

The Industrial Radical

A Quarterly Publication of the MOLINARI INSTITUTE

Volume I, Number 2

Liberty the Mother not the Daughter of Order

Winter 2013

THE PROS AND CONS OF HUGO CHÁVEZ AND NOAM CHOMSKY



ANARCHIST LESSONS FROM *STAR WARS*

Editor: Roderick T. Long
Associate Editor: Charles W. Johnson
Publisher: The Molinari Institute

Not to Praise, But to Bury Him by Kevin A. Carson	1
Chomsky's Augustinian Anarchism by Roderick T. Long	3
It's a Start ... by B-psycho	6
Nobody's Serious About "Immigration Reform" ... by Thomas L. Knapp	7
Gun Control: Who Gets Control? by Darian Worden	8
Beyond Government by Roderick T. Long	9
Abolish the Police by Anthony Gregory	10
The Root Is Power by Kevin A. Carson	15
Paths to Liberation by Anna Morgenstern	17

ANARCHIST PERSPECTIVES ON *STAR WARS*

Disney's Lucasfilm Buyout: Fighting Power with Power by Kevin A. Carson	19
Remembering Corporate Liberalism by Roderick T. Long	20
How <i>Star Wars</i> Should Have Ended: Reflections on Taste, the Expanded Universe, and Radical Politics by William Gillis	22

EXPLAINING LEFT-LIBERTARIANISM

The Distinctiveness of Left-Libertarianism by Gary Chartier	27
The Conflation Trap by Roderick T. Long	31
The Bold and the Desirable: A Prophecy and a Proposal by Charles Johnson	34
Beyond Bossism by Gary Chartier	37
Left-Libertarianism: No Master, No Bosses by Kevin A. Carson	39
Photos from Recent Molinari Events	44

The Industrial Radical is devoted to radical libertarian political and social analysis in the tradition of Benjamin Tucker's 1881-1908 *Liberty*, Emma Goldman's 1906-1917 *Mother Earth*, and Murray Rothbard's 1965-1968 *Left & Right*.

The title "Industrial Radical" honors the libertarian and individualist anarchist thinkers and activists of the 19th century, who were "industrial" in the sense of championing what they called the industrial mode of social organization, based on voluntary cooperation and mutual benefit, over the militant mode, based on hierarchy, regimentation, and violence; and who were "radical" in the sense of recognising that social problems are embedded in sustaining networks of institutions and practices, and so can be addressed only via thoroughgoing social change. Their approach informs our vision.

Subscribe to *The Industrial Radical*

For a year's subscription (four issues), send a check for \$25 U.S., payable to **The Molinari Institute**, to:

The Molinari Institute

402 Martin Ave.

Auburn, Alabama 36830 U.S.A

or pay online: praxeology.net/molinari-agera.htm

cover pic: *Les Armées de l'Air*, by A. Robida;
illustration for Pierre Giffard's *La Guerre Infernale*, 1908 (public domain)

Not to Praise, But to Bury Him

Kevin A. Carson

[10 March 2013, C4SS]

Since Hugo Chávez's death last week, predictably, the cable news talking head shows and the editorial pages of the major newspapers of record have been full of head-shaking about the dictatorial nature of his regime.

To be sure, the Chávez regime was dictatorial. But another thing is equally sure: The U.S. hates dictators, and the official media vociferously condemn them, only when they don't toe Washington's line.

Here's the plain truth of the matter: The United States has probably installed more puppet dictators in the period since WWII than any other Empire in history. And it played a major role, in particular, in installing dictators that it only noticed were dictatorial when they stopped taking orders from Washington and became an inconvenience. A good example is Saddam Hussein. The CIA backed the 1968 al-Bakr coup that installed Saddam's wing of the Baath party in power. The United States tacitly endorsed Saddam's invasion of Iran (you know, that "launched aggressive wars against his neighbors" thing Bush later talked about). The Reagan administration provided Saddam with military intelligence and sold him arms via third-country intermediaries. The Commerce Department licensed the sale of anthrax, as well as insecticides which could be converted into nerve agents. I'm sure you've heard the old joke: How did the US government know Saddam had weapons of mass destruction? They'd saved the receipts.

If the US government was providing military advisers and weapons to Hell, and the Devil suddenly stopped doing what he was told by Washington, you can be sure the next day a Presidential Press Secretary would be up behind the podium wringing his hands over all the awful, awful things they'd just discovered were going on in the Infernal Kingdom. And then a thirty-year-old photo would surface of Don Rumsfeld shaking hands with Satan.

And here's another thing: The U.S. government is pretty good at manufacturing left-wing pariah regimes. It hastens the slide toward totalitarianism within disfavored countries by giving them a foreign enemy. Not only was Castro not a Marxist-Leninist, but he purged communists after his movement took

power. He was a left-wing nationalist caudillo whose economic model would've likely left market and cooperativist elements in place indefinitely. He gravitated toward the Soviet Union and proclaimed himself a Marxist-Leninist pretty much entirely because of the US blockade, invasion and assassination attempts, and because of the global bipolar superpower dynamic.

The same is likely true of the extent of Hugo Chávez's gravitation toward Castro, although I think from the very beginning he probably had a much larger innate tendency toward self-aggrandizement and personality cult than Castro.

Let's be honest about something else, shall we? Chávez was no more authoritarian than anyone Washington would likely have replaced him with. Had the CIA been successful in removing him from power, you can bet your bottom dollar that labor organizers would have been liquidated by the secret police and all the land distributed to land-poor and landless peasants under Chávez's land reform program incorporated back into the giant latifundia which once held much of Venezuela's arable land out of cultivation.

And if their attitude toward Pinochet is any indication, the people on the Right who talk the most about "free markets" and condemn Chávez for his economic policies would be solemnly proclaiming that Pinochet II in Caracas, while a political authoritarian, was "economically libertarian."

Horse hockey! Imprisoning, torturing, murdering and disappearing union organizers, and leaving them in ditches with their faces hacked off, is not "economically libertarian." Actively helping neo-feudal latifundistas to enclose millions of hectares of vacant and unimproved land out of use while neighboring landless peasants work their land as farm laborers is not "economically libertarian." Auctioning off state assets built at taxpayer expense in under-the-table sweetheart deals with transnational capital is not "economically libertarian." Ratifying protectionist "intellectual property" accords that play a central role in putting the entire planet under corporate lockdown is not "economically libertarian."

No doubt the Pinochet knockoff who replaced Chávez would've talked a lot about "market reform" and made nice with some starry-eyed delegations from the University of Chicago. And he'd probably have turned Caracas into a glass tower showcase like Singapore. But his policies would have been, not "free market" reform, but actively intervening in the

economy on behalf of corporations, plutocrats and landlords at the expense of workers and peasants.

Intervening in the economy to increase the bargaining power of capital by imprisoning and murdering labor's bargaining agents, and to maximize the returns on capital, is no more "economically libertarian" than the reverse.

Chávez was a thug and a caudillo – a strongman. But his base of power – as with Julius Caesar and the proletarians of Rome – depended on benefiting the poorest of the poor in Venezuela. And it wasn't his being a dictator as such, or intervening in the economy as such, that was the unforgivable crime in Washington's eyes. The unforgivable crime, for Washington, was that Chávez used his dictatorial power on behalf of the poor instead of in service to the usual suspects: the landed and capitalist interests normally promoted by Washington's puppet dictators.

But even if his lust for power and adulation led him to benefit the poor for a change, the fact remains that Chávez was a thug. Whatever good was done for those living in the slums of Caracas came at the expense of an entire society increasingly centered on his personality cult, and of hellish prisons full of dissidents from the genuine Left and working class movement.

Chávez, like Caesar, improved the material conditions of the dispossessed in ways they wouldn't otherwise under the same broad conditions of power. But he didn't change the fundamental structure of power. While Chávez made the landless peasants and the denizens of Caracas's slums considerably better off than they would've been under the kind of fake "free market" regime Bush or Obama would install, they remained worse off than they would be in a society where economic justice was achieved by horizontal self-organization and voluntary cooperation among the people themselves.

The very people most active in pursuing such a vision of self-organized liberation were actively thwarted by Chávez – many of them rotting away in his prisons. As I learned from C4SS comrade Charles Johnson, Chávez suppressed the independent labor movement, put Bolivarian cronies in charge of yellow-dog unions in nationalized industries, and "employ[ed] strike-breaking tactics that would have made Frick proud." And his massive distribution of oil revenue to the urban poor came from an oil industry dependent on "constant campaigns of state

dispossession and police violence against indigenous communities in oil-rich regions."

Chávez's prisons are full of people who would achieve genuine social justice through self-organization and popular empowerment, rather than build a house of cards atop an unsustainable oil boom and the personality cult of one man. As the *El Libertario* collective pointed out, the very events since

Chávez's death illustrate just how fragile and unsustainable a social model centered on one man was.¹ "The myth of redemption of the poor through the sharing of oil revenues, a popular religion with political characteristics around his person, [and] the devastation of the autonomy of social movements in Venezuela"²

To the extent that Chávez genuinely helped the landless peasants and the urban lumpenproletariat, he did so, not by abolishing the preexisting forms of coercive state-enforced monopoly on which the rents of capital and land depended, but through counter-coercion.

In the words of Venezuelan anarchist Rafael Uzcátegui, editor of the *El Libertario* newspaper in Caracas, "what has been done with [oil revenues] is not to attack the structural causes of poverty, but to implement a series of social policies ... which are palliatives for the society poverty and which are not structurally transforming it."³

And unlike a genuine structural reform, which would abolish state-enforced monopolies and privilege and result in a spontaneous redistribution of wealth through market mechanisms, Chávez's policies depend on ongoing interventions by a strongman that are unlikely to long survive his death.

If you want to celebrate the alleviation of poverty that came about as a side-effect of Chávez's lust for power, go ahead. If you want to celebrate the fact that the Bolivarian autocracy, in contrast the US-backed dictatorships of the past, instigated a South American revolt against Yanqui influence, I'll be glad to join you, for the same reason I'd have hoped for Poland's military regime to defeat Hitler in September 1939. I, too, prefer a world in which the power of the global hegemon is weakened by rival states.

But let's not rest our hopes for social justice on the whims of strongmen and their personality cults. That's something we need to bury in the ground along with Chávez.

It's time to pursue a vision of justice and freedom we achieve by our own actions, through peaceful



cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity with our friends and neighbors – not as a gift that depends on the temporary benevolence of a dictator. Δ

Kevin Carson is a senior fellow of the Center for a Stateless Society (c4ss.org) and holds the Center's Karl Hess Chair in Social Theory. He is a mutualist and individualist anarchist whose written work includes Studies in Mutualist Political Economy, Organization Theory: A Libertarian Perspective, and The Homebrew Industrial Revolution: A Low-Overhead Manifesto, all of which are freely available online. Carson has also written for such print publications as The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty and a variety of internet-based journals and blogs, including Just Things, The Art of the Possible, the P2P Foundation, and his own Mutualist Blog.

Notes

[1] “Anarchist Statement on the Death of Hugo Chávez” (March 6, 2013): <http://325.nostate.net/?p=7306>

[2] Rafael Uzcátegui, “Hugo Chávez en 4 preguntas,” *Periodico El Libertario* (March 7, 2013):

<http://periodicoellibertario.blogspot.com/2013/03/hugo-chavez-en-4-preguntas.html>

[3] “Venezuela: Interview with Rafael Uzcátegui” (Infoshop, July 6, 2012):

<http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=2012070514032837>

Chomsky's Augustinian Anarchism

Roderick T. Long

[4 September 2008, Art of the Possible]

Noam Chomsky is perhaps the United States' best-known anarchist. There's a certain irony to this, however; for just as St. Augustine once prayed, “Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet,” Chomsky's aim is in effect *anarchy, but not yet*.

Chomsky's reason for the “not yet” is that a powerful central government is currently necessary as a bulwark against the power of the corporate elite; thus it will not be safe to abolish or even scale back the state until we *first* use the state to break the power of the corporate elite:

In the long term, I think the centralized political power ought to be eliminated and dissolved and turned down ultimately to the local level, finally,

with federalism and associations and so on. On the other hand, right now, I'd like to strengthen the federal government. The reason is, we live in this world, not some other world. And in this world there happen to be huge concentrations of private power that are as close to tyranny and as close to totalitarian as anything humans have devised.

