

Socialism and Anarchism: Antagonistic Opposites

Anonymous

1886

In reading the newspapers, we find the two names mentioned above frequently put side by side. Nay, we find them also associated with the terms Communism and Nihilism, as though these four “isms” had the closest relation to each other. This is a mistake. *Socialism* and *Anarchism* are opposites which have nothing in common but their appurtenance to Social Science. Socialists and Anarchists as such are enemies. They pursue contrary aims, and the success of the former will destroy forever the fanatical hopes of the latter.

It is true that in theories, both are thoroughly dissatisfied with the present state of human society and its politics, and that they severely criticize almost all the economical and political constitutions and laws, teachings, and practices, as now understood. But they do so from very different points of view. The Anarchist worships at the shrine of Liberty. Liberty is his goddess, and his only deity, in theory at least. He rejects all laws imposed on him from without, and respects only such laws as he himself ordains. He wants no association but with men of his own turn of mind, no rule of the majority, no submission under any will but his own, no discipline. He imagines that human society may be reorganized in the following way: When persons enough are converted to his ideas, all present institutions are to be destroyed, State and church, property and laws, of course, foremost. Reorganization then may begin by the voluntary association of groups of such persons as are thoroughly in accord; these groups may form larger societies for certain special purposes of work or enjoyment; and these societies may agree with other such for still more special aims, and so on till all mankind is voluntarily organized. And since men are changeable in their ideas, purposes, and whims, each of the groups, societies, and their connections may dissolve and differently reorganize themselves, as often as they see fit, without ever applying constraint upon one another.

It must not be assumed that we misrepresent the Anarchistic theory. We would gladly quote from their writings to prove the correctness of our statements; but as no book is in existence in which their theory is taught connectedly, we would need a great deal of scattered sayings found in their newspapers in order to present their own documentary evidence. Our readers may, however, find in *Benjamin R. Tucker's* weekly *Liberty* (Box 3366, Boston, Mass.) an Anarchistic organ which they may take for an authority on the subject, and an interesting one, too. Our readers will, of

course, call the above ideas a Utopia and utterly impractical; of our own opinion in this respect we will speak later on.

Socialism, on the other hand, is an antipode of Anarchism. It presupposes human society as a *growth* which develops itself from the simplest beginnings in oldest times through many changes into what it is. Society cannot be dissolved and reorganized. If it is to be renewed, it has to do it and does so gradually at all times. It obeys its own inborn laws, and the efforts of single men and sects cannot even give it any other direction but the one which is inherent and prepared. Scientific truth and discoveries may hasten or retard its development, but can little change it. This is the fundamental doctrine of that most modern form of Socialism which was originated by *Karl Marx*, which calls itself *Social Democracy*, and is now widely spread in Germany and many other countries of Europe, and bids fair to convert mankind.

According to this doctrine, which is well established by historical and scientific research, human society began in tribes which were enlarged families of blood relationship and had a communistic and democratic institution, such as we still find preserved among Indians, Arabs, nomadic tribes generally, and traces or remnants of which may yet be witnessed in old customs of every civilized nation. At this stage of development the first division of labor was invented, together with the first attempts at agriculture, the taming of wild animals, and the improvement of plants into plants of culture. When the working in metals was invented, and new, powerful weapons gave some tribes an ascendancy over others, wars on a larger scale were inaugurated for the conquest of land and the enslavement of weaker tribes — and thus monarchic and feudalistic institutions, based on enslaved labor, arose and founded large realms, laws for the government of the slaves and all but the lawgivers, who rarely obeyed their own laws. At this stage private property came into existence. After a vain attempt at reestablishing, in the old Greek and Roman republics, the original communistic democracy and republic, despotism remained victorious, and after the conquest of the Roman Empire through German and Mongol barbarians, their communism was blended with the Roman physical and mental despotism in the feudalism of the Middle Age.

