

# How the “Greater Good” Is Used as a Tool of Social Control

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by [Academy of Ideas](#)

September 22, 2020

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**The following is a transcript of this video.**

*“The great citizens of a country are not those who bend the knee before authority but rather those who, against authority if need be, are adamant as to the honor and freedom of that country.”*

*Albert Camus, Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*

Instead of respect for reason, open dialogue, freedom of speech and individual and property rights, political systems across the world are becoming increasingly authoritarian. Deceptions and lies, manipulation and propaganda, fear-mongering and psychological operations are all being used to justify political actions and policies that destroy life. How do politicians continue to convince the public to do away with their freedoms in favour of heavy-handed government control? Why are so few people defending liberty when a world absent of

it is a world of mass suffering? In this video we are going to examine these questions.

*"...if freedom is regressing today throughout such a large part of the world, this is probably because the devices for enslavement have never been so cynically chosen or so effective, but also because her real defenders, through fatigue, through despair, or through a false idea of strategy and efficiency, have turned away from her."*

*Albert Camus, Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*

It is often said that one cannot solve a problem if one is not even cognizant of it, and herein lies one of the reasons freedom is retreating so rapidly from our world. Many people still believe themselves to be free and as Goethe wrote: *"None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free."* Those who believe themselves to be free disregard the fact that to be governed in the modern world is to be

*"...watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured [and] commanded, by beings who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so."*

*Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*

Accepting our lack of freedom is a necessary step to counteract this undesirable condition. For so long as we remain in denial of the chains of servitude that are upon us, we will do nothing to cast them aside. But when we acknowledge our chains we can begin to push back against them and in the process contribute to the creation of a better world, or as Camus noted:

*"The task of men...is not to desert historical struggles nor to*

*serve the cruel and inhuman elements in those struggles. It is rather to remain what they are, to help man against what is oppressing him, to favor freedom against the fatalities that close in upon it...Man's greatness...lies in his decision to be greater than his condition. And if his condition is unjust, he has only one way of overcoming it, which is to be just himself."*

*Albert Camus, Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*

But widespread ignorance as to the lack of freedom is not the only reason why freedom is retreating from the world. Rather, there is also an idea that has infected many minds and this idea, if not defeated, could prove to be the kiss of death for freedom in our generation. This idea is promoted by most politicians, indoctrinated into the youth at school and via popular culture, and championed by the vast majority of talking heads in the mainstream media. This idea is collectivism. To understand what collectivism is we must consider the question: "Does the individual exist for the sake of society? Or does society exist for the sake of individuals?" Those who adhere to collectivism believe that the individual exists for the sake of society and therefore that:

*...the individual has to subordinate himself to, and conduct himself for, the benefit of society and to sacrifice his selfish private interests to the common good."*

*Ludwig von Mises, Epistemological Problems of Economics*

This collectivist mindset is foundational to communism, fascism and socialism: "*The common good before the individual good.*" proclaimed one collectivism's most infamous adherents. (Adolf Hitler) The doctrine of collectivism has been put into practice by many dictators such as Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Pol Pot and Mao. Death, destruction and

suffering on a mass scale was the end-result in each case.

How does placing the good of society above the good of the individual tend toward such unfortunate outcomes? Is it not a display of compassion to sacrifice our personal interests for the greater good of our society? At first glance collectivism may seem to be a virtuous position to take, but on closer investigation a philosophical error called the fallacy of misplaced concreteness corrupts the practical application of this ideology. The fallacy of misplaced concreteness occurs when one treats what is merely an abstraction as an entity that exists in the real world. Collectivism, in claiming the individual must sacrifice his or her private interests for the sake of society, takes what is merely a concept – “society” – and treats such a concept as if it had a concrete existence, but as Jung points out:

*““Society is nothing more than a term, a concept for the symbiosis of a group of human beings. A concept is not a carrier of life.”*

*Carl Jung, Volume 15 Practice of Psychotherapy*

In contrast to the individual that has a real existence in the world, society is an abstraction used to represent an ever-changing collection of individuals living and interacting in proximity. As far and as wide as one looks, one will never find a concrete entity called society that we can point to and identify in the manner analogous to how we can identify an individual.

*“Society does not exist apart from the thoughts and actions of people. It does not have “interests” and does not aim at anything. The same is valid for all other collectives.”*

*Ludwig von Mises, The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*

*Or as Jung put it:*

*“. . .the “nation” (like the “State”) is a personified concept ...The nation has no life of its own apart from the individual, and is therefore not an end in itself... All life is individual life, in which alone the ultimate meaning is to be found.*

*Carl Jung, The Swiss Line in the European Spectrum*

As a society is a concept it cannot think, act, speak or choose, and therefore, an individual, or group of individuals, must be granted the ability to define the so-called societal greater good and then granted the power to force individuals to act in service of this good. Since the dawn of civilization, it has been ruling classes who anoint themselves the arbiters of the greater good, and so not surprisingly the greater good, more often than not, merely amounts to the good of those in power, or as the 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologist Nathaniel Branden wrote:

*“With such [collectivist] systems, the individual has always been a victim, twisted against him-or-her-self and commanded to be “unselfish” in sacrificial service to some allegedly higher value called God or pharaoh or emperor or king or society or the state or the race or the proletariat – or the cosmos. It is a strange paradox of our history that this doctrine – which tells us that we are to regard ourselves, in effect, as sacrificial animals – has been generally accepted as a doctrine representing benevolence and love for humankind. From the first individual...who was sacrificed on an altar for the good of the tribe, to the heretics and dissenters burned at the stake for the good of the populace or the glory of God, to the millions exterminated in...slave-labor camps for the good of the race or of the proletariat, it is this [collectivist] morality that has served as justification for every dictatorship and every atrocity, past or present.”*

