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## THE FALLACY OF COMMUNISM<sup>1</sup>

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It is trite to say that the world is in a state of revolution, but triteness is an evidence of truth. Since the end of the first World War this revolution has beset us with conflicting ideologies and perennial conflict. There was no time between the two great wars when the world was wholly at peace. Fascism developed in Italy, extended to Germany, and tried its arms in Ethiopia and in Spain. The military leaders of Japan encroached upon Manchuria and involved China in a long war. Communism entered the arena and grew to a commanding position in Russia, fostering a policy of expansion which made it a threat to many other countries.

Of these ideologies Communism alone remains secure. Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and the militarism of Japan have been put down by force of arms at great cost in life and resources while our erstwhile allies, the Russians, continue to thwart our efforts toward lasting peace and in doing so arouse our suspicion that the Cominform is no more than the Comintern in disguise and that infiltration of Communism into other countries is still being actively and insidiously promoted.

Under these conditions the security of our American way of life is constantly threatened. England, our natural European ally, has swung to the left in name as well as in fact and we, without acknowledging it in the labels that we show to the world, have exhibited strong leftist tendencies. Does this modern trend mean that we have been softened for ultimate absorption into acknowledged Communism? Does the gradual change indicate a normal shift in human relations toward that end? Must Communism be accepted at last whether some of us like it or not? And finally, are those of us who dislike the implication merely reactionaries? Do we fight the change because we are selfishly interested in our own way of life and unwilling to change for the benefit of mankind, or have we actually in America, rather than only another political ideology, a sound way of living to defend?

This subject may seem a strange choice for a scientist, since it is a living issue in the newspapers and magazines of the modern world, and as far as the methods of the Soviets and of the Communist Party elsewhere are concerned, it is indeed unlikely grist for the mill of science. But the relations of living things, whether other organisms or men, are a normal part of biology and biology can offer sound and pertinent information even on the affairs of men. The variations of political emphasis are immaterial. That communism may be a form of government by communes or the strange Russian autocracy which calls itself truly democratic, that the stated principles of Karl Marx have been badly abused in the development of the communism of today, need not concern us while the central principle remains the regimentation of individuals and the elimination of private capital. From every man according to his ability, to every man according to his need, even though it is a communist credo, is a principle of social living so fine, so simple,

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so basically sound and so amenable to scientific analysis that it is a sufficient point of departure.

That science has not contributed more to the understanding of man and of human society seems incredible. Possibly the failure is the fault of scientists; possibly of those who are more actively interested and more directly involved in the relations of men. In either case we may agree with Dr. Robert R. Williams who says in an article entitled *Natural Science and Social Problems*:<sup>2</sup> "In social problems there is no appeal to natural science, and natural science as such seeks no opportunity to be heard." The entire article is well worth reading for its penetrating analysis of the social ills of mankind and the need for scientific understanding and methods in the study of human relations, but we cannot consider it in detail for our more limited purpose. Let it suffice to note that in it we find encouragement and an intelligent plea for such an application of biological knowledge as is undertaken here.

Every college student who takes an introductory course in biology encounters facts which are significant in his own life and relations but probably few of them carry these facts beyond their immediate presentation in the textbook and laboratory. I wonder how many of their teachers do more? These facts begin with a fundamental property of living substance: organization. When the student makes the acquaintance of the cell he is confronted with a complex structure whose varied parts are beautifully shaped and beautifully coordinated for the maintenance of the entire unit, and there begins the relationship which continues so intricately through the animal kingdom to man himself.

The cell may be self-sufficient, but we see among the colonial Protozoa that these self-sufficient cells may, from some unknown cause, band together to live in groups and in some of these minute colonies we see further possibilities of such a close association. A division of labor occurs. Some cells assume one duty, others another, and the greater unit is maintained and perpetuated through their joint activities. We ascend to the sponges and there find such complexity of specialization that biologists were once in doubt whether they should be considered highly organized protozoan colonies or true multicellular animals, but when we reach the Metazoa there is no question. The existence of a nervous system in these animals knits the many parts of the body so closely together in their cooperative activities that we may even lose sight of the perfection of fitness of their many tissues and organs and organ systems for the special functions that they carry on unless our work deals with such matters. But the individual is still a unit which depends for its normal existence on that perfect organization.

But this is not all. As cells may be either independent individuals or units in a colony, so may multicellular animals, and as cells in the colony or in the multicellular body may be sharply differentiated for a division of labor, so may these more complex animals within their colonies. The marine coelenterates afford many examples of such colonies, structurally continuous yet composed of many individuals whose activities are coordinated for the maintenance and reproduction of the group.