Most of the old inventions and discoveries, together with the contemporary method of production and distribution of products, were lost, as was the best portion of antique science and art. Yet a vestige of ancient democracy and communism was preserved through the German conquerors, and institutions were founded which secured a sufficiency of support for every walk in life. Everybody was more or less provided for and could hardly ever become entirely helpless. In the walled cities a new democracy sprang up, and new inventions and discoveries were made, or old ones renewed. Thus it was again the method of production which revolutionized all religion, State constitutions, social organizations, and laws. The invention of gunpowder, gradually eradicating knighthood and, through the discovery and conquest of America, inaugurated the modern period, in which capital became supreme arbiter of the fate of nations, and set the human mind discovering and inventing, dissolving all old prejudices, superstitions, and dogmas. This fourth great period of development cultivated for the second time in history and excessive individualism and established *anarchy*.

Modern production is essentially anarchical, though under the skillful semblance of law. The majority of men are, or soon become, disinherited, because land, buildings, money — all the great means of labor — are the property of capitalists, which is protected by State and church; they must, in order to live, sell their only property, their working force, for what capitalists will pay for it, which is rarely more than one-half of its real value. Labor becomes a merchandise,

which, like every other, is sold for what it will bring. And as the supply of labor is, or soon becomes, greater than the demand for it, the competition of capitalists for the world's market of their goods prevents them from paying more for labor than what it costs to keep its soul and body together. Production is no longer calculated to satisfy consumption of merchandise; no producing capitalist can foresee how large the demand for his merchandise will be; but every one has the motive to outbid his competitors for the market. Consumption is artificially stimulated; a hundred ingenious means are invented to make people buy what they do not really need, simply because it is cheap and showy. Here comes the invention of thousands of new and steadily improved machines and a nicer subdivision of labor manipulations, to produce always more cheaply and to monopolize the world's markets with the aid of conquests, treaties, colonization, and the ruin of old native industries. Women and children are pressed into the service of manufactories and to supplant men, especially the expert and educated handicraftsmen. If that is not sufficient to render production cheap, and labor submissive, and profits large, foreign cheap labor is imported, and the organization of laborers for mutual protection of their standard of life is warred against. Men are made cheap for the sake of rendering merchandise cheaper. Few men can now follow a congenial vocation and natural inclination to work; they must drudge as servants of machines and overseers, simply for the profit of capitalists. The latter themselves oust one another from the market, each manufacturing nation is at industrial war with all others, and more and more capitalists are ruined for the benefit of fewer and fewer large ones.

This is *anarchy* under the disguise of peace, law, and order. Anarchy rules supreme in all modern countries, whether republican or monarchical, democratic or despotical, protectionist or free trade. And the result is the general impoverishment of a majority of every nation, the destruction of capital itself by the utter ruin of the purchasing power of nations, and commercial and financial *crises* and *crashes* which return every few years, on an ever larger scale. And all the statesmanship in existence is utterly unable to remedy this self-imposed misery and retrogradation.

All this was foreseen and prophesied by the science of the political economy of the social-democratic school of *Karl Marx*. But their doctrine, although never controverted, was discredited, and the party advocating it was subjected to persecutions of all kinds, as though they were not physicians of the sick times, but quacks and the cause of all the world's misery. They knew that all prophets were doomed to martyrdom and took to endurance and quiet organization, and propaganda of their ideas among the masses. The sacrifices of the old Christian martyrs were reproduced, at least in Europe, and tens of thousands paid with their lives for the confession of their sacred and well demonstrable convictions.

No wonder that a few of this great host of sufferers lost their patience and turned out *practical Anarchists*. Despairing of any other rescue than by forcible means, and goaded on by the murder and ruin of thousands of comrades, they vowed bloody revenge and became criminals from motives of humanity. They preached, and, in a few cases, practiced murder and robbery of those whom they in their despair took for members of a murdering and robbing class.

We Social Democrats do not imitate, do not even excuse them. But we charge their guilt, their legal crimes, on the ruling class which has made them what they are. No doubt, they are guilty, not only in the opinion of the existing iniquitous law, but of eternal humane law; but far more guilty are the present incompetent and inhumane rulers of society and the State. Their reeking corruption, their perversion of all truth in science and morals to base ends, their incompetence to remedy the evils which they inflict upon the innocent majority of sufferers under their unnatural and immoral laws condemn them. We do not deny that there are, in this ruling class, very many

well-meaning, but misinformed persons; but their utter blindness to the facts that round them stare into their faces, is of itself inexcusable.

