

THE CREATIVE AND THE POSSESSIVE IMPULSES

The greater part of human impulses may be divided into two classes, those which are possessive and those which are constructive or creative. Social institutions are the garments or embodiments of impulses, and may be classified roughly according to the impulses which they embody. Property is the direct expression of possessiveness; science and art are among the most direct expressions of creativeness. Possessiveness is either defensive or aggressive; it seeks either to retain against a robber, or to acquire from a present holder. In either case an attitude of hostility toward others is of its essence. It would be a mistake to suppose that defensive possessiveness is always justifiable, while the aggressive kind is always blame-worthy; where there is great injustice in the *status quo*, the exact opposite may be the case, and ordinarily neither is justifiable. . .

The creative impulses, unlike those that are possessive,

are directed to ends in which one man's gain is not another man's loss. The man who makes a scientific discovery or writes a poem is enriching others at the same time as himself. Any increase in knowledge or good-will is a gain to all who are affected by it, not only to the actual possessor. Those who feel the joy of life are a happiness to others as well as to themselves. Force cannot create such things, though it can destroy them; no principle of distributive justice applies to them, since the gain of each is the gain of all. For these reasons, the creative part of a man's activity ought to be as free as possible from all public control, in order that it may remain spontaneous and full of vigour. The only function of the state in regard to this part of the individual life should be to do everything possible toward providing outlets and opportunities.

— *Bertrand Russell in Political Ideals.*