There's only one way of defending rights that have been attained, or of extending their scope in the face of these private powers, and that's to maintain the one form of illegitimate power that happens to be somewhat responsible to the public and which the public can indeed influence.¹

Now Chomsky's notion of the state as a crucial bulwark against “concentrations of private power” might initially seem puzzling, given that – as Chomsky's own research has confirmed time and again – the state has historically been the chief *enabler* of such concentrations. But what Chomsky seems to mean is not so much that it generally acts as a bulwark *now*, but rather that it *can* be made to do so; if you're facing a much stronger opponent (private power) who also has a sword (government power), you're better off trying to grab the sword and use it against him than you would be simply destroying the sword.

The government is far from benign – that's true. On the other hand, it's at least partially accountable, and it can become as benign as we make it.

What's not benign (what's extremely harmful, in fact) is something you didn't mention – business power, which is highly concentrated and, by now, largely transnational. Business power is very far from benign and it's completely unaccountable. It's a totalitarian system that has an enormous effect on our lives. It's also the main reason why the government isn't benign.²

There are two assumptions here with which I want to take issue.

First, Chomsky assumes that the influence of private business on government is “the main reason why the government isn't benign.” Why on earth does he believe this? Monopoly power tends to invite abuse, whether those who direct that power are mostly within or mostly outside the state apparatus. If Chomsky thinks government would be so harmless

without evil capitalists pulling the strings, why does he want to abolish it even in the long run?

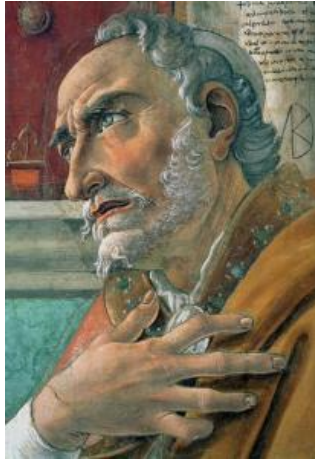
Second, Chomsky assumes that state power is “partially accountable” while business power is “completely unaccountable.” Now to begin with, I’m not sure whether the accountability of state power is here being contrasted with that of actually existing, state-enabled business power or instead with the accountability of business power as it would be without governmental support. But if it’s the former, then the contrast, even if correct, would provide no grounds for resisting the state’s abolition; the fact that $X + Y$ is more dangerous than X by itself is not a good reason to defend X . The contrast is relevant to a defense of the state only if business, *without state support*, would *still* be less accountable than the state. And here it seems obvious that the state – even a democratic state – is *far less* accountable than genuinely private business.

After all, a business can get your labour and/or possessions only if you agree to hand them over, while a government can extract these by force. Of course you can try to vote your current representatives out of office, but only at multiple-year intervals, and only if you convince 51 % of your neighbours to do likewise; whereas you can terminate your relationship with a business at any time, and without getting others to go along. Moreover, each candidate offers a package-deal of policies, whereas with private enterprise I can choose, say, Grocery A’s vegetables and Grocery B’s meats.

David Friedman illuminates the contrast:

When a consumer buys a product on the market, he can compare alternative brands. ... When you elect a politician, you buy nothing but promises. ... You can compare 1968 Fords, Chryslers, and Volkswagens, but nobody will ever be able to compare the Nixon administration of 1968 with the Humphrey and Wallace administrations of the same year. It is as if we had only Fords from 1920 to 1928, Chryslers from 1928 to 1936, and then had to decide what firm would make a better car for the next four years....

Not only does a consumer have better information than a voter, it is of more use to him. If I investigate alternative brands of cars decide which is best for me, and buy it, I get it. If I investigate alternative politicians and vote



accordingly, I get what the majority votes for. ... Imagine buying cars the way we buy governments. Ten thousand people would get together and agree to vote, each for the car he preferred. Whichever car won, each of the ten thousand would have to buy it. It would not pay any of us to make any serious effort to find out which car was best; whatever I decide, my car is being picked for me by the other members of the group. ... This is how I must buy products on the political marketplace. I not only cannot compare the alternative products, it would not be worth my while to do so even if I could.³

The “accountability” provided by democratic government seems laughable by comparison with the accountability provided by the market. The chief function of the ballot, it would seem, is to make the populace more tractable by convincing them they’re somehow in charge.

None of this should be news to Chomsky, who after all has himself pointed out:

As things now stand, the electoral process is a matter of the population being permitted every once in a while to choose among virtually identical representatives of business power. That’s better than having a dictator, but it’s a very limited form of democracy. Most of the population realizes that and doesn’t even participate. ... And of course elections are almost completely purchased. In the last congressional elections, 95 percent of the victors in the election outspent their opponents, and campaigns were overwhelmingly funded by corporations.⁴

Well, yes, exactly. So what is the basis of Chomsky’s faith in the democratic state?

Chomsky might object that my defense of market accountability ignores the fact that such “accountability” involves voting with dollars, so that the wealthy have more votes than the poor – whereas in a democratic state everyone has an equal vote. But even if we leave aside the causal dependence of existing disparities of wealth on systematic state intervention – as well as the fact that government, by controlling the direction of resources it does not own, magnifies the power of the wealthy⁵ – it still remains the case that however few dollars one may have,

when one votes with those dollars one gets *something* back, whereas when one votes with ballots one gets back *nothing* one was aiming for unless one happens to be voting with the majority. Which is less democratic – a system in which the effectiveness of one’s vote varies with one’s resources, or one in which 49% of the population has no effective vote at all?

Chomsky is hardly unaware that what he calls “business power” depends crucially on government intervention – since he has done as much as anyone to document this relationship. As he notes:

Any form of concentrated power, whatever it is, is not going to want to be subjected to popular democratic control or, *for that matter, to market discipline*. Powerful sectors, including corporate wealth, are naturally opposed to functioning democracy, *just as they’re opposed to functioning markets, for themselves, at least.*⁶

So if the corporate elite are so terrified of the free market, why is Chomsky so reluctant to hurl them into it?

Perhaps Chomsky’s view is that although government is needed to *create* these concentrations of private power, it’s not needed to *maintain* them, so just suppressing the state at this point in the game would leave business power intact. That’s not a crazy view, but it needs argument. After all, systematic government intervention on behalf of big business isn’t just something that happened back in the Gilded Age or the Progressive Era or the New Deal; it continues, massively and unceasingly. I wouldn’t claim (indeed I’ve denied⁷) that private power depends *solely* and *uniquely* on state support; but it’s hard to believe that all that state support is simply *superfluous*, as it must be if removing such state support wouldn’t appreciably weaken business power.

Chomsky has said⁸ that although he finds himself “in substantial agreement with people who consider themselves anarcho-capitalists on a whole range of issues,” and also “admire[s] their commitment to rationality,” he nevertheless regards the free-market version of anarchism as “a doctrinal system which, if ever implemented, would lead to forms of tyranny and oppression that have few counterparts in human history.” Why? Because “the idea of ‘free contract’ between the potentate and his starving subject is a sick joke.”

But this argument is blatantly question-begging. Chomsky is assuming the very point that’s in dispute

– namely that without government intervention on behalf of the rich, the economy would be divided into “potentates” and “starving subjects.” Now it’s true that market anarchists (for reasons explained elsewhere,⁹ I prefer to avoid the term “anarcho-capitalist”) themselves have sometimes – mistakenly, in my view – described their ideal economy as looking very much like the distribution of wealth and labour roles in our present economy, only minus the state. But why should Chomsky take *their* word for it? If the state really is intervening massively and systematically on behalf of the “potentate” and against the “starving subject” – as Chomsky must admit that it is, since his research explicitly demonstrates just this – why on earth would he expect that power imbalance to remain unchanged once that intervention ceases?

Not only does Chomsky underestimate the resources of anarchy, but he also appears to overestimate the serviceability of the state. He writes as if, even though the state is doing lots of bad stuff *now*, this could all be changed if more people would vote correctly. Now it’s true enough that people voting differently can make a difference to just *how* bad the government is. (If enough Germans had voted differently in 1932, they could have gotten a less awful regime.) Still, at the end of the day, what’s wrong with a coercive monopoly is not that the wrong people are running it, but rather that – leaving aside its inherent injustice – such a monopoly brings with it incentival and informational perversities which there is no way to avoid (except by removing the source of the problem, the monopoly, in which case what you have is no longer a state). Δ

Roderick T. Long is Professor of Philosophy at Auburn University, President of the Molinari Institute, and Editor of The Industrial Radical; he blogs at Austro-Athenian Empire.

Notes

- [1] “You Say You Want a Devolution” (March 1996): <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/9602290572/you-say-you-want-devolution>
- [2] “On Gun Control” (1994): <http://www.spunk.org/texts/writers/chomsky/sp001178.txt>
- [3] David D. Friedman. *The Machinery of Freedom*, ch. 32: <http://tinyurl.com/bj3f6tk>
- [4] “Chomsky’s Other Revolution” (21 Feb. 2000): http://weeklywire.com/ww/02-21-00/alibi_feat.html
- [5] Roderick T. Long, “Who’s the Scrooge? Libertarians and Compassion,” *Formulations* (Winter 1994): <http://praxeology.net/libertariannation/a/fl211.html>

[6] "Reflections on Democracy" (11 April 1994), emphasis added:

<http://books.zcommunications.org/chomsky/rab/rab-8.html>

[7] Roderick T. Long, "Can We Escape the Ruling Class?," *Formulations* (Autumn 1994):

<http://praxeology.net/libertariannation/a/f2112.html>

[8] "Answers to Eight Questions on Anarchism":

http://www.bombshock.com/anarchy/chomsky_on_anarchism.html

[9] Roderick T. Long, "Rothbard's 'Left and Right': Forty Years Later" (17 March 2006): <http://mises.org/daily/2099>

It's a Start ...

B-psycho

[7 March 2013, Psychopolitik]

I never thought too highly of Rand Paul. Let's get that out of the way right now.

I even incorrectly¹ at the time of his campaign predicted the other guy would win, due to his opponent being the better liar and Rand running away from the anti-militarism that made his father, for all his contradictions elsewhere, such a popular figure.

Well, yesterday Rand remembered for several hours that he is the son of Ron, speaking at length against John Brennan's nomination to head the CIA and by extension the claim of the Obama Administration to the right to unilaterally kill you. Naturally, being a Republican senator from FriedChickenVille, Real Murrikuh, the primary jump-off point was specifically about the proverbial Citizen Minding His Own Business getting droned over coffee, a formulation that, though understandable, tends to imply that the problem with murder vanishes once you cross the borders. Yet he expanded on that in a way questioning of U.S. foreign policy and militarism that I was shocked to hear coming from him instead of his father, actually name-checking the 16-year old that was murdered² in our names in Yemen:

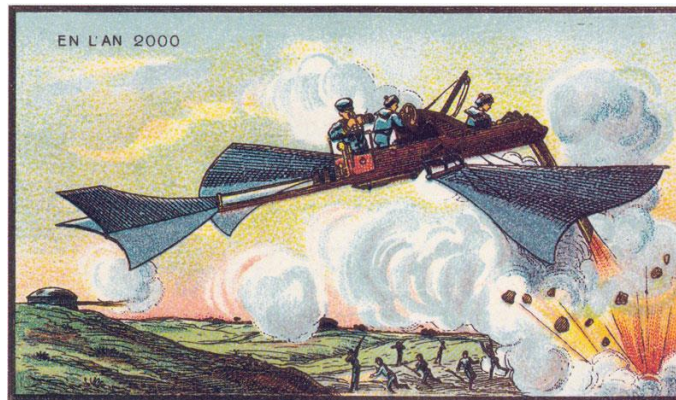
There was a man named al-Awlaki. He was a bad guy, by all evidence available to the public that

I've read, he was treasonous. I have no sympathy for his death. I still would have tried him in a federal court for treason and I think you could have been executed. But his son was 16 years old, had missed his dad, gone for two years. His son sneaks out of the house and goes to Yemen. His son is then killed by a drone strike. They won't tell us if he was targeted. Suspect, since there were other people in the group, about 20 people killed, that they were targeting someone else. I don't know that. I don't have inside information on that. But I suspect that.

But here's the real problem: When the President's spokesman was asked about al-Awlaki's son, you know what his response was? This I find particularly callous and particularly troubling. The President's response to the killing of al-Awlaki's son, he said he should have chosen more responsible father.

You know, it's kind of hard to choose who your parents are. That's sort of like saying to someone whose father is a thief or a murderer or a rapist, which is obviously a bad thing, but does that mean it's okay to kill their children ... think of the standard we would have if our standard for killing people overseas is, you should have chosen a more responsible parent.

