

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE COMMUNIST

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THAT Communism, like many other great movements, springs from something great and ideal there can be no denying. The idealists who have formulated the lofty schemes for the brotherhood of man have included in their number many of true vision and exalted purpose. The first of them is undoubtedly Christ, Whose teachings all tend that way, and give color to the tradition that He belonged to the Society of the Essenes, a sect which practised communism in daily life. This great psychologist used His powers of intuition: "He knew what was in man," St. John tells us—for the high purpose of leading men into the Communism of a Kingdom which is not of this world.

Plato, too, was a great communist. His *Republic* sets forth his conception of an ideal state, which is to be a real commonwealth: there true communism is to be practised, a communism of effort and agreement no less than of goods and remuneration. He is concerned more with the desirability of such a state of affairs than with their practicability. Yet Plato has no delusions about the equality of men—he grades his citizens into marked classes, and does not hesitate to label them as "superior" and "inferior." Unfortunately, his system fails to take into account many of the most primitive and most powerful instincts of human nature. Yet today no one can suggest a different means of regeneration from what he does, Education and Nurture.

That great practising Communist who has just gone to his account, Lenin, differed vastly from other big figures in the movement. He, too, "Knew what was in man," but he used his knowledge to increase his feeling of power: he exploited his intuitive knowledge of all that was evil in man. He made tools of those lesser individuals who are ever ready by nature and circumstance to fall under the

unreasonable sway of some powerful demagogue. It is of such lesser communists that this article would treat, lesser as individuals, but forming a class which by its numbers and its tendencies is a tremendous menace to civilization. They are within the practical experience of us all, and without them all the ambitious schemes, all the wild imaginings of a Lenin or a Trotsky would be impossible.

They menace all the culture and progress of the ages. Given their way, they would demolish civilization, and drive man back to the beginnings of things. The cataclysmic happenings of the crash of nations and the uprooting of all standards and established laws of living would reduce man to the elementals. Once more he would become a mere animal, wresting from nature his daily bread, and caring only for the satisfaction of his natural instincts. The law of the herd would have to be built up afresh. What Russia has seen and is seeing would be a mere trifle to what would come to pass. "God's own country" would become the prey of the beast, but a more awful beast than that of Apocalypse,—the beast of man's lowest nature, a law unto itself.

Such is the threat with which the Communism of the meaner natures overshadows our times. Can we afford to be ignorant of it, its cure? This article is but a suggestion, a flicker of light upon the darkness. But like the little candle it may serve to show how great is that darkness. If so, it will not have been written in vain.

The Communist is to the "political person" as the child is to the grown-up. He is undeveloped, primitive. He suffers from an "inferiority-complex."

It is a psychological fact, though a paradox, that those who are most busily engaged in asserting their possession of certain qualities do so because they do not possess them. They know their want, and think that assertion will make it come to pass. The man who insists that he is, say, very religious, and misses no opportunity of proving it to all seeming, or of dragging it into his conversation, is actually deficient in that particular. He who has it in reality takes it for granted, and says nothing about it, either in himself or in his fellows. So the Communist of the French Revolution, the *sans-culottes*, insisted most strongly on Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, while by his behavior he denied to thousands of his brothers the possibility of liberty, and *égalité* was an unknown quality in his treatment of *les aristos*.

Again, psychology shows us that one is inclined to "project" on to others the very faults one possesses oneself. None is harder upon

the girl who has gone astray than the very person who has done so herself, or would do, were circumstances to allow. So the Communist imputes to others that very love for gold, and lust for power which is an important part of his own make-up.

The Communist of today, who loudly asserts that all men are equal, and that he is as good as you (if not better), is merely declaring that in his heart of hearts, his Unconscious, he *knows* that he is really inferior.

This inferiority may be in two spheres: either he may feel himself mentally inferior, or his physical build may make him one of the little folks who feel they are apt to be overlooked. Consider the declared communists, say of your own acquaintance, or if you have none, of Russia, and see how many come under the latter category. In either case, in order to effect "compensation," we find the natural reaction of self-assertiveness. Little men are proverbially "cocky," like bantams. This law of compensation is not, however, without its good points . . . it was that which made, for instance, an orator out of Demosthenes, congenitally afflicted with an impediment in his speech. The Communist arises as an abnormal development of this law of compensation.

He remains in many ways childlike in his attitude to his fellow men. It is a fault in development, sometimes a regression. Children as a rule have a very clear idea on the subject of "meum"; but "tuum" is a very different matter altogether. You may not meddle with what is mine, but I shall do as I please with yours, if you are silly enough to let me! So the Communist does not desire to have *his* possessions, rights, or privileges touched, but will deal in arbitrary fashion with those of others, under the pretence of making them the same for all. Children, too, are naturally cruel. They are Sadists. Ask a group of children how some offence (which does not touch themselves) should be punished, and you will find their sentences severe; and the suggestions of the younger children will be harsher than those of the older. As we grow older we tend more to mercy. So it was in the childhood of civilization. The code of Hammurabi is severe in the extreme; the harshness of the laws which Draco made for ancient Greece is still commemorated in the phrase "draconian severity."

So the Communist is cruel. He wishes to gain his way by brute force. He acts on impulses, motivated by the lower centers and not censored by the higher. In many cases, he personally finds violence of speech a sufficient outlet for his reactionary feelings but too often,

his fiery and ill-considered words start a train which leads to mob violence.

For mob psychology, still little known, complicates the general tendencies of the Communist. The mob, too, is primitive in its psychology. It is more primitive, peculiarly enough, than the individuals which compose it; more prone to act in an unreasonable and uncontrolled manner. It is highly susceptible to suggestion, and a remarkable medium for conveying it. So when it is composed of Communists, all primitives, it is even more primitive and suggestible, and who can wonder at its acts? The interaction of their psychology on it, and its psychology on them, leads to acts of violence inexplicable in any other way.

Besides lacking in physical development, and possessed of a mentality which requires more than anything else education and direction of will power, as a child does, the Communist is primitive in so far as he has not learned civilization's great lesson, the necessity of subordinating self to herd, the need for the suppression of instincts which tend to be anti-social. Suppression is not enough: these instincts, say the psychologists, must be sublimated. That is, they must find expression but in a form which is satisfying to the individual, and of value to the community. This is what the Communist has most need to learn. He employs suppression, not sublimation, and the result is the same as in the case of the neurotic . . . an abnormal condition marks him out from his fellows. He has this to learn. He has not kept pace, for various reasons, mental, social, environmental, with those around him. His hand is against them. His primal instincts, chafing under the bridle of civilization, drive him to violence in word and deed. He wallows in blood and rejoices in hatred.

He will only disappear with the production of a better race type, i. e., through eugenics, by greater facilities for self-development, through education for individuation, and through using up his aggressive and pugnacious instincts in the playing fields, where he will learn the rule of the herd, for the side and not the self, for the nation, not the individual.

Like most of the evils from which the world is suffering today, the cure can be found in education, a method advocated as of the highest importance so many hundreds of years ago, by that master Communist, Socrates, through the medium of his pupil, Plato, "all is easy if care be taken of one thing, nurture and education."