We can now return to the exposition of what Social Democracy is. The foregoing excursion was indispensable to the better understanding of what follows:

Our Socio-Democratic science demonstrates that the present form of Society and Government works its own speedy destruction. Seen from the economical standpoint, society produces more, and is able to produce many times more, than it can consume. Side by side with enormous stores of grain, flour, victuals, millions of men, women, and children are unable to procure by work the means wherewith to buy sufficient food. Men and women willing to work in the line of clothing and covering of the body do actually freeze or sicken in front of filled magazines of tissues, clothing, and men's and women's wear. Builders of houses, miners of fuel, workers in furniture may not find a dwelling, may be unable to warm their bodies and ease their weary limbs, while there is an abundance of goods that might satisfy their wants. The execrable nonsense, the incredible folly is a tangible reality, that there are too many workers of every kind and — at the same time — too many persons unable to purchase what they could produce, just because there is too much merchandise of every kind for sale. Men by the million are becoming superfluous because they have not the means to work, while such means exist in too great an abundance. And this insane state of things is formed at a time when the most stupendous discoveries and inventions are known and may be made almost to order. The age of scientific wonders and technical perfection is also the age of total inability of the learned world to remedy the simplest wants of the greatest number of persons! Less than a century after the spurious discovery made by *Malthus* that mankind would multiply in a geometrical, and their food only in an arithmetical progression, the *fact* is established that food and all the first necessities of man are being produced in a far greater ration than we find purchasers!

All the teachings of religion and philosophy are ridiculed by the practices of State and church, legislation and intercourse, even in Christian countries! Nations professing the religion of universal brotherhood carry on wars with the most perfect means of murder and destruction that may be imagined. Millions of soldiers in the Old World, and even in the New, are kept on foot, avowedly to guard the peace among nations who worship as God the great herald of "Peace on earth and good will among men!" The very language is full of hypocrisy and deception. Industry is nowadays the means of supporting, by overwork of a majority, in idleness and sensuous luxury a minority which cannot even claim any merits! "Law and Order" are pretexts for throwing mankind into a state of anarchy and all but universal dissatisfaction!

They call wage-labor "free labor," while it *must* be sold afresh from day to day in order to continue existence; they call it a *free contract* when the disinherited worker has no longer his own means of labor, but *must* work for an owner of means of labor at a rate of wages which amounts, as a rule, to hardly half of the product of his labor. They call *capital* the one portion of the proceeds of labor which is not consumed, but accumulated for further production, and they omit to mention that it is the one portion of the proceeds of labor which is withheld from the laborer, of which he is robbed under the permission of law; in short, that capital is the accumulated stealings and pickings from the property of other men. They call *property* what is not the fruit of one's own labor, while there cannot be any other reasonable title to property than work. And this list of hypocritical confusion of terms might be lengthened *ad libitum*. In fact, all institutions of society and law are nowadays hypocritical and demoralize the public sense of truth and honesty.

It is the merit of Social Democracy to have established this new cognition and science. It has cleared up what never could be explained by the old political economy: the cause of commercial crises; of the impoverishment of the majority in every nation; of the enormous opposites in the condition of men. It is no longer a marvel why there can be and are hundredfold millionaires here, and an abject poverty of a mass of *proletarians* there; why commercial crises are spread likewise over republics and monarchies and despotical States, over protectionist and free trade countries, over Protestant, Catholic, and other communities; why all the “statesmen” and wiseacres of the press are utterly unable to suggest a thorough remedy to commercial depressions and the division of mankind into a ruling class and a ruled class, into all-powerful money kings and moneyed corporations on the one hand, and an immense majority of paupers, or what must ultimately become paupers, on the other hand. This riddle is solved by the school of *Karl Marx*. The one great cause of all the ruin of society and States is this, that labor never receives the full proceeds of its product; but must, because it is disinherited, create capital for a minority – the owners of the means of labor, of land, buildings, machines, money, etc., by creating *surplus value*, furnishing *surplus labor*, more labor than is paid for, working *surplus time*, more time than is required to defray the expenses of its own sustenance. And the only thorough remedy is not to work and produce more than what can be consumed by the producers themselves.