Obviously I disagree with Rand Paul on putting anyone to death, even if it is al-Awlaki, but again, Real Murrikuh. Also, his sympathy with al-Qaeda did not occur in a vacuum: at one point he was actually condemning the 9/11 attacks, participating in online discussions³ with the *Washington Post*, and being invited to the Capitol. Going off of the timeline we know of for Anwar al-Awlaki, his turn from this to Islamist militant spokesperson appears to coincide with the move towards U.S. invasion of



Iraq. This is not to defend taking up such views, only to point out the process, and how it reflects the humongous Fail when it came to "hearts and minds" with regard to the world's reaction to how the U.S. government approaches it. He clearly shifted allegiances, engaging in what can safely be called nutjobbery.

But that and a nickel doesn't buy an explanation of why in the hell his son had to die!

As usual, the fear-mongers supporting never-ending global war act as if everyone is an imminent threat, like the slightest stir of anger in faraway places is equivalent to someone about to detonate explosives at the Nets game. The continuation of this absurdity is the true threat to national security, as eventually if you treat the entire world as your enemies they will decide the shoe actually fits and respond. Common sense, on the other hand, would acknowledge that They, even if they don't particularly like Us, are Over There, and the overwhelming majority of likelihood of them attacking us can be mitigated by not being Over There. It's kind of like not getting stung by bees – don't go slapping beehives with a stick.

For someone with any degree of actual power to point out how absurd the entire foreign policy status quo is, is itself a pigs flying moment. Yet, as is par, it's inherently damaged by appeal to such power to check itself, via invocation of the Constitution. Folks, if the checks & balances and the Bill of Rights actually worked in the way described in public government schools' American History courses, there'd have been war crimes trials by now. The shape of the beast changes, but it is still a beast, it is still the fire of arbitrary authority doing whatever it feels like. If I were the hopeful sort, I'd suggest the next step should be repeal of the blank check known as the Authorization to Use Military Force, followed by calls for rapid draw down and removal of the U.S. military from its current global deployments – a shift from talk to action on dismantling the empire once and for all. I'm not holding my breath though. This continues not for the reasons given to us by the perpetrators of these crimes, but for reasons of self-aggrandizement & enrichment, thus disproving the security argument isn't enough.

Still, for most of a day the U.S. Senate functionally did jack squat. That's a good thing. Δ

B-psycho is the net name of a musician & left-wing blogger out of Missouri. His site is www.psychopolitik.com.

Notes

[1] <http://www.psychopolitik.com/2010/10/19/aqua-buddha-vs-napalm-jesus>

[2] http://paul.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=727

[3] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/liveonline/01/nation/ramadan_awlaki1119.htm

Nobody's Serious About "Immigration Reform" ...

Thomas L. Knapp

[17 February 2013, Knappster]

Barack Obama's circulating draft proposal is such weak tea that calling it "reform" at all comes off as a bit of a joke, but its biggest weakness is that it doesn't require the Republicans claiming it goes too far to reveal what planet they're from. Because it sure as hell isn't Earth.

Like most Republican proposals, Obama's would conscript every business owner in the United States as an unpaid Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent (using the "E-Verify" system, which would be Orwellian if it was actually functional in any meaningful sense).

Like most Republican proposals, Obama's includes a raft of pork-barrel funding for "securing the border" nonsense¹ (Rand Paul says² he'll be adding an amendment requiring the GAO to periodically lie its ass off by certifying that US borders are "secure").

Obama's proposal does offer a "path to citizenship," but it's not a soft and fuzzy one. "Illegal immigrants" (a category of persons which, per the US Constitution, cannot possibly exist in federal law) would have to apply for visas, undergo criminal background checks, submit biometric information and pay fees to get on to that path in the first place. Eight years later, those who qualified for the visa could apply for permanent resident "green cards," and later for US citizenship.

If it was a Republican offering this plan, I might call it a good start (as I did when George W. Bush offered a "reform" proposal way back when). But Obama really needs to go the extra mile. Supporters of dramatically expanded immigration freedom probably provided his margin of victory for re-election on the one hand, and on the other he's been far more draconian in office than his Republican predecessors (he deported more immigrants in 3½ years than Bush did in 8).

To get "serious," Obama should go *at least* as pro-immigration-freedom as, say, Ronald Reagan or Bush 41.³ Δ

Thomas L. Knapp is Senior News Analyst and Media Coordinator at the Center for a Stateless Society.

Notes

[1] <http://knappster.blogspot.com/2006/04/malkin-versus-homeland-security-and.html>

[2] <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/02/17/report-bill-would-set-8-year-path-to-residency>

[3] <http://knappster.blogspot.com/2011/10/those-hippy-dippy-doo-open-borders.html>

Gun Control: Who Gets Control?

Darian Worden

[18 January 2013, C4SS]

Supporting gun control laws means giving government more credit than it deserves. Government is an institution run and staffed by people with their own interests and personalities. Are they really any smarter, more competent, or less likely to escalate violence than the average person?

If anything, institutional interests and incentives combine with the difficulty of holding government actors accountable make them more dangerous. The laws they enforce make them an even bigger threat to public safety. Government workers with assault weapons break into people's homes if they are suspected of having unapproved medicine, haven't paid off the banker, or happen to live at the wrong address. If those government workers feel threatened during their adrenaline rush they are liable to shoot the terrified residents and their pets – and get away with it. I wouldn't feel any safer knowing that these were the only people who could legally buy 30-round magazines.

Dispersing the tools of personal defense among peaceable individuals and consensual communities makes life safer by reducing the power of (and indeed the perceived need for) militarized official protectors. Of course, not everyone is average, and gun violence committed by private citizens is frightful. But the

prevalence of violence often signals a power imbalance, usually government enforced.

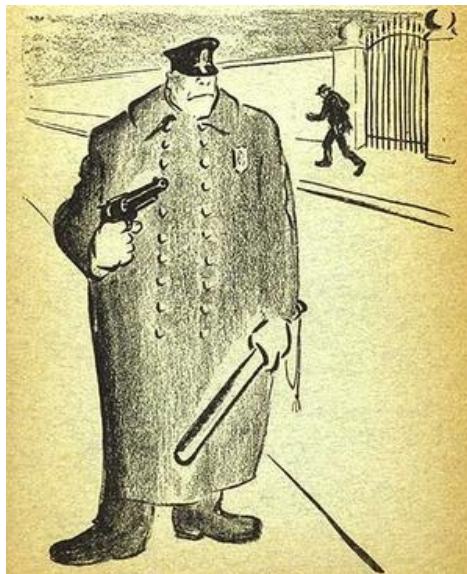
Mass shootings often, but not always, take place in institutions of rigid hierarchy where an individual made powerless by the system sees aggressive violence as a means of empowerment through conquest. Such motivations can be limited through widespread personal empowerment based on respect for autonomy and the cultivation of responsibility rather than obedience.

True, not every mass shooting fits this pattern, and unfortunately it is doubtful that any society can entirely prevent murder. But it is possible to reduce the number of victims. The best way to do that is by reducing institutionalized dislocation and by encouraging people within the community to take responsibility for defense rather than calling on – and waiting for help from – government officials. Having powerful weapons with big magazines can help them accomplish this. After all, police departments point to active shooter scenarios to explain why they need the types of guns targeted by assault weapon bans.

Most deadly violence committed by private citizens occurs in areas suffering from institutionalized discrimination. Unofficial economic segregation leads to some areas getting the worst schools, the most hostile police forces, the lowest levels of investment, and the largest burden of environmental hazards. These are usually places where minority racial groups, targeted by the bigotry of the powerful, live. The Black Panthers recognized this; their gun-toting swagger was part of their community improvement and empowerment program.

Today government policy – carried out by the people gun control advocates trust with assault weapons – makes neighborhoods into drug war battlegrounds while local politics tries to isolate the problem into particular school districts. Youth are harassed and an obscene percentage of adults are imprisoned, stifling the potential for open and peaceful community development.

The original Black Panthers were not perfect, but remain instructive. They certainly got attention. Rebels at the bottom of every power imbalance can probably learn valuable lessons from their experience.



While we make society more compassionate – which cannot be done without cultivating respect for liberty and autonomy – we should respect the gun rights of all responsible individuals. It is amazing that an 18-year-old can vote and serve in the military, but cannot legally buy a handgun for personal defense, especially since it was once common for rural students to bring guns to school and leave them in the principal's office so they could go hunting before or after school. If guns are viewed as familiar but dangerous instead of as mysterious sources of forbidden power, they will probably be handled more responsibly.

The alternative to moving toward freedom is making society more prison-like, with heavily armed paramilitaries standing guard while those considered “off” are subject to “mental health” inquisitions. The path to greater responsibility, accountability, and compassion is found in the pursuit of liberty. Δ

Center for a Stateless Society News Analyst Darian Worden is a left-libertarian writer and historian. He has hosted an internet radio show, written essays and fiction, and is the lead writer for Head First, a history adventure series. His website is DarianWorden.com.

Beyond Government

Roderick T. Long

[11 August 2011, Libertopia Underground]

The idea of society without government can give people a sense of vertigo. We often think of government as a framework or structure that holds society in place and keeps it orderly; remove it, and everything becomes chaotic!

But there's something odd about this way of thinking. Because government isn't some kind of external constraint on society, separate from it and free from its limitations. It's just a particular way (a fairly nasty way, unfortunately) that people interact.

By contrast, imagine a government run by Superman. Now there's a ruler who really could enforce his will on millions of people by his own personal might. He could hear your whispers of dissent with his super-hearing, zip over in an instant with his super-speed, incinerate you with his heat vision or level your building with a blow of his fist – and be back home within a minute.

But we're not ruled by Superman. No ruler has the ability to impose his or her will without the support of lots of government employees – and those employees, being vastly outnumbered by those they rule, cannot impose their will without the acquiescence of the populace. All that maintains the powerful in power is a generalised *habit of deference*.

We libertarians sometimes say that government is maintained by violence. That's partly true and partly false – partly insightful and partly misleading.

It's true that those who disobey the government's edicts, even when the disobedience is peaceful and harms no one, are repaid with cudgels, bullets, or prison bars; this is why government is such an uncivilised mode of human interaction. (The use of force should be reserved only to combat those who initiate force themselves.)

But governments can coerce the few only because the many go along with it. If the populace were to ignore the government *en masse*, the rulers would be reduced to the status of crazy people shouting on street corners – as in the Monty Python sketch¹ where Hitler returns from the dead, changes his name, and runs for office in England, giving his usual style of speeches, attended by only a handful of bored, puzzled spectators who watch his antics for a bit while passing by.

And what that shows is that the idea that government is necessary to maintain order is a myth. They're not maintaining order. We – all of us – are. And we can keep doing it without them.

But aren't the rulers necessary to coordinate our activities? On the contrary: voluntary, distributed networks – markets, internets, etc. – are far more effective at coordination than are coercive, centralised command-and-control systems. And there is a long history of voluntary associations of individuals efficiently providing even judicial arbitration and security services for themselves, without government or in defiance of government.

As Thomas Paine wrote in *The Rights of Man*:

Great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It has its origin in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished. The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all the parts of civilised community upon each other, create that great

chain of connection which holds it together. The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation, prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole. Common interest regulates their concerns, and forms their law; and the laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of government. In fine, society performs for itself almost everything which is ascribed to government. ...

If we examine with attention into the composition and constitution of man, the diversity of his wants, and the diversity of talents in different men for reciprocally accommodating the wants of each other, his propensity to society, and consequently to preserve the advantages resulting from it, we shall easily discover, that a great part of what is called government is mere imposition. ...

For upwards of two years from the commencement of the American War, and to a longer period in several of the American States, there were no established forms of government. The old governments had been abolished, and the country was too much occupied in defence to employ its attention in establishing new governments; yet during this interval order and harmony were preserved as inviolate as in any country in Europe. ... The instant formal government is abolished, society begins to act: a general association takes place, and common interest produces common security.

The only amendment I would make to what Paine says here would be to eliminate the phrases “[a] great part of” and “almost.”

It's common for people to distrust noncoercive solutions to social problems, because such solutions don't *guarantee* that the problems will be solved. That's true enough; but what the objection misses is that governmental mandates don't guarantee anything either. Government doesn't stand outside of society, shaping patterns of human interaction; it is itself just one more pattern of human interaction. Whatever government mandates is enabled and sustained by voluntary cooperation. And since centralised, coercive, monopolistic systems are notoriously beset by informational and incentival perversities, what the government decrees is actually far *less* guaranteed than the services that a freed market would provide.

Rulers have power only because we all continue to act as though they do. And what we thereby

maintain in existence is a system in which powerful elites (both those holding actual government office, and the nominally private corporate plutocrats who benefit from governmental privilege) regulate our lives, drag us into sanguinary wars, and expropriate the products of our labour.

