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The Poverty of Left-Wing Activism

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Sauvage presents a critique of left-wing (ie. left of capital) activism. From <https://web.archive.org/web/20170616211024/https://edensauvage.wordpress.com/2016/11/16/the-poverty-of-left-wing-activism/>.

It is all the more clear what we have to accomplish at present: I am referring to ruthless criticism of all that exists, ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be. (Marx to Ruge Letter (1843))

Introduction

The left-wing activist is merely a caged animal, a pitiful creature trapped within the real domination of the capital relation.

- Like a caged animal, the left-wing activist hurls their body at the imprisoning bars enclosing them.
- Like a caged animal, the left-wing activist tends to their wounds and then hurls themselves at the industrial-strength steel bars again and again.
- Like a caged animal, the left-wing activist struggles to break free of their psychological chains, but their resistance remains forever inscribed within the boundaries of capital.
- Like a caged animal, the left-wing activist roars in protest but their protest remains unheard by their captors.
- Like a caged animal, the left-wing activist bares their teeth at the smirking faces of capital surrounding them.
- Like a caged animal, the left-wing activist reaches the highest vantage point of armed alienation.

What is the psychology behind the left-wing of capital? Hopeless. The Liberals with their linked arms and candlelight vigils, the anti-racists with their self-flagellation and guilt, the anti-sexists with their decorated bodies and militant faces, the Stalinists with their flags and portraits, the Trotskyists with their signs and megaphones, the Maoists with their guns and red books, the Anarchists with their masks and spray cans. Despicable. Behind the glaze of heroic radicalism lies the alienated and isolated individual, a plaything of alien forces, as separated from their own desires as from other individuals. Among all kinds of individuals, the leftist is particularly sensitive to alienation. Capitalism's miserable alienation drive the leftist to become a leftist and from then on, leftism becomes a key component of the psyche of any given

social formation.

Leftism as a psychological tendency arises from the alienation of capital in three ways: (1) the estrangement of human beings from their species-being, that is to say the estrangement of human beings from their innate conscious dynamic role to remake their world in their own image, causes the leftist to fall into despair, guilt, self-hatred, and powerlessness. (2) The estrangement of human beings from the products of their labor, such that the products of their labor appear as an alien force above and beyond them, turns the human being into a plaything of alien forces trapped inside an alien structure. Reification of the products of their labor as an alien force imposes a rigorous discipline upon the leftist, resulting in heavy psychological chains that bind down the leftist in a thousand ways. (3) The estrangement of human beings from each other, hence the lonely crowds and atomized wandering individuals characteristic of late capitalism, results in anti-social behavior and the propensity for leftists to join or form cult-like organizations for the sake of identifying with an illusory community.

Alienation from Species-Being

Let us first discuss the alienation of leftists from their species-being. Built deep into the psychology of every human being is a desire to create. Humanity is a creative species. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, Karl Marx wrote, "Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity." What is the process of conscious life activity? Humans must have creative goals of their own to work towards and they must accomplish these goals autonomously (by themselves or in small, non-alienated groups), without interference from above. Capitalism, more specifically alienated labor, interferes with both steps of this process. Alienated labor is a system where goals are handed down from above by supervisors, by advertising, and by the dictates of the market economy. Goals are superficial, trivial, meaningless, and out of personal control. Alienated labor is also a system where the process of accomplishing goals is not done autonomously, but rather through a network of bureaucrats and supervisors. Even outside the workplace, regulations, laws, moral codes, social norms, and personal entanglements hem in the human being in a thousand ways, so that no goal is ever accomplished autonomously. This alienation from species-being leads to frustration, misery, and a sense of powerlessness, ultimately resulting in low self-esteem, guilt, and self-hatred.