It is by working for wages, i.e., for less than the proceeds of our labor, by creating a *surplus value* for people who might work, but do not work, and by thus creating *private capital* in their hands, that we ruin society and politics. On the contrary, by working only as much as is needed by all the useful workers, and by creating the necessary capital through our own contributions and doing away with all private capitalism, can we procure all the means of a true, universal, and high education, and improve the universal morality and brotherhood of men.

This, in a nutshell, is the theory of Social Democracy. It must be added that such a new state of things will be effected more by the natural development of economics than by our teachings. The evils engendered by private capitalism are so formidable and growing in so rapid a proportion, and the wisdom of “statesmen” and self-constituted rulers is so impotent, that society can not continue in its old ruts much longer. The anarchy of society and politics will, within perhaps, the nineteenth century of our era, have exhausted its vitality and out of despair run into a new issue, akin to the Socialist proposition. And there is so much wisdom and scientific and artistic knowledge and experience still left in the world, though ousted from the right place that, once directed in the proper channels, a complete renewal of society and constitutions may be brought about, without very violent and bloody convulsions. The conviction once impressed upon a majority of workers that private capitalism is doomed to abolition, together with wages, slavery, corruption, and class domination, a new form of social life and political practice may be inaugurated almost without severe throes of birth. What alone is needed in the meantime is enlightenment of the working masses (workers, both with mind and body) about the doom of private capitalism, a doom of its own make, which cannot be prevented.

From this short exposition it may be seen that Socialism is the most decided enemy to both the Anarchism of the capitalistic class and the Anarchism of those revolutionists who have been rendered more or less crazy by the cruelties and revolting injustice of our present “law and order.” In fact, this latter class of Anarchists hate us more than they hate the other class of Anarchists, or anybody. If they were paid by *Bismarck*, or *Tsar Alexander III*, or *Jay Gould* for destroying our organization, they could not more efficiently go about it than they really do. Their actions

stultify their teachings, and vice versa. They conspire with the least enlightened and most pliant elements against us, the only apostles of a better future.

We do not in the least deny that we have very little hope for an entirely peaceful renewal of society and politics and that we may have to fight for the redemption of the working class from the threatening complete thralldom. But that war must be forced upon us — we try our best efforts to avoid it, and though this may be impossible in most of the European States, we must and do consider it possible in the United States and wherever freedom of speech and of the press, the right to peacefully assemble and organize, and universal suffrage (inclusive of the suffrage of women) are not curtailed by existing laws. We are fully outspoken in our ideas and aims, all our working for redemption is above board, we shun secret organization for our purposes. Our platform of principles, which will be found at the conclusion of this treatise, means what it professes, no more, no less.

We, therefore, protest against being confounded and in any way identified with Anarchists of any type; we are the implacable enemies of all anarchism. And, if we are sometimes designated as Communists, we wish it to be understood that our Communism is different from all other Communism in that we demand nothing in common but capital — the great means of labor (land, buildings, machines, money) because all capital has been and is partly a gratuitous gift of Nature to all, partly being created by the labor of all mankind, and nothing can reasonably be private property but the full proceeds of one's own labor, as agreed upon by common compromise. Our Communism is not sectarian, but truly universal and compatible with the highest degree of liberty which is at all attainable. The most correct term for our Communism would, perhaps, be Collectivism, as it is now called in France. As regards the term Nihilism, we have to state that, even in Russia, what was, half a century ago, stigmatized as Nihilism is no longer in existence, but supplanted by either practical Anarchism of a propagandistic kind, or revolutionary conspiracy of all classes, as far as their reflection has begun.

Finally, as may be gathered from our platform, we are a propagandistic organization which goes hand in hand with the great labor movement that is now refermenting the society of the world, and we shall be revolutionists only when forced into being such by legislation and persecution withholding from us the means of a peaceable propaganda. We, Socialists, have come to stay; depend upon it.

[In the original pamphlet there follows the text of the 1885 "Platform of the Socialistic Labor Party.]

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Anonymous
Socialism and Anarchism: Antagonistic Opposites
1886

Retrieved on 27 May 2011 from www.marxists.org
First published as a pamphlet by the National Executive Committee of the Socialistic Labor Party,
New York, 1886.

Edited by Tim Davenport. Punctuation modernized. Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing,
Corvallis, OR, 2005.

theanarchistlibrary.org