In the words of Gustav Landauer, just over a century ago: “The state is a relationship between human beings, a way by which people relate to one another; and one destroys it by entering into other relationships, by behaving differently to one another.”² Δ

Notes

- [1] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZU5aWyK9MRk>
 [2] “Weak Statesmen, Weaker People” (*Der Sozialist*, 1910); excerpted in Robert Graham, ed., *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*, vol. 1 (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), pp. 164-165.

Abolish the Police

Anthony Gregory

[26 May 2011, LewRockwell.com]

On May 13, 1985, in the twilight of the Cold War, residents of Philadelphia were ruthlessly bombed from the sky. The enemy government was conducting a political mission, but innocent inhabitants of that distinctly American city were caught up in the attack. After ten thousand rounds were fired at civilians over a period of two hours, a helicopter swooped in and dropped C-4 and Tovex explosives, destroying 65 houses. Five children were slaughtered in the strike.

The perpetrator was not the Soviet Union, or else the attack might have escalated into international conflict. It certainly would have made it into textbook timelines and become part of the nation's consciousness. No, those responsible for this atrocity were members of the Philadelphia police department. The local cops sought to finish off their political enemies after years of animosity and tension. The proximate legal excuse for bombing their own city? The cops had gotten complaints about noise and the stench of compost.

Twenty-six years have passed since the bombing of the MOVE house¹ and if there was any doubt before, it is now beyond question that the local police have become the occupying troops that Malcolm X

described. They are the standing army the Founding Fathers warned against. In the United States, they are the most dangerous gang operating and they do so under the color of law.

Anyone who reads Will Grigg² should be familiar with this reality. The man who once edited the magazine for the John Birch Society, an organization whose 60s mantra was “support your local police,” has since then focused largely on documenting the daily outrages conducted by these tax parasites. Reading his specific accounts of misconduct and brutality, one comes to the inescapable conclusion that police abuse is not a bug in the system; it is an intrinsic feature.

We can cite some of the most gruesome and high-profile outrages of recent years, such as the murder of Oscar Grant³ on New Year’s Day, 2009, a young man shot by a Bay Area cop in the back while lying face-down on the ground; or the brutal beating of Alexander Landau,⁴ a college student who dared to ask Denver cops for a warrant before they searched his trunk; or the plight of seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley Jones,⁵ who was murdered last May in Detroit as she lay on her family’s couch while the cops raided the home, tossed in a flash-grenade that set her on fire and then shot her in the head.

Any one of these incidents should set off as much anti-government anger as the Boston Massacre, but some will object that I am cherry picking. So let us limit ourselves to just the last couple months to illustrate the depth of the problem. Last month, police in Trenton⁶ shot and killed an unarmed man, saying he was reaching for his waistband. In Orlando,⁷ police tased a man to death for being disorderly in a movie theater. In Derby, Kansas,⁸ a police officer broke a teenager’s arm because he dared to talk back after getting in trouble for wearing sagging pants.

On May 5, police in Tuscon stormed into Jose Guerena’s home around 9 AM, and shot him 71 times.⁹ Yes, fearful for his family’s safety, he was holding an AR-15 in self-defense, but didn’t get a shot in, despite lies to the contrary – yet there was no evidence found of any wrongdoing or illegality on his part. In Alabama, a police officer beat an 84-year-old man¹⁰ for reporting a car accident and daring to put the offender under “citizen’s arrest” – a more civilized version of what police do routinely – and then the officer turned an ambulance away, insisting the elderly victim didn’t need medical help. Louisiana

cops tased Kirkin Woolridge¹¹ at a traffic stop on May 18, and he soon died of complications in jail.

Just in the last week, we have the DC cops who brutally beat up a defenseless man in a wheelchair.¹² In Moore, Oklahoma, innocent residents are upset¹³ that police shot at their homes indiscriminately in attempting to chase down an “armed suicidal subject.” In Fort Collins, Colorado, a police patrol car seriously injured a bicyclist,¹⁴ but unlike nearly any other collision between a bike and car, it is being blamed on the bicyclist.

These are just very recent examples that can be found from a minute of Googling. They are no doubt the tip of the iceberg. They do not begin to represent the millions of smaller injustices conducted by police daily, both under the cover of law and in naked violation of statutes and court decisions, or the thousands of daily injustices and acts of torture and sexual abuse in America’s prisons and jails, for which law enforcers are at least indirectly and very often directly responsible.

The chaotic violence of the modern police state is ubiquitous. Every day there are 100 SWAT raids in America.¹⁵ Remember in the old days when SWAT raids were reserved for stopping some terrorist intent on destroying half the city? Maybe that was just in the movies. There were 3,000 SWAT raids in 1981, the year I was born, which was bad enough. There will be 40,000 this year.

In modern America, even small towns have their own air forces. The TV news frets about al-Qaeda, but rarely exposes the threat of the thin blue line. About as many Americans have been killed by police since 9/11/01 as died on that day. Between 1980 and 2005, police killed 9,500 people in the U.S.,¹⁶ approximately one per day and almost three-fourths as many people as have been sentenced and executed in the United States since colonial times. A study in Harris County, Texas, found that between 1999 and mid-2005, officers in the county shot 65 *unarmed* people,¹⁷ killing 17.

But don’t police put their lives on the line for us? Only 177 police¹⁸ were killed in the line of duty in 2009, which might seem like a lot, but being a police officer is not¹⁹ even one of the top ten dangerous jobs in America.

Surely, the people who are killed by the cops had it coming. Well, consider how many are killed when the police presumably do not intend to kill at all and so reach for their taser. Amnesty International²⁰ found that “the number of people who died after

being struck by Tasers in the USA reached 334 between 2001 and August 2008.”

This all puts aside the unspeakable corruption that plagues virtually every police station in America. From an Orlando officer²¹ covering up evidence of vicious brutality against a 100-pound woman to the systematic corruption of a small-town department in Kansas²² to San Francisco undercover cops²³ stealing drugs for themselves, even the reported cases of police misconduct – there were 2,500 such reports last year²⁴ – are enough to show the whole system is rotten. A cursory look at the admitted child rapists²⁵ and other such lowlifes who often “serve” as officers for years before being caught also puts the lie to the very idea that police are on average any more noble than the general population.

Limited-government libertarians often reserve at least three functions to the state – military, courts and police. But why police? We never tire of talking about America as it was before the government swallowed society whole. In particular, we reminisce about the principles of 1776. Yet, although there was plenty to object to in colonial law and law in the early republic, police as we now know them didn’t exist back then.

Philadelphia adopted a police force in 1845. New Orleans, Cincinnati, Chicago and Baltimore followed suit in the next decade. From the beginning these were politicized bodies, involved in corrupt local politics and enforcing questionable laws. They were not immaculately conceived any more than the state itself. But it was not until the Progressive Era that the modern police force was truly born. At the turn of the century, cities adopted fingerprinting and forensics labs. Soon came radios and patrol cars. Berkeley, California, home to many great strides in progressive social engineering, was also a pioneer in creating modern police. August Vollmer, Berkeley’s chief of police, trained a new generation of cops through the University of California. His protégé O. M. Wilson went on to revolutionize the forces of Wichita and Chicago.

By the 1960s, police were more often in cars than walking the streets. This made a big difference. Lawrence M. Freedman writes in *Crime and Punishment in American History*:



A cop on foot was a familiar cop, a neighborhood cop; he knew his beat, and the beat knew him. He was also pretty much on his own. Headquarters was far away; he was beyond its beck and call. But now a ton of steel separated the motorized officer from the community; police cruising in patrol cars were strangers to the dark, dangerous streets; these police tended to feel alien, beleaguered; the locals, for their part, thought of them as an outside, occupying force.

This alienation from the community tends to galvanize the police into a tight-knit gang complete with its own identity: “The police are a tight, beleaguered group. They develop their own subculture, and it is a subculture of tough, macho conservatism. ... They see human beings at their worst, and that certainly colors their philosophy of life.”

Furthermore, cops have come to “believe in fighting fire with fire. Police brutality was part of a more general system of police power. It rested on a simple credo: the battalions of law and order had the right, if not the duty, to be tough as nails with criminals. Force was the only language the criminal understood.”

Force might be necessary to deal with violent thugs, but allowing the greatest predator of all – the state – to monopolize the sector of the economy concerned with using force against criminals is a recipe for oppression and injustice. The entire history of government police demonstrates they cannot be trusted. They are the henchmen of all the totalitarian regimes we see on the History Channel. In the United States, they were always a menace, at least to some. They tended early on to focus their brutality against the other – immigrants, gangsters, ethnic minorities, transients and the counterculture. Today they still bias their violence against the fringes of society, the young and the powerless, but they are now so vast a presence that no one is safe, no matter how respectable, no matter his demographic.

The 20th century brought us all the horrors of progressivism, and one conspicuous example has

been the militarized city police force, which has become an organization hostile to all manner of civilized decency. The last century, particularly since the 1960s, also meant an increasing nationalization of police, arming them with military weapons, plugging them into national databases, harmonizing oppression throughout the country so there is no escape, charging cops with new national crusades against drugs and other non-crimes. Then there is the revolving door between the military and police precincts, with veterans, often traumatized from battle, increasingly enlisting back home as cops. The institutional and cultural nationalization has made matters worse, although local police, as agents of the state, have been very eager partners in the federalization of law enforcement. They have never been the great defenders against national usurpation conservatives long hoped for; but today they are all-out quislings.

Needless to say, all anarchists should support outright and immediate abolition of the police. We're talking about the enforcement arm of the state, after all. If you oppose the state monopoly, you must favor eliminating the state's method of maintaining its monopoly – through the police. And indeed, if you distrust socialism, you should distrust law-enforcement socialism²⁶ as much as anything, for this is the original sin that allows all other state depredations to follow. Also, when the state misallocates resources, it is not nearly so evil in itself as when it inevitably misallocates violence on a massive scale.

For much of U.S. history, Americans had less government and fewer police. Government will necessarily be weaker, all else being equal, the fewer enforcement agents it boasts. Without any armed enforcers, the state withers away. The fewer armed state agents the better. The growth of modern leviathan in the 20th century accompanied the rise of the city police force. Big government and cops go hand in hand.

If your goal is to end the welfare state, the regulatory state, the wars, or anything else seriously bad about government, abolishing the police would seem to be a major priority. Do you oppose taxation? Abolish the police, as well as all other agencies of government law enforcement, and see how threatening those 1040s and state tax forms seem then.

Some will argue that the police protect our rights. But if the market is really better than socialism,

abolishing the police outright shouldn't be a problem. Why trust the state to continue cornering the market on rights protection? If protecting life, liberty and property is important – and it most certainly is – we cannot to let the central planners and their armed enforcers run the show. Fire them immediately. The market will find a better way to protect us within 24 hours, if it takes nearly that long. If we all take up the abolitionist cause, certainly by the time police are abolished, civil society will find a way to fill the void.

And of course, the very premise that we must maintain state police for the sake of our rights assumes that they protect our rights more than they infringe them. This is completely dubious. Surely we have no “constitutional right” to police protection, as the Seventh Circuit Court determined in *Bowers v. DeVito* (1982).²⁷ When there's a riot or huge unleashing of social unrest, police often bail out, leaving shop owners and other people to fend for themselves, who do a better job anyway, as during the 1992 LA riots. What's more, the police often exacerbate the catastrophe by disarming homeowners and shooting at people committing petty offenses, like they did after Katrina. Furthermore, studies seem to indicate that police strikes²⁸ don't lead to any demonstrated rise in crime.

We can probably assume that abolishing the police would not lead to the apocalypse people fear, not even in the short run as the market sorts things out. Why?

First of all, actual crimes are almost never prevented by the police. The vast majority go unsolved. At best, the police investigate them after they occur, and then usually do nothing. Sometimes they make an arrest, which might, at a huge expense to taxpayers, result in someone in jail – and maybe even the right person. Even in this minority of cases, the idea that jail is a remedy to the rights violation, or prevents more rights violations from occurring, is an unchecked premise. Even putting violent predators in prison where they can brutalize less violent people may not actually reduce the amount of aggression, if we count the victims in the cages, as we should. Meanwhile, even the government's pursuit of actual criminals entails numerous rights violations in itself – investigations of the innocent, enslaving jurors and witnesses, turning lives upside down. Victims are never made whole. And for this we have to run the risk of being shot or wrongly arrested by the state.

Second of all, the police actively encourage violent crime in myriad ways. They enforce the drug

war, which probably doubles the number of homicides and vastly increases street crime, along with some help from gun control, which they also enforce. Gun control, by the way, demonstrates that people do fear the police more than criminals – otherwise no one would follow these gun laws. Instead, law-abiding folks know the risk of being caged for this non-crime is more significant than the risk of being caught unarmed by a private thug. So does gun control operate in preserving the advantage for private criminals. Abolishing the police outright, even if it put upward pressure on crime rates, would probably overall lead to fewer crimes because of the elimination of the criminality incited and encouraged by state activity.