These characteristics permeate the left-wing activist milieu, even if select individuals may provide an exception. Politically correct culture, an essential component of virtually all of the left, is an example of low self-esteem, guilt, and self-hatred in action. If someone construes as offensive anything said about them or a group with which they identify, then that is a sign of low self-esteem and self-hatred. Politically correct leftists are hypersensitive about terminology used to describe marginalized groups, over-occupied about anything that may point to any marginalized group they identify with as being inferior. This political correctness is predominant not in the masses of the marginalized communities themselves, but in a subset of highly educated activist-type people, who often rise to middle class or even bourgeois positions within bourgeois society. Due to their guilt, politically correct leftists identify strongly with the issues of groups that have an image of inferiority or undesirability, such as ethnic minorities, women, gays, the disabled, etc. Victimization is ingrained in the guilt-ridden leftist mindset because of this intense personal identification with marginalized groups. Leftists themselves often feel on some level of consciousness that those groups are inferior or undesirable. However, they would never consciously

admit to having these kinds of thoughts, even though their internalized feelings that those groups are inferior or undesirable determines their intense identification with their problems.

Leftists' feelings of inferiority also cause them to generally outwardly despise that which has an image of superiority or successfulness, such as America, Western civilization, whites, males, and rationality. Reasons leftists give for hating things that have an image of superiority do not match up with their actual subconscious reasons for hating them. They say that they hate those things for being imperialist, colonialist, classist, racist, misogynistic, ableist, etc. but they readily find excuses for these tendencies when they appear in communities, identities, and countries with which they strongly identify. At best, they only begrudgingly admit to those tendencies in communities they defend while they fervently point them out in Western culture and often exaggerate their impact. Hence why the radical leftist passionately decries racism and colonialism in America but eagerly finds excuses for racism and colonialism in the Soviet Union and China. Occasionally the leftist's outwardly expressed despise for things with an image of superiority hides their inward fetishization of those things with an image of superiority. Hence the anti-racist activist who only dates whites and the feminist who prefers male domination during sex.

Nagged with a persistent sense of self-doubt, the leftist sometimes bursts out with exuberant affirmations of the strength and power of the communities they identify with. This is due to an internalized fear that the communities whose problems they identify with are actually undesirable or inferior, which is what they actually subconsciously believe to be true.

The leftist, not confident in themselves, engages in virtue-signalling behavior to try to gain approval from other leftists. Virtue-signalling is the expression of viewpoints that cohere with one's ideological milieu, with the intention of raising one's social status as a result. Virtue-signalling is superficial in essence, as the virtue-signalling leftist often promotes the most bland and trite socially progressive views possible to the public so as to not offend anyone's sensibilities. Virtue-signalling often devolves into a situation where all dissenting views are filtered out and various leftists all affirm each other, trying to assuage the lack of self-confidence (and to some extent, internalized self-hatred) they each feel internally.

Leftists, due to their lack of self-confidence, are also averse to individual ability. They blame society for the failures or inferiority of an individual and not the individual themselves. That is not to say that society is not responsible for the failings of individuals but merely to make a point about the psychology of leftists. Self-reliance is a foreign concept to leftists. Leftists generally want society to solve everyone's problems and provide for everyone's needs, because they have too much self-hatred to have confidence in their own abilities or in the abilities of the communities with which they identify.

The self-hatred of leftists leads them to commit masochistic acts in defense of their ideals. Leftists often provoke police and racist/sexist retaliation. They say they do that because those tactics are successful, but in reality leftists do not see masochism as a means to an end but as an end in itself because they prefer masochistic tactics.

The estrangement of the leftist from their species-being also results in hostility becoming a large component of leftist behavior, due to their frustrated need for power. As a result, leftist behavior often becomes calculated not for the maximum benefit of the marginalized groups they claim to be helping but rather for maximum hostility. Instead of taking conciliatory approaches to solving social issues, they impose

hostility into conflicts, thus exacerbating tensions and in many cases, worsening the social issues they were trying to solve. The leftist drive towards hostility is so ingrained inside the leftist mindset that leftists would resort to inventing social problems if no social problems existed in order to make an excuse to act in a hostile way towards civil society. The leftist drive towards hostility is also largely responsible for the broken windows and burnt flags characteristic of the radical left. There is no rational basis by which these acts will lead to a free and human society, yet radical leftist activists continue to do them, to let out the frustration and hostility they feel as a result of modern alienation.