*Nathaniel Branden, The Psychology of Romantic Love*

The philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a staunch collectivist who exerted a profound influence on the ideas of Karl Marx, promoted collectivisms' negation of the individual with the following words:

*"A single person, I need hardly say, is something subordinate, and as such he must dedicate himself to the ethical whole. Hence, if the state claims life, the individual must surrender it...All the worth which the human being possesses...he possesses only through the State."*

*Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right*

Contrary to the philosophical trickery promoted by collectivism, neither the "greater good" of society nor the state nor any other concept used to describe a symbiosis of human beings is superior to flesh-and-blood individuals, whose spontaneous actions are the real creative and generative force in the world. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher Auberon Herbert wrote,

*"The individual is king, and all other things exist for the service of the king."*

*Auberon Herbert, Lost in the Region of Phrases*

Or as he further explained:

*"[The individual] is included in many wholes – his school, his college, his club, his profession, his town or county, his church, his political party, his nation...but he is always greater than them all...All these various wholes, without any exception...exist for the sake of the individual. They exist to do his service; they exist for his profit and use."*

*Auberon Herbert, Lost in the Region of Phrases*

The conviction that “the individual is king” informed the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries and led to a rapid awakening to the vital connection between freedom and the individual rights of life, liberty, and property. Generally speaking, individual rights specify that:

*“The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily or mental and spiritual.”*

*John Stuart Mill, On Liberty*

Those who support individual rights are not motivated by an insensitivity to the plight and suffering of others, but rather by the recognition that in granting each of us the freedom to pursue our own good, social cooperation, the division of labour and a prosperous society emerge in a bottom-up manner and thus the ability to help others also improves. For without the wealth generating mechanism of freedom all the good intentions in the world will not clothe, house and feed the poor. Collectivists claim the opposite. An emphasis on the rights of the individual, they suggest, rather than on the greater good, tends to inhibit social cooperation and promote an atomized population in which every man and woman is an island left to fend for themselves. But here collectivists have it backwards. We are naturally social animals and so the atomization of individuals only results when a government, under the guise of the “greater good”, is granted the power to enforce social isolation or else to sow the seeds of fear and suspicion amongst friends and neighbours. In his classic study of 20<sup>th</sup> century collectivist

political systems, the medical doctor Joost Meerloo noted that

*"...behind the iron curtain the most prominent complaint in the totalitarian system was the feeling of mental isolation. The individual feels alone and continually on the alert. There is only mutual suspicion."*

*Joost Meerloo, The Rape of the Mind*

Carl Jung, who lived through the totalitarianism which swept across mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, likewise observed:

*"The mass State has no intention of promoting mutual understanding and the relationship of man to man; it strives...for atomization, for the psychic isolation of the individual."*

*Carl Jung*

The best way to promote social cooperation and a prosperous society is not through top-down centralized control, but to remove the clamps of control and to let individuals make their own choices with respect to their own lives. And this is what a society structured on individual rights accomplishes. Live and let live, as the age-old adage puts it. Or as David Kelley explains:

*"[Individual rights] leave individuals responsible for living their own lives and meeting their own needs, and they provide the freedom to carry out those responsibilities. Individuals are free to act on the basis of their own judgment, to pursue their own ends, and to use and dispose of the material resources they have acquired by their efforts. Those rights reflect the assumption that individuals are ends in themselves, who may not be used against their will for social purposes."*

*David Kelley, A Life of One's Own: Individual Rights and the*



## *Welfare State*

As individual rights leave us free to pursue our own good in our own way so long as we do not aggress upon the person or property of others, it follows that each of us has the right to freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of association and assembly, the right to property and bodily autonomy, and the right to work and retain the fruits of our labor.

*"Man is absolute lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest, and subject to nobody." (Locke)*

*John Locke, Second Treatise*

Individual rights are universal in that they apply to all human beings everywhere:

*"...rights exist regardless of whether they are implemented in the legal constitution of a given country."*

*David Kelley, A Life of One's Own: Individual Rights and the Welfare State*

And they are inalienable in that they cannot be given or taken away by any man, government, or institution.

*"A man's natural rights are his own, against the whole world; and any infringement of them is equally a crime...whether committed by one man, calling himself a robber...or by millions, calling themselves a government."*

*Lysander Spooner, No Treason The Constitution of No Authority*

When a society and the judicial system are predicated on a deep respect for and commitment to individual rights, the individual is king and therefore the individual is free. But

when individual rights are transgressed under the pretext of public safety or the “greater good”, the individual turns into mere political property which any mob or government or institution in power can oppress, detain, or eliminate if deemed necessary. As Lysander Spooner explained:

*“...there is no difference...between political and chattel slavery. The former, no less than the latter, denies a man’s ownership of himself and the products of his labor; and asserts that other men may own him, and dispose of him and his property, for their uses, and at their pleasure.”*

*Lysander Spooner, No Treason The Constitution of No Authority*

In the modern world we are moving ever closer to a widespread acceptance of collectivism and thus the condition of political slavery to which Spooner alludes. At times such as these it is useful to recognize that while the majority are complicit in their servitude, in standing on the side of freedom, we unite ourselves in spirit with all other guardians of freedom across the globe.

*“I rebel – therefore we exist.”*

*Albert Camus, The Rebel*

Or as Camus Further wrote:

*“Every insubordinate person, when he rises up against oppression, reaffirms thereby the solidarity of all men.” (Camus)*