Even though individuals may remain structurally discrete, this principle of organization extends still further into a phylum which stands at one of the pinnacles of evolution—the phylum Arthropoda. Here in the social insects we find it perfectly expressed. It is an object lesson by which we have failed to profit as we should even though comparisons have been drawn between the social organization of the insects and of man often enough from many points of view.

Two orders of insects, the order Isoptera including the termites and the order Hymenoptera including the ants, bees and wasps, contain species with complex

<sup>2</sup>Williams, Robert R., 1948. *Natural Science and Social Problems*, *American Scientist* 36(1), 116-126.

colonial organization. Their colonies differ in complexity and in permanence but at their maximum development they are very significant. In these colonies the individuals are not all alike. Their variation is not merely the variation of complex organisms such as we see in any species nor merely the differences of sex, but involves the existence of different castes, in the honey-bee colony the reproductive queen and drones and the sexually inactive workers, and in some other species a considerable diversity of forms which may bear little resemblance to each other. Individuals of each of these castes are shaped by heredity to carry on special functions and thereby to occupy a special niche in the colony. The coordination of their behavior is as nearly perfect as that of the component parts of the human body. They do not compete for individual advantage. As far as we know they do not quite their jobs nor strike for higher pay. They are utterly dependent on each other and if one caste fails in its duties all are ultimately doomed and the colony perishes. Each individual serves the colony according to its ability and each receives from the common stores whatever it needs.

Just as the varied functions of one body are carried on by its parts, so are the duties of the colony delegated to the special castes, and nowhere more conspicuously than in reproduction. The drone honey-bees have no value save to fecundate the queens. The queen has no value save to deposit eggs and, oddly enough, neither parent has any instinctive urge to care for its own young. Yet the workers, which have no instinct to mate and do not normally deposit eggs, carry on the elaborately specialized tasks of rearing the young.

This is a perfection of communal life which we can well envy. It has been appreciated for many centuries, as the search for a utopian organization of men attests. Plato's *Republic*, in the fourth century before Christ, outlines such a perfect communism. The scriptures emphasize its principles. And finally Sir Thomas More, almost five hundred years ago, coined the word Utopia for his organization of men which should coordinate them as perfectly for the maintenance of society as any social insects.

One fact these thinkers failed to note. Perhaps they should have been biologists first and philosophers later! That fact is simple. The true biological communism of the insect colony is an inherent pattern of life shared by only a few kinds of animals and man is not among them. When we consider the ways of the mammals, of which he is one species, we find that most of them are solitary, a term which means to the biologist only that the individual is a self-maintaining unit on which the species is based. Each individual defends himself and finds his own food and such shelter as he may need. He has only one need for association with others of his kind—the need for a mate when the second great urge of life is active. All individuals may mate and beget young and in the resulting family the intensely selfish motivation of their lives is at least temporarily modified.

This is the pattern of human life. Every human being is equipped by heredity with essentially the same structure as every other, barring the differences of sex. In the natural state each is self-sufficient and his motivation leads him to seek his own welfare first. Only in his family life is that motivation secondary. There nature has guaranteed the future of the species by shaping him to place the welfare of his dependents often ahead of his own. And since the long infancy of human beings results in the overlapping of a natural succession of children, the family becomes very nearly a lifelong preoccupation.

But even among the mammals a strongly gregarious tendency may develop. Man shares that tendency to a high degree and since he is an intelligent tool-making creature his association paves the way for a division of labor far more complex than that of any social insect and thus he has arrived at his intricate social way of life. But his division of labor is based primarily on special training. He remains a versatile being who may do many tasks well and who can become

discontented with his job or with his reward. To satisfy the inherent capacities which they do not satisfy he may want more than he can earn and in his search for satisfaction the natural allegiance to others which is basically expressed in his family may extend readily to his trade union, his village or his country, since their welfare and their security affect his own.

And man is pugnacious. The safety of the solitary animal demands that he be able to protect himself, but by some marvel of evolution that instinct has been directed in the social insects almost wholly to the defense of the colony. In man it is not so. He may fight his neighbor, he may fight for his union, and occasionally he fights magnificent wars, but the chip is still on his own shoulder whether it reveals itself in physical violence or in selfish diplomacy.

For these reasons the structure of human society rests on a foundation of quicksand. They explain our groping through the centuries for more nearly perfect relations among men. They explain the makeshifts and changes which promise so much and leave us in the end much as we were before. Citing Williams again, "we are doing no worse than in Roman times, merely no better." Man is simply not an inherently social animal and too many men fail to appreciate how they must behave as individuals to maintain a smoothly working society. They must be coerced by customs and laws and their inherent nature rebels at the coercion.