Postmodernism, a large component of the Left, attacks rationality, science, and objectivity. The emotional reasons for why postmodernists do so are primarily linked to feelings of inferiority as well. Postmodernists hate science and reason because they label certain things as objectively true (superior) and false (inferior). The postmodernist's feelings of inferiority run so deep that they cannot tolerate the classification of things as superior and inferior, causing them to revert to a complete relativism.

Leftists from privileged backgrounds of any kind are into long, agonizing, and ultimately, useless dissertations about their privilege, as a result of their inferiority complex. These kinds of discourses do nothing to advance the interests of the marginalized or stop the interests of capital, but only to serve to temporarily alleviate the speaker's white/male/straight/cis guilt. In general, leftists engage in largely useless and purely symbolic behaviors, usually to boost their slighted egos in light of their inferiority complexes. Leftists put up large signs and banners, cover their bodies with self-affirming and social-justice-sounding sharpie marks, check other individuals' privileges along with their own, talk amongst their fellow leftist elite about "structural violence" as if they know anything about it, and generally act in a hostile way to those who do not have the time, energy, or resources to conform to the leftist vocabulary and mode of speaking. At best, they are changing ideas, instead of material reality, which is the actual generator of non-leftist and therefore "unclean" ideas. They are thus snipping off the leaves of the tree of social hierarchy and not its roots. Most of the time, however, they are not even changing ideas but rather just stroking their self-esteem and inadvertently scaring away people from the values that they adhere to with their latent hostility.

Leftists' beloved political correctness and identity politics fetishize/reify certain marginalized identities generated by class society. Political correctness and identity politics do this by celebrating identity and agonizing over minute differences in privilege, giving them the appearance of reality, instead of destroying identity and privilege, as well as the class systems that give rise to them. Leftist political correctness and identity politics instruct us to treat other human beings not as humans-in-themselves but as parts of reified identities. These identities, which are a figment of the ideological imagination given the appearance of subjectivity by the social relations among people, then take up life and haunt us like the weight of a thousand dead generations, making us the passive prisoners of the identities capital and chance happen to assign to us. All identities are social roles given to us by capital's ideology to further the reproduction of capital, to further the division of labor and the atomization of proletarian resistance. When the reproduction of capital ceases and the proletariat becomes the master of its own fate, so does the need for identity.

Political correctness and identity politics are thus contrary to the mission of communism, which eliminates and demystifies class society, abolishes all identities pre-defined by capital, and creates the real human community, where we can all relate to

each other on the basis of our mutual humanness, instead of the mediating lenses of a thousand identities. We will no longer be prisoners of identity, jailed by fetishized forms and ideological mystifications. To that effect, communism will abolish all national identity. Communism will end whiteness, but it will also end blackness and other marginalized racial identities. Communism will obliterate masculinity, but it will also obliterate femininity.

In the real human community, I will not treat you as a means to an end, a mere token to increase my social capital among my leftist peers but as a human individual. I will not treat you as a reified identity and think of you or others through the lens of identity, but finally as a real and authentic human being. I will not treat you based on your identity, whether it is an identity to be pitied or despised or respected, but based on your inner qualities and your connection to the real human community. We are species-beings. Our species-lives, that is to say our consciously creative life activity, will no longer be hindered by a thousand barriers and mediations, but will flow freely around the real human community. Our species-lives will intertwine like lovers in bliss and vines around a tree. Finally will we have become human.

