

An Individualist On Socialism - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

Source: <https://medium.com/@postliterate/an-individualist-on-socialism-e4ac67159c53>

It should first be addressed a common objection to the individualist framework, which is the claim that many ills of present-day society are caused by heightened individualism. It is this individualism, it is said, which is the root cause of exploitation in the world. To some, the answer to this dilemma is simple: destroy individualism and make the individual put society before himself (either in the name of humanism or some other lofty abstraction). However, any individualist should be quick to assert that such a state of affairs does not sound any less oppressive to the individual than a world of exploitation. There is further nuance to this discussion, but what is important right now is solving the central issue at hand: how can individualism be utilized without exploitation?

I do believe Einstein is correct when he asserts that man's "*position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate.*" The result being, "*unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life.*" [1]

I believe the solution to this issue lies not in hierarchical nor collective forcing of individuals to cooperate with each other nor forcibly suppressing man's instinct to dominate, but in socialization. It should be clear the individual is greatly shaped by the society which he is brought up in, so much

so that it can be said the individual does not fully belong to himself, owing a callable part of himself to the whole of society. I believe this fact can be utilized to derive the most benefit from both the individualist and collectivist frameworks simultaneously.

If each individual were to be raised into a society which socializes him not to be selfish and egotistical but to be kind and cooperative, the individual choices he will go on to make in his life will be greatly shaped by this worldview. In this system, the individual retains full autonomy and choice to be both cooperative and kind, or to be rude and exploitative. However, by way of socializing him to see the value in cooperation, both economically and psychologically, his choices are motivated towards less exploitative ends. This can occur in very simple forms, simply by teaching our children to see the superior value of cooperation and mutual aid rather than individual competition for attaining one's goals.

I will now discuss socialism in particular. I hope it is clear that the current form of capitalism, intertwined with the state, is in many ways oppressive to the individual. It makes it difficult for him to perform his own private business practices and subsequently compels him to work under oligarchical corporations, while other monopolists from afar control and track him to sell his data to companies and governments.

However, it is difficult to say that merely cutting the state out will result in a renewal of individual liberty. Even with the end of this tool of class domination and insurer of private capital, in this now completely free market the possibility of new monopolists developing and creating new state apparatuses remains. It is important, therefore, to utilize aspects of socialism to ensure these encroachments of liberty do not occur.

The primary worry of the individualist in a socialist or communist society is firstly the fear that his individual will become subservient to the greater community, and secondly that his ability to do business privately will be curtailed. This contradiction between socialism and capitalism is

one of many, but are important contradictions as they provide the tools for a liberated future in which we can be free both from exploitation and from the tyranny of collectivism.

I suspect utilizing the methods of socialization I detailed earlier may facilitate more widespread use of cooperative enterprises and other more democratic, less hierarchical business practices. However if things go horribly wrong and a monopolist seizes control of society for his profit, at that point it will likely become necessary to coercively topple his power merely to preserve the existence of freedom for others. Such measures should only be taken with extreme caution and be understood as a deliberate attack upon a person's freedom to expand the freedom of others. It should never be understood as a rule.

However, ultimately I cannot provide a clearly defined model of how this libertarian socialist model would look like and in fact I will always refuse to. This is because a liberated future cannot occur along pre-designated designs. Attempting to craft the world exactly how you wish to see it, no matter how "libertarian" your model is, is not only utopic but necessitates the use of coercion and authoritarianism to grant you the perfect model you wished for.

A liberated future, on principle, will be messy. This is what makes it liberated in the first place. There will be many problems to sort out and nothing will be guaranteed. But only in this state will we have the freedom to pursue our wills as we see right in our eyes.

[1] Albert Einstein, *Why Socialism?*