

# Live & Let Live: The Beauty of Individuality

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⌚ [www.thelastbastille.com/2012/10/06/live-and-let-live-the-beauty-of-individuality/](http://www.thelastbastille.com/2012/10/06/live-and-let-live-the-beauty-of-individuality/)

**1/15/16 UPDATE: In learning more about individualism, I realized this article really needed a serious overhaul. Entire paragraphs have been deleted and brand new ones added, with only a few elements kept from the original version. I sincerely hope this revision is more helpful to you all.**

*"I'm convinced at a fundamental level of the power of the individual...we do ten thousand things with ten thousand others, but rarely pause to give a moment's credit to the power of the individual. Why is that? Why do we feel so powerless alone? Why do we let this fear hold us down when history has repeatedly shown us that it is the individual, the lone voice in the wilderness, who lets a pebble fall from his hand and starts the avalanche of change?"*

– [The Anti-Terrorist](#)

Etymologically, libertarians were known as the advocates of free will, which is not a bad association for modern contemporary ones to have. Individualists typically revere free will by assuming that each man chooses his own destiny, regardless of collective norms. My thoughts and feelings are mine alone, and no one else's. Consequently, I'm absolutely responsible for what I think and feel; nobody can "make" me feel anything or think "for" me. This burden is solely mine to bear, just as yours are your own responsibility.

TJ Kirk has claimed that individualism is foolish because self-sufficiency contradicts labor specialization; I fail to see how voluntary trade proves the existence of a collective hivemind. Robert Heinlein's fictional character, [Professor Bernando de la Paz](#), laid it out all quite well:



*"A rational anarchist believes that concepts such as 'state' and 'society' and 'government' have no existence save as physically exemplified in the acts of self-responsible individuals. He believes that it is impossible to shift blame, share blame, distribute blame...as blame, guilt, responsibility are matters taking place inside human beings singly and nowhere else. But being rational, he knows that not all individuals hold his evaluations, so he tries to live perfectly in an imperfect world...aware that his effort will be less than perfect yet undismayed by self-knowledge of self-failure."*

Speaking of existentiality, forests do not exist, but trees do. "Society" is equivalent to a forest, because only individuals have free will. Nobody can speak for "society" because it doesn't exist, hence why I have begun shifting my own language away from using phrases like "stateless society," "truly free society," and most notoriously, "We the People." Collective unconsciousness has not been proven to exist, despite

baseless assertions to the contrary.

What is collectivism, though? [G. Edward Griffin defined it thusly](#):

*“Collectivism is the concept that the group is more important than the individual and that government is justified in any act so long as it is claimed to be for the greater good of the greater number. That is the foundation upon which the Federal Reserve is built and it is the foundation for literally every other modern assault against our liberty. Collectivism is the enemy of freedom, and we must launch a pro-active crusade against it. Not to do so is to surrender without a fight.”*

Most statism is collectivistic; [nationalistic fervor is routinely used to justify war, even guerrilla war](#), but never to avoid it. Socializing costs is a form of collectivism, regardless of whether the subject matter involves [retirement savings, medical insurance](#), or [central banking](#). Class warfare is another form of collectivism that [balkanizes](#) individuals against each other according to superficial criteria; it also encourages special interests to violate the non-aggression principle by attempting to vie for control of public policy.

Collective trends and even fads are not necessarily bad, but rather the problem is [identity politics](#) itself. Nearly all social “movements” are designed to fail simply because they don’t account for individuality. What is it with this “we” shit, anyway? Probably a good way to break this bad habit is to throw a dollar into a jar every time you use a first-person collective pronoun, such as “us,” “our,” and “we.”

From my earliest memories, I knew I was noticeably different from my [family of origin](#). I always refused to ask permission to do anything I wanted, and subsequently I got into trouble frequently for doing so, regardless of whether my actions harmed someone else or not. Their disapproval and ridicule of me for being a “[black sheep](#)” was something I’d rather do without, and they wondered out loud, during my teenage years, why I was so withdrawn from them.

If I had been hit with a newspaper for disobedience as part of my dog-training, then at least my human dignity would have been respected. I didn’t have the courage to tell them back then that I resented their mistreatment of me, that I had been routinely dispensed with by them simply because I refused to be what they wanted me to become, which was a reflection of themselves. Because of this, I gradually became a [grey man](#) in order to protect myself from both my parents and siblings alike.

Needless to say, I departed from my family of origin as soon as I could, and I have never looked back, because they truly never cared for me at all, given that I steadfastly refused to be assimilated into their collective, as if I were a mindless drone. Perhaps this is why I have remained an individualist for over a decade now, as well as why [Henry Thoreau’s experiment of living alone in the woods](#) resonated with me so strongly.

Unfortunately, group-think amongst most political dissidents seems to have been borrowed from my family of origin. [Reformism](#), as a failed political strategy, truly demonstrates the opportunity costs involved in begging the State for undue favors. I am also rather skeptical of the faith placed in the [theory of critical mass](#), as well as the [hundredth monkey effect](#), by others within the [alternative media](#), as some sort of panacea.

Everything I've done to free myself has been done either alone, or in concert with other individuals through fluid peer-to-peer relationships. Formally "organized" groups are much too top heavy in practice, and in fact, impose drastic opportunity costs upon its membership. For example, think of the hassles involved in trying to get a bunch of people to attend [a public meeting](#), much less anything else more intensive or serious that requires actual work.

[Leaderless resistance](#) that operates on the principle of [mutual aid](#) is, I think, the best approach to "organizing" libertarians and other individuals, whether it be a business cooperative or a [freedom cell](#), such as a [security team](#). "Groups" get infiltrated – interpersonal relationships, however, are really only susceptible to blackmail and extortion, for the most part. This makes them noticeably harder to penetrate and disrupt.

The nice thing about Stefan Molyneux's [Against Me argument](#) is that it removes excuses for tyranny by personalizing the institutionalized government coercion between individuals. This, and other ways of perceiving the world through the lens of [methodological individualism](#), accurately simplifies one's perception of reality itself. Relationships and personal integrity are what matter, *not* collectivistic ideologies and serving the "common good." In other words, it's not the "left" versus the "right"; it's the State versus you.

What I desire, more than anything, is [liberty](#). In order to have that, I must be able to use my own faculties independent of external control. As such, the principle of [laissez-faire](#), to live and let live, is a necessary guiding light that respects individual autonomy; without that, life is just not worth living.