Third and most important, the police themselves routinely violate the rights of innocent people as a major component of their job description. The greater their numbers, financing and power, the worse it gets. It is the job of police to harass the innocent, to jail people for victimless crimes, to stop people for minor traffic violations, to trick people into admitting law breaking, to fulfill quotas for arrests, and to generally instill in the community a fear and awe of the state. It is almost impossible to be a police officer on the beat and not violate the non-aggression principle on a regular basis. As a material fact, most police conducting arrests on the street are committing acts of kidnapping, theft, trespass, and invasion. Those who arrest people who end up in prison are effectively accessories to rape and assault.

Even if having police is a desirable thing, we cannot do so safely until the bad laws are off the books, and then it would be best to fire all police and start over. If having had a severe criminal record tends to disqualify people from the job, so too must having been a reputable police officer. If I am too harsh in this regard, it is just one more reason to abolish the government's police and allow for the market to take over. Allow entrepreneurs to decide which former government police are redeemable and employable as private security and which are not.

What to do about violent thugs? The market, social norms, private security, the wonders and corollary institutions of private property, gated communities, private gun ownership, religious values – all the blessings of civil society are on our side. But the police rarely are. When a violent criminal kills or assaults or rapes or steals, we all condemn it, and we can find a way to deal with it when the criminals are

not protected by the system. But what about when the criminals *are* the system?

Private security is already a greater bulwark against violent and property crime than many people realize. As of 1997, according to *the Economist* (as cited by Robert Higgs)²⁹:

There are three times as many private policemen as public ones. ... Americans also spend a lot more on private security (about \$90 billion a year) than they do, through tax dollars, on the public police (\$40 billion). Even the government itself spends more hiring private guards than it does paying for police forces.

For a decade and a half, we have had three times as many private guards as public ones, yet it is an oddity indeed to hear about their abuses, unlike those of the police that make the papers every day – and that's just counting reported offenses. It should be no wonder. As market actors, private security guards are generally heroic defenders of property, commerce and life, and are liable for the wrong they do, unlike the state's armed agents, who work for an institution of monopoly, theft, kidnapping, rape rooms and murder.

Can we really survive without government police? When we consider how much they do to disrupt civil society, it would seem obvious that we can. The police, on balance, are a force for decivilization and disorder. They commit massive violations of person and property. They enforce gun and drug laws that basically create organized crime and breed gang activity. Most of what they do encourages, rather than diminishes, violence. Despite all this, America remains a fairly civilized place. If we survived this long with the police, just imagine how much better off we'd be without them. Δ

Anthony Gregory is a research analyst at the Independent Institute. He lives in Oakland, California. See his webpage www.anthonygregory.com for more articles and personal information.

Notes

- [1] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MOVE>
- [2] <http://www.lewrockwell.com/grigg/grigg-arch.html>
- [3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BART_Police_shooting_of_Oscar_Grant
- [4] http://blogs.westword.com/latestword/2011/01/alexander_landau_got_pulled_ov.php

- [5] <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1989857,00.html>
- [6] <http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/05e7442484e74f229a30184af5e565c3/NJ--Trenton-Police-Shooting>
- [7] http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2011-05-22/news/os-adam-johnson-taser-20110522_1_tasers-orlando-police-family-members
- [8] <http://tinyurl.com/c6hzdhk>
- [9] <http://www.lewrockwell.com/grigg/grigg-w212.html>
- [10] <http://rt.com/usa/police-beat-elderly-man>
- [11] <http://www.wvltv.com/news/local/Man-dies-after-being-Tased-by-arresting-officer-Wednesday-morning-122170059.html>
- [12] <http://egyptsaidso.com/shame-on-them/d-c-police-beat-up-a-man-in-a-wheelchair>
- [13] <http://tinyurl.com/admjzot>
- [14] <http://tinyurl.com/bxdzwuv>
- [15] <http://tinyurl.com/ahxrnqw>
- [16] http://www.colorlines.com/archives/2007/11/killed_by_the_cops.html
- [17] <http://www.chron.com/news/article/One-in-three-police-shootings-involve-unarmed-1651275.php>
- [18] <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2010/1228/Why-police-officer-deaths-rose-37-percent-in-2010>
- [19] <http://www.lewrockwell.com/blog/lewrw/archives/86367.html>
- [20] <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/usa-safety-tasers-questioned-death-toll-hits-334-mark-20081216>
- [21] <http://www.copblock.org/4586/cop-caught-falsifying-police-report-after-attacking-woman>
- [22] <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/2011-05-26/news/opa-locka-police-accused-of-massive-corruption>
- [23] <http://tinyurl.com/apoglng>
- [24] <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/181513.html>
- [25] <http://www.policebrutality.info/2011/05/new-orleans-cop-raped-13-year-old-girl-seven-times.html>
- [26] <http://mises.org/daily/2423>
- [27] <http://www.lewrockwell.com/gregory/gregory100.html>
- [28] <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1983.tb00276.x/abstract>
- [29] <http://www.independent.org/publications/tir/article.asp?a=109>

The Root Is Power

Kevin A. Carson

[8 March 2013, C4SS]

One of Henry David Thoreau's most famous sayings is "There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root."

A series of serendipitous events this week pointed me to this central truth. Two of my Twitter friends, Jakob Petterson and Natalie Reed,¹ raised the question of when environmentalism and racial and gender justice started being propagandized as matters of purely individual consciousness. Today, coming out of my natural foods cooperative, I saw one of those "peace poles" designed to be mounted in your front yard as a moral statement.

The central identifying feature of a reformist effort is that it fails to strike at the root of oppression – power. All such efforts aim either at changing individual behavior without regard to the individual's position in the overall system of power, or at creating an authoritarian institutional framework staffed by upper-middle class "helping professionals" to protect the individual from oppressive behavior.

In the late 1960s Charles Reich's vision of social change in *The Greening of America* put a shift in consciousness ahead of changes in the power structure. What really mattered was not dismantling the power of the centralized state and giant corporations, but seeing that those institutions were run by people in beads and bell-bottoms who, like, had their heads in a good place, man.

In the utterly godawful *Captain Planet* cartoon, all the villains like Horrid Greedly were motivated, not by material incentives to externalize their costs on society, but by an irrational hatred of nature. And the proper response was to encourage kids to recycle and turn off lights in empty rooms – not to attack corporate capitalism's basic structural imperatives to utilize production capacity through planned obsolescence and grow through extensive addition of subsidized inputs rather than increased efficiency. Which stands to reason, of course – the latter alternative doesn't sound like something Ted Turner would much cotton to.

As for those ridiculous "peace poles," I have nothing against consciousness-raising as one weapon in the arsenal of the peace and social justice



movement. But if that change in consciousness consists of Coleman McCarthy teaching “peace studies” classes about “Martin Luther King and the Rabbi Christ,” it’s just as much an opiate as the consciousness it’s replacing. The only effective change in consciousness will be one that involves seeing through the Matrix – that is, understanding war in the context of the system of power it serves. We have war because the people running things have a material interest in fighting wars. War, like all other state policy, is an instrument of the ruling class’s interest. Like every other aspect of the power structure, it’s just another means of extracting surplus labor every waking moment of our lives; in Morpheus’s words: “When you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes.”

The feminist concept of rape culture, although frequently misunderstood, describes a fundamental principle that’s more broadly applicable to all forms of oppression and exploitation. One effect of rape culture is to confer a form of male privilege even on the protectors of women. The ubiquity of the threat of rape, and women’s dependence on “good guys” for protection, directly empowers patriarchal institutions in a way that – whether or not they intend it – creates a power differential on behalf of men.

One example of hacking at the branches rather than striking the root of oppression, in the case of feminism, is the tendency to ignore the way patriarchy interlocks with other forms of structural oppression – particularly class oppression. So the internal structure of the Second and Third Wave feminist movements replicates the hegemony of the upper middle class in the larger society. The movement is disproportionately led by an establishment from the managerial-professional strata with a tendency to see themselves as managing the less privileged – sex workers, transgender women, working poor women, etc. -- “for their own good.” And their policy agenda gravitates toward the needs of managerial-professional women: cabinets and boardrooms that “look like America.” Of course this obscures the oppressive nature of the power of cabinets and boardrooms as such, and the mutually reinforcing relationship between patriarchy and hierarchical corporate/state power.



This same good cop/bad cop dynamic characterizes all power relationships. The liberal reformist fights oppression, not by attacking the fundamental sources of the bad guys’ power, but by creating a class of good guys to protect us against the bad guys. The “protectors” are empowered by the preexisting system of oppression; they see their primary role, not as dismantling it, but as making it more bearable – and hence, in objective terms, more sustainable. More often than not, liberal reform involves simply putting the oppressive power structure itself under the control of “progressive” or “enlightened” people who make the system seem a bit kinder and gentler but leave the fundamental processes of exploitation and oppression in place.

A good example is environmental policy in the form of a “Green New Deal,” which leaves the basic structural imperatives of mass-production capitalism in place – but converted to the production of bullet trains and wind generators. And of course the leading advocates of this model are über-capitalists like Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, who want to make green technology the basis of another Kondratiev long-wave or “engine of accumulation” by enclosing it (via “intellectual property” law) as a source of rents.

Even when our overlords are sincerely humane, the goal (as explained by the farmer in Tolstoy’s parable) is to treat the livestock as kindly as possible – consistent with the primary goal of keeping us inside the fence and continuing to milk us.² So long as the alternative is between the phony Reagan/Thatcher model of “free markets” versus New Deal liberalism or Social Democracy, I have no quarrel with those who take advantage of the opportunities the latter afford to make oppression more bearable. After all, in its essence the neoliberal model of “free markets” is as statist as state socialism – and I’ll take the form of oppression that weighs less heavily on my own neck.

But sooner or later, we need to look up from the tasty oat mash that nice farmer gave us and start thinking about how to break out of this fence. Δ

Notes

[1] <http://freethoughtblogs.com/nataliereed>

[2] <http://archive.feedblitz.com/528094/~3859973>

Paths to Liberation

Anna Morgenstern

[1 August 2012, C4SS]

What if they built a factory and no one came?

A lot of people in the broader anarchist movement seem to focus more on goals or endpoints and ignore or underemphasize the means to achieving them. This is understandable, in that statists are constantly challenging us to identify what a stateless society will be like. (Statists are generally concerned much more with outcomes than the means to get to them, or most of them would be horribly shamed by the programs they advocate.) This creates a great deal of internecine squabbles that I think are unnecessary. Existentially, intentions are much less important in determining someone's character than actions. Now there are many, many varieties of anarchist individuals and organizations with their own characteristics and philosophy, but I think, in terms of their program to achieve anarchism, we can divide them into 5 basic groups. I will attempt to explore these groups and their means, and see what their impact would be.

First off are the insurrectionary anarchists. Though they come in different flavors, most of them would consider themselves revolutionary anti-capitalists. Though dormant for a long time, the insurrectionary mode of anarchism was one of the oldest varieties, right alongside anarcho-syndicalism as anarchism became defined as a unique offshoot of the labor movement. The insurrectionary anarchists often get a lot of criticism from the rest of the "left" at large, criticism that I believe is un-deserved. This criticism, I believe, points to how much most people have been tamed by the powers that be, which have absorbed and co-opted their ostensible "opposition." While I have a different "most preferred" strategy, they are certainly useful allies. When I saw the pictures from Greece, of the crowds successfully attacking riot police, my heart swelled.

Basically the insurrectionary anarchists follow a program of confronting capitalism when and where it exposes its major coordinating events, and of finding techniques to reclaim the abandoned or easily re-expropriated parts of the system for the use of the people. It is largely not a "productive" strategy, but rather a negative force, attacking state-capitalism

while providing nothing for the capitalists to consume. In the beginning, food, shelter and clothing for the insurrectionary anarchist comes from refuse or unused property, though ideally, as the revolution advances, they will be in position to make bold strikes into re-expropriation of actual exchange value. Now, this will be considered "stealing" by vulgar libertarians. But as the insurrectionary anarchist argument goes, the capitalists already stole their capacity to produce these goods from us. It would be no different than robbing the vaults where the IRS keeps their ill-gotten tax gains.

