic life, there is an absolutely identical parallel. Each organism is strongly individualized and absorbs all the sap indispensable for its growth, to the exclusion of the rest of like organisms. Nature as a whole, for its part, tends to a more complete heterogeneity and enriches its manifold organism and consolidates its aesthetic unity by means of taking up a part of the life of its simple components, inferior organisms made subservient to it by relations of necessity. Finally, in the physical order, the Cosmos and the atom are the different modes of individuality in powerful manifestation.

When it is a matter of scientific solutions, how is it possible, then, to be apart from that which science itself manifestly posits, or to establish 'a priori' principles which are in conflict with the natural world?

Collectivism, as we have already said, is the preliminary outline of a scientific aspiration. Don't ask for details, applications, and the complete formulas that freedom rejects. Don't be dogmatic, don't build a system. Provide general principles in accord with nature and science, and that is enough. In this way there is a place within collectivism for all manners of production, trade, and consumption, all forms of cooperation, all modes of association for the purpose of the universal enjoyment of all the wealth and gratifications. Science, art, industry, and agriculture have the guarantee of their free development within collectivism, and it can be affirmed, for what remains to be said, that if this economic principle constitutes a system, it is certainly the only system gratifying to the human race, because it is the system of freedom.

The Scientific Foundations of Collectivism

Those reading this work will have seen in the preceding chapters that the economic solution that we support is in accordance with human nature and the lessons of experience. Avoiding any dogmatic exclusivity, we have arrived at a rational conception of things and ideas, at a positivist science of the biological development of society. Leaving out all doctrinaire formulas, we have determined it unnecessary to resolve difficult problems of psychology, and independently of them, only taking as its basis the reality of the human race, we concluded in determining the organization of a free society along general lines.

From another perspective, logical reasoning, the philosophy of the right [of ownership], enabled us to discover the judicial principle in virtue of which the inclusive generality of ownership is ordained for us in parallel to the inclusive generality of freedom and that of solidarity. The symmetric evolution of these three modes of social life is realized in such a way that it can be assured to be, in essence, the realization of progress in its highest expression.

Is there any room for doubt that this principle, this idea of collectivism, has real scientific foundations, given its conditions of the amalgamation of human nature with a social right?

As we have already said, philosophical positivism was able to explain, by means of the principle of evolution, most of the phenomena of the universe and establish the general laws of life. Naturalists have satisfactorily determined the relations and origins of living things, the motive and the nature of species, and owing to that, today we can laugh at the theological nonsense which previously had us partaking of the sacraments. In the same way, geologists have furnished enough data so as to formulate the timeline of the composition and development of the planet. In the same way, astronomers explain to us in a rational mode the successive spans which stars traverse, the reason for nebulae, the regularity of the movement and progression of atmospheric phenomena.

In this way also sociology is beginning to establish its basic principles in a scientific mode, and so for the principle of evolution to constitute its primordial basis, the essence of investigation in all its forms. The analysis of social evolution is, consequently, the first condition of all knowledge of the laws through which human associations are ruled.

The scientific basis which comes as first principle in support of collectivism, is necessarily the same basis which facilitates our social evolution.

With only a little study of the history of ownership, one fact is constantly offered to our reflection. From the origin of society until the current day, private property and community or State have lived and keep living in permanent conflict, despite the appearance of a false harmony. Every day the collective increasingly takes away the individual's property and rights. Every day the individual strives more persistently to attribute to himself the right of possession in absolute terms, and tries to wrest his principal attributes from the State. Individualism and communism thus live in eternal conflict, without history deciding in favor of one or the other. Every day private property is seen to be more taken over by the State, and even with full individualism, there are many things common to all citizens. Conversely, communal goods are seen being continually sought by individual interests, and even with things of more universal enjoyment, more in common, there arises private usurpation in its form of exclusion, at times by the individual, at times by the collective. The constancy of this back and forth, of this social phenomenon, speaks very eloquently against both solutions. Society, not finding the expression of its desires in either of these ends, seems to find itself in that first period [of evolution] in which forces fight for determining the necessary outcome. But in the end, material progress, the great progress of science and industry, arrives to hasten the moment of evolutionary initiation, and society begins to enter into a new phase. Individual production and isolated capital is replaced by production in common and capital on a grand scale. Corporations of agriculture, industry, and trade arise everywhere, and personal efforts are replaced by the titanic effort of the collective. The proliferation of producer associations, the general tendency towards cooperation for consumption, the initiation of mutual insurance and credit associations, indicate that society is close to a rapid change. The only thing needed is for the evolution to pass through what remains for it to do in the work undertaken, the only thing necessary is for that evolution, being made aware of itself, to determine the moment of the Revolution, and collectivism will be a fact. Eliminating the broker and exclusive ownership, or any monopoly of wealth, the Revolution will knock down all obstacles which are now in opposition to the evolution being fully realized. Instead of the landowner who exploits the serf on a plot of land, instead of the public corporation which squeezes the industrial worker, in place of the entrepreneur who exhausts the laborer, you will see spontaneously