How, under such conditions, can man be communistic? Sir Thomas More regarded private property as the chief barrier to the attainment of his Utopia, as the basic reason for all of the lawless tendencies of men. He proposed a completely communal ownership of consumer's goods. Houses were not to be locked and freedom of entry was to be permitted. Every man might go to the centers of supply for the group and help himself to what he needed without making a direct return. The population was to eat in common dining halls in which the work was to be shared in rotation. Every human being was to work as long as he was able and then to continue into a happy and abundant old age. And his roseate plan extended into every detail of organization, freeing men from the established customs of his day as far as More could make the shift in his own mind.

It is a beautiful dream but we are still far from the utopian state for the simple reason that we are not utopian beings. Each of us is plagued by that versatility of the solitary animal. We conform to the social pattern by choosing a vocation and training ourselves to work at it, but once we have settled down to the routine of the job our unsatisfied urges clamor for expression, since few of us can express ourselves fully in one occupation. We need recreation, we cultivate hobbies, we seek entertainment which is usually a vicarious outlet for unfulfilled desires. Instead of finding the satisfaction of our biological needs adequate we work for the money and the leisure to secure in our avocations the expression of our latent capacities. And the individualism, or more bluntly the selfishness, of the solitary animal would result in our taking what we want far more freely than we do if the pressing need for restriction had not long ago imposed upon us the ethics and customs and laws that keep us within reasonable bounds of respect for the rights of others.

In the inherently communistic societies of insects these pressures are not felt. The individual is fitted by heredity for the performance of special tasks. Its structural adaptations and its mental patterns shape its course of life and it expresses its possibilities fully in the duties which it performs. It is not troubled by allegiance to its family, for even the process of reproduction is communal. The colony transcends the family and the individual as the multicellular body transcends the organs and tissues and cells which compose it. Both are maintained by the spontaneous coordinated activities of their subordinate parts and all of those parts share in the prosperity of the unit which they maintain. The

individual does not have unexpressed capacities to be satisfied, it need not interfere with the rights of others, and no government is needed to keep it in line with the common good.

Man, however, probably found in his initial division of labor intensely personal advantages. His heritage fitted him to do certain tasks better and more easily than others and he could devote himself more fully and more happily to the exercise of his own special aptitudes by exchanging his efforts for the products of similar specialization in others. If social life could have remained such a simple barter it might have greater possibilities of attaining communistic perfection, but unfortunately it could not. Our tool-making has led us into an extremely complex pattern of specialization in which the activities of men are often remote from basic needs and their desires often far surpass their productive capacities. Our intelligence, too, enables us to assess future values which cannot bring the immediate returns needed by individuals and so we need some planning and coordination and regulation for the ultimate good of the group. We secure these results by governing bodies of one kind or another and in this factor also our society draws away from true communism.

The desires of the individual, to be satisfied largely by the acquisition of property, and his need for direction, have led to the hierarchy of private and political managements expressed on the one hand in our capitalistic industrial system and on the other in our increasingly complex governments. Both have led to abuses and from both have come our communistic ideas and experiments, which should ideally lead to common ownership of all goods but those most intimately personal and to a perfect coordination of individuals which would result in anarchy because governments would no longer be needed. That end would be the final degree of social perfection, for true communism is nothing less.

But we must not forget the mold in which we are cast. Man, the solitary animal, does not spontaneously fit into a given niche in the social order. He works to satisfy his needs and his desires, and since they are in many cases greater than the value of his work to others, he may be discontented with his lot. He is shaped like other men and as a result he finds it difficult to understand why his rewards are less. Here is the source of more discontent and of antagonism to others as well. If his intelligence is high he may adjust himself happily to his lot but human intelligence varies and by the normal law of variation it is average or less in a majority of the population and as a result many men are discontented with the existing order and desirous of change. Their natural allegiance to family and to the smaller groups with which their own welfare is obviously linked enables them to use the power of numbers through pressure groups of all kinds to secure what they want for themselves and their dependents. The question of the greatest good for the greatest number does not necessarily enter. Instead society struggles along through a balance of power between labor and capital, between political parties and between national governments and alliances.

Political communism begins with the sound premise that these frictions should be eliminated. First, the accumulation of wealth must be prevented. Private capital must go. The government becomes ostensibly the people's government, its property is therefore theirs, and we are on the road to Utopia. For if the worker cannot be exploited by the capitalist there can be no abuse of individual privilege. In transition to anarchy some government is necessary and capital is always needed even though it is government capital, but if it is the people's own government that holds the power, then each man has a share in its efforts and in its gains and the abuses of the past are at an end.