In terms of dialectical materialism, the IA movement could be seen as the revolution of the sub-proletariat, taking place in the midst of the incomplete revolution of the proletariat. For this reason, many statist Marxists see insurrectionary anarchist as a counter revolutionary force ... in a sense they are considered "too radical for the times." As far as I can tell though, the insurrectionary anarchist movement, to the extent that it succeeds, provides quite a few boons to the working class. First off, it reduces the "reserve army of the unemployed", placing upward pressure on wage rates, by giving the workers a viable alternative to submission. Secondly, it removes goods from availability, increasing effective demand, which, while inflationary, also adds upward pressure on wage rates from the bottom up. Plus it gives psychological relief to the bottom, marginal strata of the working class by giving them a concrete viable alternative to their situation which is not submissive but defiant and proud, not alienated but passionate.

In theory this combined pressure on the capitalists should yield shocks and amplify the basic contradictions in the system ... in some areas capitalism will collapse or be forced to withdraw. In these spaces the insurrectionary anarchists will build a new way of life (somehow), rinse, and repeat. So far the most successful insurrectionary anarchist movements in recent times have been the EZLN, the Zapatistas of Chiapas. In many areas of Oaxaca there have been large pockets of success, but a lot of backlash as well.

Then there are the Philosophical anarchists. They come in both anarcho-capitalist and anarcho-socialist varieties. Their essential idea is to eschew political activism largely, but to make attempts to convince people far and wide of the essential rightness of their position. In theory, this will undermine the power and prestige of the state at all levels of society. Fewer and fewer individuals will actively take part in the various

workings of the state, until one day the last bureaucrat turns the lights out in the last office. Though they tend not to openly advocate the other paths, their methodology requires people to pursue them, lest this method take hundreds of years. They tend to be the most pessimistic about the short term prospects for anarchism. Many anarchists will combine philosophical outreach with other strategies, though the insurrectionary anarchists often seem to be a bit less sanguine about this, seeing it as a diversionary waste of time.

There are the “Parliamentary” anarchists. These types also come in both anarcho-capitalist and anarcho-socialist varieties. They want to “work from the inside” to undermine the state through direct engagement with its machinery. They will field candidates, vote, agitate for specific laws, etc. In theory, by pressuring the state they will force it to act against the ruling classes’ wishes, weakening them step by step until the state itself is easily abolished altogether.

Anarcho-capitalists who follow this path are often indistinguishable from minarchist “libertarians” except in their idea of the endgame, and possible radicalism of their proposals. Anarcho-socialists who follow this path are often indistinguishable from Fabian social-democrats except in their idea of the endgame, and possible radicalism of their proposals.

The weakness of this position is that it tends to yield a very stable state. As the radical left and right parliamentarians collide, the economic positions will stabilize around a sort of mixed economy capitalism, while civil liberties will be high and militarism low. Very much like Western Europe actually. This sort of state will eventually collapse under its own economic contradictions but if both parties are dedicated to advancing their positions it could take a very long time.

Then there are the anarcho-syndicalists, or labor-anarchists, and the agorists. Despite evolving from very different positions, these two strategies have the most in common with each other, and are capable of co-existing with insurrectionary anarchism, at least in theory. They are not political revolutionary strategies, but economic revolutionary strategies, that employ force primary as a last ditch self-defense tactic.

Anarcho-syndicalism is one of the oldest varieties of anarchism, basically evolving out of the labor movement of the 19th century. They seek to find ways to use direct action in the workplace to disrupt the employing class, while also developing alternative

forms of production (often called syndicates, thus the name) that are worker-owned and often not tied into a profit motive. (Since the laborers would be receiving the full product of their labor, there would be no profit per se, no excess revenue going to a third party.) Anarcho-syndicalism is not confrontational with “capitalism” as a unified force, but confronts the capitalists inside the workplace. The *IWW*, while not officially “anarchist” in name, is basically a model of how this sort of method works. They did not seek to engage the state directly, but to pressure the state to concede to their demands as workers.

In theory the employers will be pushed back and gradually replaced, until independent workers collectives will control the means of production and the state will cease to have any meaning or power.

Kevin Carson’s *Labor Struggle: A Free Market Model*¹ has a lot of historical and speculative ideas about this path in detail.

The major advantage of this strategy is that it is productive and immediate. Using the techniques of direct action gets immediate, tangible results for the working class, which empowers them to engage in further action. The major disadvantage is that it tends to draw the fire of the state, literally and figuratively. As the conditions of production are moving away from large-scale material outlays, this methodology is becoming more and more practical again. At the same time, it is becoming more and more similar to agorism.

Agorism is the idea of counter-economic production with a philosophical underpinning of anarchism. Counter-economic production is production that exists outside of the purview or approval of the state. The black and grey markets, so called. In a sense, agorism could be seen as freelance anarcho-syndicalism. One difference is that agorism is something that can be practiced by individuals, small business owners and workers alike. The basic idea is to operate outside the eye, and thus control, of the state. Stealth, exile and cunning, as James Joyce put it, are required. This strategy is also productive and immediate, it is also direct action, only outside an official workplace.

The website agorism.info has a great deal of information about agorism and its possibilities as a revolutionary economic anarchist strategy.

As each of these paths advances, we can expect that there will be an overlap between an-syn and agorism. Unofficial unions, syndicates and labor associations will form their own production firms not

dependent on a capitalist owner and in ways unauthorized by any state, thus being equivalent to agorist firms. Profit taking agorist firms and syndicates will trade with each other for parts and material and services. Both agorism and anarcho-syndicalism remove laborers and a marginal number of unemployed from the market for state-capitalist labor, thus providing upward pressure on wage rates. They are both deflationary forces, by adding goods and services to the market at lower prices than a statist firm which must absorb the costs of the state's taxes and regulation. This puts state-capitalist firms in a vice. The state will have to expend more and more resources to fight these unauthorized mills of production, while at the same time dealing with a larger and larger insurrectionary movement. It is quite reasonable to expect that at least some anarcho-syndicates and agorist firms will donate materials and services to the insurrectionary anarchist movement, perhaps in exchange for labor or crafts, as each of these movements grow. The insurrectionary movement will develop, perhaps, into the "sword" of

the anarchist movement while agorism and anarcho-syndicalism will serve as the "plowshare."

Each of these movements can co-exist and synergize each other's activities if they can get over their philosophical differences at least for strategic purposes. That may seem like a big "if" right now, but as the state in its desperation grows more authoritarian, exposing the iron fist from below the velvet glove, the pragmatic benefits may bring all of these "direct action" movements together, at least at the margins. Δ

C4SS Contributing Writer Anna O. Morgenstern has been an anarchist of one stripe or another for almost 30 years. Her intellectual interests include economic history, social psychology and voluntary organization theory. She likes piña coladas, but not getting caught in the rain.

Notes

[1] <http://c4ss.org/content/4163>

ANARCHIST PERSPECTIVES ON *STAR WARS*

Disney's Lucasfilm Buyout: Fighting Power with Power

Kevin A. Carson

[2 November 2012, C4SS]

Over the past couple of days, I've seen a lot of alarmism over Disney's buyout of Lucasfilm. That's to be expected, of course. As someone who hates large corporations, copyright, and copyright-enabled corporate control of information, I sympathize – believe me.

The fears of *Star Wars* fans – probably a majority – that Disney will kiddify *Star Wars* and turn Leia into Snow White are also predictable. What's interesting, though – the dog-bites-man story – is the number of fans who are optimistic. Whatever corporate copyright lockdown Disney puts the franchise under couldn't possibly be worse than what George Lucas

has done. The Disney acquisition actually offers to breathe new life into the *Star Wars* universe. The fan community is awash with excited speculation about what might be in store for the third (Episodes VII-IX) trilogy, and whether the Grand Admiral Thrawn novels – an authorized part of the Lucas empire, but never yet authorized for film – might be translated into film. Heady stuff, if you're a *Star Wars* fan.

The thing is, corporate mergers and acquisitions shouldn't be necessary for this kind of stuff to happen. There's already a huge fanfic community – operating on the barest edge of legality if at all – of *Star Wars* fans writing more creative stuff than Lucas ever dreamed of. In a free market, any big film company (or small indy film producer) that wanted to turn this stuff into a movie would be free to do so, without asking Lucas's permission or paying him a single penny. If it weren't for the dead hand of copyright wielded by George Lucas, there would probably already be Thrawn films in existence, along with every other permutation of the *Star Wars* fictional universe imaginable.

Historically, literature was governed by the same folk ethos as travelling blues singers playing juke joints and riffing off each other's material. Can you imagine what the Shakespeare corpus would look like if he'd had to buy out the copyrights of Petrarch and all the other writers he mined for story ideas? Disney – a company which is now at the forefront of attempting to destroying the very idea of the public domain – was itself built on reworking (usually not for the better) public domain material originating with the Brothers Grimm, A. A. Milne, Rudyard Kipling, and Hans Christian Andersen.

So the actual situation is that mergers between giant corporations, wielding totalitarian information control, are – unfortunately – necessary to artificially recreate the situation that would naturally exist without the state-enforced totalitarian “intellectual property” monopolies. Of course it would be far better to eliminate copyrights and patents altogether. But that's going to happen with or without this particular corporate acquisition. As Cory Doctorow said, the desktop computer is a machine for copying bits instantaneously and at zero marginal cost. Any industry whose business model is based on preventing bits from being copied is too stupid to survive.

Frankly, I'm not that concerned about the merger. It's only significant to the extent that it's a cartel for pooling copyrights. And copyright is in the process of becoming completely and utterly unenforceable anyway – taking corporate dinosaurs like Lucasfilm and Disney into the ashheap of history along with it.

In the meantime, maybe we can expect some great films. Δ

Remembering Corporate Liberalism

Roderick T. Long

[6 February 2007, Austro-Athenian Empire]

The main plotline of the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy concerns an apparent conflict between the central government (the Senate) on the one hand and a

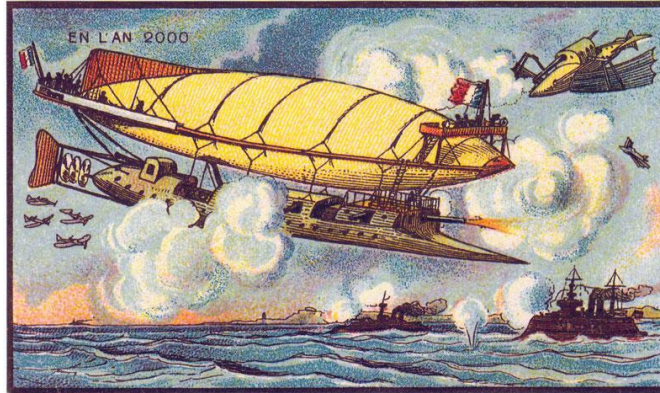
coalition of mercantile interests (the Trade Federation, the Commerce Guild, etc.) on the other. As events unfold, however, it quickly becomes obvious to the audience (though much less quickly to the protagonists) that the conflict is largely a ruse, with the leadership of the two sides (Chancellor Palpatine and Count Dooku, respectively) secretly working hand in glove.

Which isn't to say that all is rosy between them. Each wants to be the dominant partner; witness Dooku's failed attempt to betray Palpatine in *Episode II*, and Palpatine's successful backstabbing of Dooku and his corporate allies in *Episode III*. Still, the partnership is stable enough to succeed in manipulating the protagonists into unwittingly undermining the very liberty they have been seeking to protect. As the pseudo-conflict escalates, there are, in the words of *Episode III*'s opening crawl, “heroes on both sides” – but the good guys on the two sides have been duped into fighting one another, each side grasping the evil of the other side's leadership but not yet that of its own.

Unfortunately, this is not just science fiction.

During the first half of the 20th century, there was a widespread perception that big government and big business were fundamentally at odds. Free-market individualists generally regarded themselves as defenders of peaceful business interests against the rapacious state. Those on the left saw the same opposition though with the reverse evaluation; for them government, especially (in the U.S.) the federal government, was the champion of the common people against rapacious business interests. To be sure, the libertarians would periodically complain about businesses seeking subsidies and protectionism, and the left would periodically complain about governmental violations of civil liberties – but by and large each side saw these problems as embarrassing deviations from the mostly noble record of their favoured allies.

It hadn't always been so. In the late 19th and very early 20th century, there was a much more widespread understanding among both leftists and free-marketers of the symbiotic relationship between state and corporate power. Just imagine telling



William Graham Sumner, or Benjamin Tucker, or Emma Goldman, that the relationship between government and business is one of enmity!

But this insight seems to have gotten submerged in the triumphant advance of progressivism and social democracy. By the 1920s Sumner was dead, Tucker in voluntary exile, and Goldman deported; and former anarchists like Victor Yarros had forgotten everything they'd once known¹ about class analysis. By the 1930s, it was possible for someone like FDR to cartelise the entire economy under a plutocratic elite and yet have his policies viewed (with admiration in some quarters, alarm in others) as an assault on the business class on behalf of workers and the downtrodden.