appearing the association of agricultural workers exploiting the ground for their own profit, the association of industrial workers working in their own factories, the association of machinists, or mechanics, etc., having usufruct of the railroads, the proletarians, in brief, at the present time dispersed and dispossessed, associated in that future with diverse objectives and in possession of all the elements of work.

Whoever does not see that this, and nothing else, is the social tendency, whoever does not see and understand that evolution is essentially collectivist, is blind, or fakes being so.

And social evolution is completely collectivist, because nothing in it is found which advocates community. It appears in such way that the individual, holding his right as something indisputable, understanding that the whole of his work is his one legitimate property, has no worry whatsoever about anything other than entering into the possession, into the usufruct, of what corresponds to everyone equally.

The social evolution of ownership, then, is one of the scientific foundations of collectivism.

Can it be explained in some way that the communist element would in no way play a part in this evolution?

Certainly. Another scientific principle, also owing to the evolutionary school, will give us the reason for that phenomenon. It is the general law of living things, that all organisms have as the condition of their existence the necessity of individual differentiation. Each individual living organism inevitably develops itself through this means. As it becomes enriched in its component elements, as it becomes more heterogeneous, it endeavors to accentuate its special individual characteristics, to radically distinguish itself from its opposites. This fact of experience, verifiable on any occasion, has its origin in the principle called the fight for survival. In the animal kingdom this principle is manifested in obvious ways. Even species that live in a community, are not free from the fight, since what they really do with their organizational procedures, in many of which slavery plays a part, is to be better prepared, to be arranged in more favorable conditions for the fight.

This principle which science has popularized, for which reason I'm not obliged to demonstrate it, is what, in a clear and definite manner, explains that the communist element plays no part at all in evolution. Man naturally tends towards differentiation, towards individual against individual, through this principle. All our progress is realized, and our best works are produced, through this principle. Without the fight for life, without that sentiment which sets us into the necessity of outperforming anyone who catches up or goes ahead, our passions would be dormant and activity for advancement would be null, the outcome for the betterment of society, zero. It is necessary for a man to get into a struggle with other men and with nature, that is to say, with all that which is not 'me', so that work, science, and art might be produced and embellished with all the marvels that we now acknowledge. For that reason, invention, improvement, and progress always originate from spontaneous individual initiative; for that reason, the collective, weaker in what we could call its individual conscience, frequently resists the push given by the individual because the law, the principle of the fight for existence, makes a collective much less inclined towards differentiation than an individual.

As such, communism is not contagious to the social evolution, which tends, contrary to communism, to maintain that other principle that gives motivation to all our manifestations of activity. The movement of transformation, then, is realized independently of the right of the individual, and is even conserved through every change in the established order. Does this not explain why society, by necessity, equally avoids those two extremes that continually entreat it?

Collectivism, consecrating the inclusive generality of the right on one side, and the guarantee of the ownership of work on the other, can take pride in satisfying two scientific principles: that of evolution and that of the fight for existence.