Men worked toward this ideal through the evolution of their governments in the past. At first government depended on the might of a ruler and the inarticulate and illiterate masses submitted because they must. Then leaders arose

among them and over the route of the Magna Charta the common man gained some of the rights that he deserved and finally arrived at the democratic form of government so well developed in Switzerland and in the United States. Here every man who votes has a voice in the regulation of his own social group.

But the vote of the moron unfortunately carries the same weight as that of an intelligent man and the ruling majority may include far more men who are incapable of judging the issues at stake than intelligent voters simply because of the normal variation of mental capacity. And those less intelligent citizens are the ones most concerned with bettering their own lot and far less with their obligation to society. Any persuasive leader or attractive ideology that can promise them a more abundant life for less effort will gain their support. Hitler and Mussolini and the Russian leaders were persuasive and Fascism, Nazism and Communism appealed strongly to this class, for it has always been true that the support of an unthinking horde is needed to establish such revolutionary governments. The leaders of these movements are like other men. We have no reason to suppose that they are ideally interested in the welfare of their peoples to the exclusion of personal ambition and the thirst for power which are human expressions of the intense selfishness of the solitary animal. Enough of the people vote the new regime into power but only to find, tragically, that they have voted themselves into impotence and have reverted to a despotism probably little less than those which their ancestors fought to overthrow.

And so political communism is fallacious. Communal enterprises have worked on a small scale for fairly long periods, as in the Amana Society of Iowa, but Communism as we see it expressed today appears to be a bastard of the Fascist idea, the doctrines of Karl Marx, democratic principles of organization and dictatorial rule which seems removed only in outward form from actual despotism. But in any form communism is fallacious because of the biological nature of man. His retention of the characteristics of the solitary animals makes him an individualist. He demands self-expression. Yet he is an intelligent creature on the whole, who can see the value of the division of labor in his society. If he were so shaped that every man could spontaneously subordinate himself to the social group he might attain the semblance of communistic perfection but his selfish impulses are far more deeply rooted in his remote animal ancestry than his distinctively human qualities, and the more deeply rooted a tendency is in the evolution of an animal, the more spontaneously it is expressed. Perhaps, in the long course of our future evolution, the human species may become more fundamentally social. No evidence of such a trend can be seen at present, however, and certainly for a long time to come we must deal with man as he is today. What he needs for maximum social success is evidently a system of regulation which will guarantee him the necessities of life, enough opportunity for self expression to make him a happy contributing member of society and enough regimentation to bring this result as fully as possible to all men. But that is what the democracies have given him with a very reasonable degree of success, while Communism has accomplished far more in coercive regimentation than in opportunities for self expression.

Whatever man may do, since he is an organism, has a biological basis. His society is no exception. Because of this foundation man cannot be truly communistic. Any movement masquerading under that term is a wolf in sheep's clothing, for it promises what cannot be realized. The great theorists may have been honest in their ideals, but their biology was unsound. In the militant modern Communists we cannot even be sure of honest ideals, for the class antagonism that they preach is anything but true communism. But we are still fortunate in America, for the same biological foundation shows that our pride in our country is not based merely on patriotism nor on a selfish desire to perpetuate our own

comfortable way of life but on the fact that it is ultimately, biologically, a superb if imperfect example of the successful adjustment of solitary man to social living. We may support it as militantly as need be in all confidence that it is a sound way to the realization of the ultimate destiny of man, whether that destiny may be a true communism or merely a more effective compromise between human beings with the same inherent nature as those of today and the requirements of a sound social organization. More coined the term Utopia to designate a nonexistent land. It is still nonexistent. In spite of the lavish promises of Communism it cannot be created by deliberate planning. It is an inherent pattern of life developed in the social insects as the result of a long course of evolution which took place while our own species evolved toward a very different end. And evolution is immune from ideological and legislative influences.

Political communism can appeal strongly to men of limited intelligence since it promises them what they cannot earn for themselves. Through the power of franchise, if not of arms, they may force it upon increasing numbers of men, but the very need for force is a contradiction of true communism and an indictment of the existing political ideology. At the best it can only prolong our struggle for friendly cooperation among nations. At the worst it can plunge the world into a despotism such as men struggled for centuries to overthrow. For these reasons, but basically and insidiously because it is a contradiction of the inherent biological nature of men, the whole fabric of political communism is fallacious.

Until more men can understand the fundamental nature of this fallacy the threat hangs over us. And the hope that enough men can attain that understanding may itself be a utopian dream.