But in the 1960s things began to change, with the discovery, or rediscovery, of what came to be known as *corporate liberalism*. It's no coincidence that this era saw the emergence of both the new left and modern libertarianism – and both movements differed from their predecessors precisely over this question. The research of new left historians like Gabriel Kolko, James Weinstein, and William Appleman Williams, and journals like *Studies on the Left*, revealed that the corporate elite had been both the chief beneficiaries of and the chief lobbyists for the supposedly anti-business regulations of the Progressive Era;² and Murray Rothbard and his associates at the journal *Left and Right*³ and its successor *Libertarian Forum*⁴ eagerly brought the same message to the libertarian “right.” Free-marketers were discovering that their beloved business class, far from being Ayn Rand’s “persecuted minority,” had all along been in league with the hated state; while those on the left were simultaneously learning that their beloved liberal state, far from being the bulwark of the poor against the plutocracy, had all along been in league with the hated corporate elite.

In a famous 1965 speech,⁵ SDS president Carl Oglesby spoke for much of the new left in pointing out that the “menacing coalition of industrial and military power” and its “demand for acquiescence” against which he and his fellow radicals were organising were “creatures ... of a Government that since 1932 has considered itself to be fundamentally liberal.”

The original commitment in Vietnam was made by President Truman, a mainstream liberal. It was seconded by President Eisenhower, a moderate liberal. It was intensified by the late President Kennedy, a flaming liberal. Think of the men who now engineer that war – those who study the

maps, give the commands, push the buttons, and tally the dead: Bundy, McNamara, Rusk, Lodge, Goldberg, the President himself. ... They are all liberals.

Oglesby concluded that “corporate liberalism ... performs for the corporate state a function quite like what the Church once performed for the feudal state. It seeks to justify its burdens and protect it from change.”

On the libertarian side, Rothbard was arguing⁶ in the same year that the political program of big business had always been to “fasten upon the economy a cement of subsidy, stabilization, and monopoly privilege,” and that the aim and effect of the New Deal in particular had simply been “to impose a State monopoly capitalism through the NRA, to subsidize business, banking, and agriculture through inflation and the partial expropriation of the mass of the people through lower real wage rates, and to the regulation and exploitation of labor by means of government-fixed wages and compulsory arbitration.”

Corporate liberalism functions via a façade of opposition between a purportedly progressive statocracy and a purportedly pro-market plutocracy. The con operates by co-opting potential opponents of the establishment; those who recognise that something’s amiss with the statocratic wing are lured into supporting the plutocratic wing, and vice versa. Whenever the voters grow weary of the plutocracy, they’re offered the alleged alternative of an FDR or JFK; whenever they grow weary of the statocracy, they’re offered the alleged alternative of a Reagan or Thatcher. Perhaps the balance of power shifts slightly toward one side or the other; but the system remains essentially unchanged. (Which explains, for example, why the recent much-trumpeted power shift in Congress has resulted in precious little policy change.)

Alas, just as the insights of the 19th century were largely lost by the 1920s, so the insights of the 1960s seem to have become largely lost by the 1980s. Probably Reagan indeed played a crucial role in sowing confusion once more, this time by wrapping fascism in libertarian rhetoric just as the Progressives and FDR had wrapped fascism in leftist rhetoric. In any case, many libertarians today (sometimes even professed followers of Rothbard) have gone back to thinking of business as a persecuted minority to be defended against the creeping “socialism” of the regulatory state, while many on the left (sometimes

even professed anarchists, like Noam Chomsky) look to the federal government as a bulwark against so-called “laissez-faire” and indulge in nostalgia for the New Deal.

If the left/libertarian coalition of the 19th century, abortively re-attempted in the 1960s, is to be reestablished, as it should be, it is above all an understanding of the nature of corporate liberalism – its *non-accidental* nature, given the incentives inherent in state power – that must be revived. Δ

Notes

[1] <http://praxeology.net/unblog03-06.htm#10>

[2] For a summary of their findings, see Roy Childs, “Big Business and the Rise of American Statism,” at: <http://praxeology.net/RC-BRS.htm>

[3] Archived at: <http://mises.org/journals/left-right.asp>

[4] Archived at: <http://mises.org/journals/libertarianforum.asp>

[5] “Let Us Shape the Future,” at: <http://tinyurl.com/6p4mxo>

[6] “Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty,” at: http://mises.org/journals/lar/pdfs/1_1/1_1_2.pdf

How Star Wars Should Have Ended: Reflections on Taste, the Expanded Universe, and Radical Politics

William Gillis

[19 September 2011, Human Iterations]

I’m feeling profoundly under the weather so it’s as good a time as any to indulge in that most venerable of radical pastimes, ranting about *Star Wars*.

I discovered *Star Wars* the same way any poor eight-year-old did in the early 90s, through the comics section at my local library. *Dark Empire* and *Tales of the Jedi* were richly watercolored and stunning in their scope. And eventually I got bored enough to follow up on their source films. It didn’t take long for me to realize that *Star Wars* was an acceptable geekdom in the otherwise harsh projects. *Star Wars* was *gangsta*. And the root of this I suspect lies in its dramatically different character from *Star Trek*, *Lord of the Rings* or the myriad superheroes and chain-mail wearing dragon-slayers cranked out monthly. *Star Wars* feels familiar.

Having turned to the comics section only after exhausting the rest of the stacks, I was knowledgeable

enough to recognize the technological trappings as laughable, but gracious enough to appreciate the sly self-effacing shrug in “*a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away.*” The realism of *Star Wars* is its resonance with our common experience of ‘how reality works.’ Reality is complicated, gritty, lived-in, with more components than you can ever experience or understand. Obi-Wan and Luke don’t know the names of all the alien species dicking about in Wuher’s cantina and it wouldn’t occur to them to try. The galaxy is a big place. And the Empire’s success in this context is awe-inspiring and despair-inducing even while being obviously incomplete. *Star Wars* is what the world looks like to kids dealing dope on street corners. Scraping by in the chaotic brutal periphery, proud of the various impressions of home and community found there, using fantastic tools without the slightest understanding of how they work, in awe of the state while waking up every morning simmering in hate for it. *Star Wars* creates an environment in which the colors are brighter but everything else is the same. And then it wraps us up in the fantasy of meaningful resistance.

Maintaining this essential “tone” of *Star Wars* has been probably the most uproarious issue in the last three decades of popculture. Everyone knows the prequels dropped the ball, although the list of widely identified missteps is a bit shallow in description (more on that later). But *Star Wars* has been grappling with this burden from the very beginning. Some poor sod at Marvel Comics is told “we’ve got a license” and all of a sudden he’s forced to make difficult decisions about what would best signify the “star warsness” of a story as opposed to a Buck Rogers story. It’s not enough to draw some familiar outfits or even capture the characters’ voices; what fans are addicted to is the feel of the world. And it’s an inarguable fact that almost everyone has been failing to nail that in one way or another ever since.

I’m not going to suggest that my extensive fandom (which collapsed before high school) or presumed media studies prowess grants me perfect depth in analysis. Every writer and artist that’s worked on *Star Wars* has brought their own subjective lens and I’m not immune. But I do have one very simple point that I think should unarguably frame the issue:

The most potent and successful component of *Star Wars* was the taste of reality that suffused its fantastical nature.

Lucas believed his winning formula was the genre mixing pot, something he struggled to stir up in the

prequels and Lucasfilm has slightly more successfully adopted as their guiding light in the T-Canon. But this is wrong. Objectively and empirically wrong.

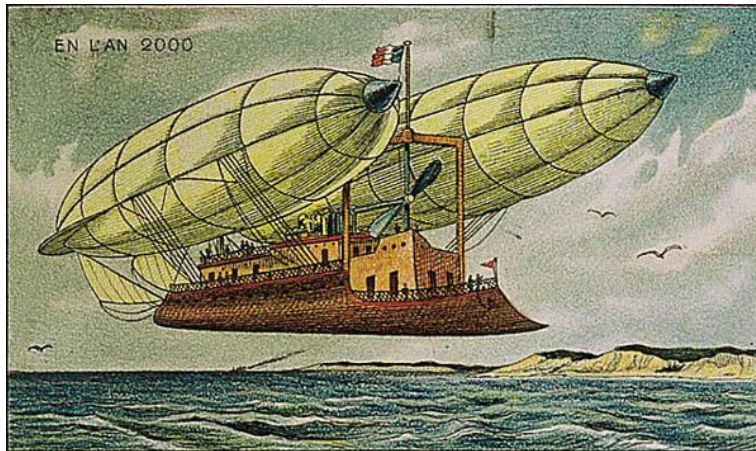
And now, in recognizing that, I'd like to talk about what can and could have been done to save the taste we all long for and yet have all but given up on re-experiencing.

Let's start with *Return of the Jedi*. I've held onto an idealization of *RotJ* for far too long, mostly through the way my earlier experience with *Dark Empire* and Ian McDiarmid's starkly redeeming performance in most of the prequels set the Emperor front and center in my head. But the too cool for school bros that kvetched obnoxiously about the Ewoks not being über badass mech-driving Wookiees actually had a point. Lucas had a really good idea with the Ewoks – a tiny band of dismissibly cute primitives ends up being critical in the Empire's downfall – but he focused too much on them and too little on the unavoidably eye- and mind-catching rebel fleet. The Ewoks go from being a realistically unexpected counterpoint to an off-tone chirpy *FernGully* fairy tale.

In the process we're denied a chance to soak up the random realness of the assembled rebel fleet (either before battle or during). The sudden diversity we glimpse finally has the opportunity to sell the notion of the Rebellion. We want to see a whole variety of aliens, capital ships and one-off fighters. Even an eight-year-old can't swallow the idea of the near monolithic resistance army almost as clean-cut as the Imperials.

You see this is where *Star Wars* inevitably loses me, and where I think it also begins to lose everyone else whether or not they fully recognize it. Simply put, the actual ranks of the Rebellion are portrayed as nearly as white (human) and clean-cut as the Empire. Han, Luke, Leia and Chewie in so far as they aren't are an *exception* against that backdrop. And in being allowed to be that exception they're implicitly an elite. *RotJ* does some nice things to consciously try and rectify all this: introducing the Mon Calamari, Lando's Sullustan copilot, sticking a Dressellian into the mission briefing, making the Endor strike team extras

scruffy hippies with beards, long hair and varying baggy clothes. But it doesn't go anywhere far enough. And the moment the continuity of novels and comics picked up after the second Death Star gets vaporized that same unimaginative, undetailed, monolithic interpretation of the Rebellion (and the war) started spiraling out of control. The Rebellion immediately became The New Republic and all of a sudden the whole damn struggle wasn't about



overthrowing totalitarianism and breakin' the law as one pleases but rather restoring the rightful regime. The Empire half-collapses and The New Republic steps in to take over. A very conventional war is fought for five or six years and then there's a single galactic congress and a single galactic

military and everything is essentially the same as under the Empire except shit gets voted on. Everything from there on out is basically a *Star Trek* story minus the scientists.

(It's a pretty obvious reality that the *Star Wars* tone cannot allow for the existence of scientists. Most writers, no matter how stupid, have caught on to the paradigm dissonance it would create and stepped aside. Indeed the best explicitly banished science out to the fringes of *Star Wars* history. One of my favorite summations was the throw away factoid that no one knows how hyperdrive works and no one cares. Sadly, in both our world and theirs the mindset of science is alien and *unrealistic* to the average person. *Star Wars* has tinkerers and engineers but the horizon of its aspirations is the horizon of the capitalist and working man. This is why midichlorians were so repulsive to the fans. And why building a ridiculously scaled up blaster to shoot rebellious planets was more swallowable than discovering $e=mc^2$ and carpet bombing them with nukes.)

Star Wars took a turn for the suck a long time ago and those mistakes have been continuously compounded by everyone writing in its world since. The stream of what revamps writers are caught in showcases the growing desperation to get back to the roots. The obvious piece of advice: *Stop Writing About Han, Luke and Leia! Keep characters obscure rather than dynastic and focus on separate concurrent sagas about little*

people! is a waste of breath – we’re talking about space-fantasy genre trash after all.

But it’s worth asking the question, hypothetically what developments after Endor would still retain the rich *Star Wars* feel?

To answer that I think it’s necessary to get a tad political.