But there is still more. This latest acquisition from science is amplified and developed in human societies in a more perfected way than in the rest of the zoological tree. Irrational beings, and even human beings of the present day, live, in part, at the expense of that law in an open conflict of reciprocal and total destruction. Only a few species come to an understanding of the necessity of association for the purpose of battle. Most are disposed to individual conservation, with the exclusion of all sentiment of reciprocity that is not that of the ferocious and permanent war. In the same way, our current individualism understands no more than half of the law that all beings obey. Our society is one that is rudimentary, where the negative element of humanity, the animal, dominates. But as our knowledge grows, as biological development keeps adding to the body, likewise the human element is expanded, and the savage war instinctual to the beast, is replaced by the noble contest of reason, art, knowledge, and work. Then the necessary complement of the principle of the fight for life is seen emerging, and from the exclusion which previously characterized it, there follows the attraction of the fighters. Humanity understands that the previously mentioned principle, with one individual against another, is a negative element, and plans to direct the fight against nature, associating all opposing forces among them. As such, the general idea originates of association for the fight for existence, and what began being the product of savagery, ends up determining the highest level of human perfection, social solidarity. What can not be realized unless in an instinctual mode between beasts, is realized consciously among humans. The sentiment of individual preservation, which so strongly rules us, is identified in this way with the sentiment of societal preservation, and becomes more powerful, more intelligent, more knowledgeable. Where there was no more than war of man against man, we see emerge a society confronting nature. To subjugate it, to dominate it, is the purpose of humanity. Join forces, associate men, form a cooperative association, channel the common power and direct it to that determinate end.

The fight for existence and the association for the fight, such is the law that reigns over society. Individual and group, ownership and solidarity, differentiation and association, are the terms of a logical series from the scientific method, to which collectivism is accommodated according to that law.

It is useless to reduce the terms individualism and solidarity, obviously in opposition, to a synthetic unity which would annihilate them. This could be attained in the order of ideas by successive abstractions from reality, but in fact they will exist eternally in the same mode where there will always be noumena and phenomena, the real and ideal, molecular attraction and repulsion, reason and sentiment, simple unity and collective unity, homogeneity and heterogeneity.

Collectivism is completely in accord with science. The land free for the liberated farmer; the factory free for the liberated factory worker; the element of work always free for the liberated producer. May freedom be the universal instrument which resolves all the problems of life, for the individual and likewise for society. May the association, or in other words, the contract of federation, be what would resolve all the conflicts of freedom. May solidarity in the end be what would defend us against all alterations from natural laws. There you have everything.

Supporting this latest human ideal are the following:

- I. The tendency toward the inclusive generality of the Right [of ownership], or in other words, parallelism and symmetry in the development and integration of freedom, ownership, and solidarity;
- II. The tendency of social evolution;
- III. The universal principle of the fight for existence and its complement, the association for the fight;
- IV. The natural dualism of human life, in other words, the existence of individual sovereignty and the collective;
- V. The necessity of individual differentiation, free of any obstacle and of any law that does not originate from nature or science and is not voluntarily accepted.

Each one of these tendencies, principles, or necessities has been examined, at times separately and in a special mode, at other times simultaneously and alternatively, on analyzing ownership, studying collectivism, and defining in detail some of their most essential foundations.

What remains for us to do, in the meantime? Absolutely nothing; but if something might be needed, in the last word, it would originate from our inadequacy.

Scientific positivism and experience will keep demonstrating with greater fidelity each day the certainty of the general principles here established. Such is our belief in view of known history. But if it were not this way, since our minds are not closed to the Truth, we would gladly throw out our mistakes and candidly confess our lamentable error.

The most recent positivist principles and the study of human nature, give, day by day, the firmest base to the collectivist aspiration, in opposition to both individualism and communism. And whoever has left behind religious faith, political faith, and economic faith necessarily has to follow science and nature. Reasoned analysis is our only guide.

May the light of analysis appear, may the radiant focus of reason appear, may the science resulting from one or the other arrive to illuminate us, to persuade us if we are mistaken, to strengthen us if we are at the truth.

With all that, let us continue propagating and demonstrating our principles, let us continue popularizing our ideals, may we remain steadfast in the discussion and the criticism of the present social order, that in the end Truth will triumph over all the mists which shroud it in error, and Justice will prevail, in spite of all prejudices, all dogmas of faith, and all the aberrations of the human spirit.

We will continue our work, firm in our convictions, supported by science and experience, maintaining our ideals of political freedom, economic freedom, and total freedom for the human race.

Freedom, we want nothing more than freedom, since what freedom does not do, not one institution whatsoever will be able to make possible.

For that reason we are Anarchic Collectivists, for that reason we support the definitive emancipation of the proletariat, and for that reason we dedicate all our efforts to that.

May the present work be useful in some way for what we pursue: such is our desire.

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Anarchic Collectivism
Its Scientific Basis
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