Plaything of Alien Forces

Let us move onto the misery of the leftist caused by the estrangement of the laborer from the products of their labor. The fact that in bourgeois society the producer's products appear as an alien force above and beyond the producer under capitalism, the fact that human beings are mere playthings of alien forces that they themselves have unleashed, imposes a very distinctly strict moral code upon all individuals. Why? Society is ruled by the value form and the commodity relationship. Commodities must be produced, distributed and consumed to ensure the reproduction of capital and hence a distinctive moral consciousness evolves to ensure that this process is as smooth as possible. People are thus socialized by bourgeois society to obediently fulfill their particular role in the reproduction of capital. Most people are able to break a few of these moral rules without too much psychological anguish. However, for the oversocialized individual, this is not possible. The oversocialized person must constantly stay within the numerous and strict moral injunctions of their society, lest they feel cognitively dissonant. As it is impossible to fulfill all of the moral requirements of a society at all times, this imposes a severe burden on the oversocialized individual, feeding into their feelings of guilt and defeatism. The oversocialized individual must police their own thoughts for infarctions to the established moral code, greatly restricting their thought and behavior. The oversocialized person is therefore restrained by "psychological chains" and cannot but follow the path that society has laid out for them. This leads to a constant sense of constraint and powerlessness, causing great psychological anguish.

The leaders of left-wing movements, typically coming from the intellectual class or other middle classes, tend to be oversocialized due to their over-education. The oversocialized leftist revolts against their own "psychological chains" and attempts to assert their species-being, their desire to recreate the world based on their own desires, by rebelling. However, the oversocialized leftist is unable to rebel against the most fundamental values of the society that they reside in. As a result, the oversocialized leftist rebels by fighting for racial equality, gender equality, animal welfare, economic justice, etc. These ideas are all propagated daily by the mainstream media and educational system, both systems that output the capital-reproducing moral code of a given society. Leftists of the oversocialized type rebel in favor of the values of the society that they live in by claiming with much degree of truth that their society is

not living up to the values that it created.

One exception to this rule is the fact that many leftists engage in non-state-sanctioned violence, which is contradictory to the moral code of nearly all bourgeois societies. The leftist engages in violence as a form of “liberation”, in the sense that they rebel against their “psychological chains” by engaging in violent acts. But even then, the leftist justifies their militancy in terms of the values propagated by the mainstream media, such as justifying violence for the sake of anti-racism or anti-sexism.

As a result of their oversocialization, and the perverse relation they have to their creative species-being, the leftist must impose their morality on others; they must force leftism into every corner of reality and make all thoughts leftist in content. They want to actualize their creative desires, but as their creative horizons are limited by their strict moral code, everything they seek to actualize pertains to their moral code. As a result, leftism is inherently totalitarian in nature and contrary to a free society. The leftist’s natural creative drive is perverted into the need to regulate everything possible. The leftist type is thus drawn like flies to social reform movements because for them leftism plays the role that religion plays for the religious: said religion is Right with a capital R and anything out of the bounds of said religion is Sin with a capital S. Their extreme oversocialization and their drive for power mean that the leftist is never satisfied with the current levels of regulations and government programs. They must constantly expand top-down authority as a reformer because they view themselves morally above the society they live in. They must constantly re-educate everyone and indoctrinate everyone with their leftist philosophy. Any deviancy must be punished. Any flaw must be crushed and suppressed. The leftist jumps from cause to cause, seemingly as urgently as possible, while the bourgeoisie laughs as their useful idiots expand capitalist governmental power with every reform they make. The leftist will not stop pursuing a cause until they have complete control over that facet of human existence. Then, they will jump to another cause and start the process over again. All this does is increase the strength of the bourgeois state apparatus, the bourgeoisie, and ultimately capital itself. The bourgeoisie has in effect played the leftist for a fool, even if individual members of the bourgeoisie do not realize this fact themselves.

Social Alienation

Alienation from species-being results in alienation from other people as well. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx stated, “An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labor, from his life activity, from his species-being, is the estrangement of man from man. When man confronts himself, he confronts the other man. What applies to a man’s relation to his work, to the product of his labor and to himself, also holds of a man’s relation to the other man, and to the other man’s labor and object of labor.” More than that, capitalism engenders the atomization of individuals through the Spectacle. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord posited, “Spectators are linked only by a one-way relationship to the very center that maintains their isolation from one another.” The spectator’s separation from their social being is absolute under the real domination of capital and even the “community” is nothing more than a pseudocommunity of isolated individuals gathered together and not the material human community. In the same text, Debord said, “But the general trend toward isolation, which is the essential reality of urbanism, must also embody a controlled reintegration of the workers based on the planned needs of production and consumption. Such an integration into the system must recapture isolated individuals as individuals isolated together. Factories and cultural centers, holiday

camps and housing developments – all are expressly oriented to the goals of a pseudocommunity of this kind. These imperatives pursue the isolated individual right into the family cell, where the generalized use of receivers of the spectacle’s message ensures that his isolation is filled with the dominant images – images that indeed attain their full force only by virtue of this isolation.”

The anti-social nature of capitalism leads naturally to the anti-social acts of the leftist. The leftist engages in violence because they belong to no human community and feel the pangs of loneliness more acutely than other individuals. Militant activism’s broken windows and smashed ATMs are all an expression of the alienation of human from human under capitalism. The leftist yells to no one in particular damning slogans while marching through the bosses’ streets. Completely ineffectual and probably even counterproductive. Are we foolish enough to not see that this is merely the cry for help of the lonely individual cut off from the material human community, cut off from any kind of real belonging?

How does the leftist, being the most sensitive to alienation of all individuals, cope with their lack of belonging and creeping loneliness? They do so by forming or joining semi-religious sects of one variety or another, which provide a false sense of community for the left-wing activist. The religious nature of the Left is most apparent in the recruiting and donations model that leftist organizations all share. The accumulation of capital via donations and the organization’s need to perpetuate itself and grow means that the leftist organization is merely another bourgeois-religious racket under capitalism. Left-wing organizations, no matter how hard they pretend to be separate from capitalism, are subject to the same economic laws as any capitalist entity. Like any firm, the left-wing cult competes with other organizations of the same type for recruits, which act as both workers and customers. Because the accumulation of fresh recruits is key for the accumulation of capital and prestige, each leftist organization has its own business model for attracting new workers/customers, which they themselves call their “ideological tendency”. And if social being determines social consciousness, then it follows that for all of their rhetoric, all leftist cults are merely ideologues for the bourgeoisie, purveyors of radical bourgeois ideology.

All leftist organizations are cults but some leftist organizations are more cult-like than others. I do acknowledge that there is a difference between Socialist Alternative and the Revolutionary Communist Party – USA. Nonetheless, all leftist organizations, no matter how much they plead or fetishize “democratic centralism” or “non-hierarchical decision-making”, all devolve into bureaucratic-centralist leadership cults under the real domination of capital. There is a core leadership which makes all the decisions, and a transmission-belt system in which bourgeois ideology wrapped up in radical garb is pumped into the rank-and-file, who laps up the ideology obediently and is taught to worship their superiors. Organized under the real domination of capital, which penetrates every orifice of civil society and social life, the leftist cult is thus organized by capital and reproduces the same hierarchies between leader and led that exist under capitalism.

This pseudo-world is not our world. Leftists call each other comrades, yet each of them has to watch their tongues, lest they fuck up their political line or their rhetoric and be subject to yet another round of struggle sessions and social shunning. Leftists call each other comrades, yet leftist cults are stocked full of well-hidden rapists and other types of abusers. Can’t we already see that the leftist milieu is not the real material human community?

Conclusion

In this essay, I have attempted to give an exposé of the poverty of the left-wing activist. Communism, the real movement of proletariat, has historically been associated, for better or worse, with the Left. Key to detaching communism from the failed tactics and politics of the Left is to subject the Left to a ruthless critique, one that pierces right to the heart of the origins of leftist militancy. My point was not to offend or to call out any individual in particular, but merely to illustrate how leftism is reproduced by capital (and reproduces capital) and why leftists act in the ways that they do. The main takeaway for the reader should be to be more skeptical of the claims of the Left and to realize that the Left is completely determined and submerged by capital. The “radicalism” of the Left is a mere farce, a mere tool brought up by the alienation of the capitalist mode of production, and has nothing to do with the real movement of the proletariat, which ebbs and flows regardless of the provocations of various cults of bureaucratic extremists.