First I’d like to point out a number of positive things about the prequels that were entirely new yet felt solidly *Star Wars*: Shitty battle droids produced *en masse* by rich people to create their own private armies? *Fucking good idea*. Palpatine’s slow machiavellian rise to power. The Republic deteriorating to showing its inherent unviability. The Jedi being scared and reflexively conservative. A local dispute with a WTO/IMF stand-in. Secession. Shiny things with a hint of decay.... Granted, Lucas screwed up and made things ridiculously dynastical, rammed the camera directly at big issue stuff (battles, debates, etc.) rather than dancing around the periphery, and thought things like slapstick, 50s kitsch, and cheesy romance were the perfect additions to his formula. Oh and neutering Iain McDiarmid’s mence with a silly latex-and-force-lightning debacle and hell, shitty dialogue mixed with shitty, shitty acting. But mainly he fucked up at something that was a good idea and one that he actually meant to accomplish: Moral quagmire. Every once in a while the prequels stop fearfully candy coating everything and start to embrace the theme that shit is fucked up and folks can’t be sure anything they do means a damn. The inescapable point of any hypothetical *Star Wars* prequels was always going to be how ridiculous the notion of a monolithic purely good team is. When Alec Guinness’ Obi-Wan speaks of the Old Republic he does so with some obvious nostalgia, but it’s also clearly tempered with depression, not at the impediments to its restoration, but at the realization that it was an unworkable delusion.

So here’s my proclamation: The Rebel Alliance is not some orderly conspiracy by political powers to restore the Republic, rather it has to be an alliance of rebels emerging in different places and different contexts for vastly different reasons. Oh there’s rebellion everywhere, proles shouting “five-oh” and taking out stormtroopers in back alley shootouts, terrorist cells blowing up upper class human civvies on Eridu, businessmen hiring pirates to attack Imperials getting too close to their illegal bacta operation. There’s slave rebellions on Kashyyyk and secret worker councils in the Kuat shipyards and

speciesist underground armies and liberal dumbfucks on Alderaan and ideologues of Every Conceivable Stripe. Roving clusters of buddy fighter pilots making attacks where they can, working off of one or two official contacts with other resistance groups. Shit is complicated. So the Yavin 4 resistance was largely humans bankrolled by rich core world dissidents (Alderaan, Chandrilla ...) and they may have been a logistical center best tied to the other groups. But they’re dwarfed by all different kinds of actions and uprisings. Slowly growing more tied together and making some serious gains but suffering starker attrition as they do.

I’m partial to the notion that Palpatine, being Sith and a genius, was irreplaceable. If keeping a Galactic Empire tied together was remotely feasible without massive psionic magic the Republic would have become an Empire long ago. And I’m partial to the notion that the Imperial Navy was crippled at Endor. So even while many, many people and classes were indebted to and dependent on the Empire their hold *was* shattered in much of the galaxy immediately following Endor, including Coruscant (that’s what you get when you build your ridiculous city planet on top of miles of lumpenproles). The Imperial power structures that manage to persist (economic, political, and military) end up splitting in a variety of ways. In many cases the regional governors assume sovereign control over their territories. The Imperial Navy as a whole probably holds together quite well, lumping up in one or at most two broad regions. Maybe there’s some epic civil war, maybe not. However you cut it “Empire” is a self-evidently outdated word. A regional body (probably over a chunk of the core) faced with fraying effects all around needs an ideological narrative to even make sense. Notions of purity, elitism and order have to be harped on much, much harder (causing openly recognizable inefficiencies in some respects). Everywhere else Imperial structures persist by means of superficial shifts matched with appeals to Old Republic “great civilization” narratives.

For the vast majority of the galaxy the collapse of the Empire means a sudden return to local governance. Corrupt administrators, republican governments, traditional rulers, gangsters, warlords, corporate operations ... With a ton of un-ruled marketplaces as well as idealic fringe communities as well.

It’s utterly preposterous to assert the Rebel Alliance would hold together in these conditions.

Until Endor there had never been anything close to a single coherent “rebel fleet.” Ackbar is sick of all your traps. (Also your non-traps. The only decent genders have tentacles.) He’s going home to Mon Calamari. Obviously. Because that’s his motivation. Or if he has an ideological one for the shape of the galaxy as a whole (communist!, anarchist!, libertarian!, fish-philosophy!) then fine, he has that, but there’s just no way in hell it’s going to be uniformly shared by all the different components of the rebellion. The vast majority are just doing it for their homeworld, or their families or revenge or general insurrectionary spirit. Sure, some rich planets that have fallen from the Empire’s grace long in an abstract way for the privileges they had under the Republic – but they just broke the back of the only military force anywhere near capable of bringing everyone else in line.

Nobody gives two shits what some human in a big robe says on the remains of a looted Coruscant. (And oh yeah, there’s a *massive* amount of looting/piracy in the immediate aftermath of Endor as the luckiest dispossessed start divvying shit up and entropic egalitarian forces rush back into the market.) Cooperation? Don’t shit me. Everyone remembers what everyone else got up to under the Empire. And they all restructured differently. Everyone in power fears every other new planetary power for either being an iota too radical or an iota too conservative. Between such parties setting up even the loosest of galactic federations makes no sense. There isn’t an overarching enemy to be fought against, it’s not even clear who still is “Imperial” and who isn’t, but there *are* uncountable threats springing up all over the place as well as rubble and workcamp files to be sorted through back home. The Alliance was a success, now it’s over.

That said, undoubtedly some groups forged in the rebellion would continue kicking. Whether through shared ideology or simply having no home to return to. Some folks like Wedge and Hobbie would cluster in different ways, decide on targets/priorities and keep fighting. But there is absolutely no simple big picture. There are no maps of the galaxy half in red and half in blue, gradually ceding to blue.

And Leia is most definitely **not** elected Chancellor of Everything from media popularity and hero worship. (*Star Wars* doesn’t have a galactic press or

internet in any relevant way, it’s not a sedate information-age setting. Kids fix their father’s landspeeder and deal deathsticks out by the slave pens. Remember, it’s the sort of world where “I *just received word* that the Emperor has dissolved the senate” makes sense. Where Leia has to personally drag a little bit of data from one star system to another with a whole fucking starship. Folks aren’t checking live feeds on space-twitter.)

That said, *Star Wars* is an optimistic bit of fantasy and I have some optimistic paths the galaxy could take without chucking all sense of gritty reality.

First, Luke actually trains Leia. They gather, inspire and collaborate with other force sensitives. And then search for surviving Jedi knowledge, vanquish local evils, and forge their own way. Not at the center of things, but at the periphery. The Jedi remain a faint, passing legend for a long time. They do not chuck Star Destroyers around with their minds. Nor are there creatures that block their access to the energy field of life itself. They do not set up shop on Yavin IV just because we’ve seen it before and anything that’s been seen has to have its backstory explained (missing the whole point!). They are wanderers. Healing and freeing. And no longer chained to the flag of a centralized government or reactionary tradition they slowly start to make progress in aggregate. There is no Jedi council or even an order. No one Jedi ever encounters or even learns of, much less communicates with, more than a tiny fraction of their kin. But dictators, oligarchs, gangsters, and politicians dissolve in their wake and



more utopian, collectivist societies emerge. (Also, incidentally, Ben’s impression in the force never goes away. That’s not something unique, it’s just what happens to every damn Jedi who meditates on what life wants rather than what they want. Vader was surprised by this because he hadn’t finished developing as a Jedi.)

Second, trade becomes impossible to regulate. Smugglers and other agorists proliferate wildly until their various mutual-aid networks become the most stable galaxy-spanning social institutions. Taxation is impossible for the same Iain Banks space-is-3D reasons – at least without the sort of massive capital investment that disappeared with the Empire. Entities like the Trade Federation can only

emerge in the context of a larger state. Asteroid bases and hijacked capital ships go from obscure relay points to major conduits of culture and civilization. A proliferation of small non-localized pirates is certain, but this isn't impetus for the creation of large scale governance because there's nothing a government could do any better than mutual aid / insurance networks. All this erodes the hell out of regional governments and core worlds with unsustainable cultures suffer badly. (Poor Coruscant was always going to end up another Nar Shadda.)

The long term future of the *Star Wars* galaxy is in space, even more so than before. A populace split more fairly between sedentary planet-sized governments / collectives and flowing circuits of the cheerfully nomadic free-wheeling traders criss-crossing the stars. The peace that is ushered in is hardly complete, but it's better regulated and more egalitarian than the Republic ever was.

Writers have always assumed the Republic arose from colonizers attempting to keep in contact and assert control during an era in which space travel was less well known. A time where the relatively few ships that existed were financed by institutions. In which the galaxy was a lot emptier for travellers with possible dangers around every corner. Over its existence those initial conditions have slowly changed. I like this interpretation because it gives meaning and substance to the massive social shift Palpatine wrought. The Empire was an intelligent if desperate attempt to adapt the Republic's outdated mechanisms and drive to deal with the now teeming and highly connected galaxy.

Basically a totalitarian Empire makes sense, a rotting and unsustainable Republic makes sense, a teemingly complex anarchic and increasingly more nomadic post-collapse culture also makes sense. But a more or less decent galactic-sized democracy instantly formed and accepted out of the goodness of all the Rebels' hearts? Totally unbelievable. And basically a stubborn Liberal lack of imagination.

In short, the only believable future is one in which the death-stick dealing teens win. The world doesn't go back to bureaucrats, committees, corporate

laws, and stodgy religious institutions. Or if it starts to, the forces leading that push are fought just as furiously as the Empire was. The only new world coming is one of the Han Solos and Lando Calrissians. The grubby working class, the petty criminals and entrepreneurs. Frequently sketchy, but basically decent.

The major upsets when they exist are not from the development of new scientific breakthroughs (pah!) but from discovery of new functions in the ancient tech everybody is already walking on. Or the discovery of ancient unknowably storied locales like Korriban. (Indiana Jones tapped the same Lucas genius for making you feel like there was too much rich context to ever pick apart.) There are no Sith because the Sith with their very specific historical grievance (christ it'd be nice if the piling up *KOTOR* era stuff managed some tangible motivations beside the over-harped and cartoonish "hate makes you powerful" shit) died with Palpatine. Rather there are Jedi who fuck up, Jedi who disagree on bad days, and psychopaths who were lucky enough to be successful at moving the nickel around with their minds when they were eight. Shit can get dramatic, stakes can get relatively big scale, but not so big – the empire's dead and with it the only time in thousands of years there was even the economic capacity for things like Death Stars much less the social context to apply it meaningfully. On the whole the Galaxy starts living a bit more nomadic and anarchic like The Culture except without any conscious or noticeable moral enlightenment. Factions jockey back and forth. Local powers try to act imperialistically. Ideologies clash and shift. The Jedi go on. Quietly. Less perceptibly.

That's how *Star Wars* ends in my head. Δ

William Gillis is a second-generation anarchist who's worked as an activist in countless projects and capacities since getting involved in the lead-up to N30 (the "Battle in Seattle"). He studies high energy physics and holds a deep fascination with the egalitarian potential of markets. William's writing can be found primarily at humaniterations.net.

EXPLAINING LEFT-LIBERTARIANISM

The Distinctiveness of Left-Libertarianism

Gary Chartier

[5 November 2012, Bleeding Heart Libertarians;
revised]

Left-libertarianism in the relevant sense is a position that is simultaneously leftist and libertarian. It features leftist commitments to:

- engaging in class analysis and class struggle;
- opposing corporate privilege;
- undermining structural poverty
- embracing shared responsibility for challenging economic vulnerability;
- affirming wealth redistribution;
- supporting grass-roots empowerment;
- humanizing worklife;
- protecting civil liberties;
- opposing the drug war;
- supporting the rights of sex workers;
- challenging police violence;
- promoting environmental well-being and animal welfare;
- fostering children's liberation;
- rejecting racism, sexism, heterosexism, nativism, and national chauvinism; and
- resisting war, imperialism and colonialism.

Simultaneously, it features libertarian commitments to:

- affirming robust protections for just possessory claims;
- embracing freed markets and a social ideal of peaceful, voluntary cooperation; and
- crafting a thoroughly anti-statist politics.

A Leftist Position

A leftist position might be thought of as one marked by concern with subordination, exclusion,

deprivation, and war. Left-libertarians wholeheartedly embrace these leftist concerns. But left-libertarians may differ from other leftists insofar as they:

- affirm the *independent value* of robust protections for just possessory claims – as, among other things, an expression of and a means of implementing the leftist opposition to subordination and leftist support for widely shared prosperity, but also as constraints on the means used to pursue some leftist goals;
- make different *predictions* about the consequences of establishing a genuinely freed market (rejecting the view that such a market would be a corporate playground);
- offer different *explanations* of the origins and persistence of objectionable social phenomena (so that, for instance, state-secured privileges for elites, rather than market dynamics, account for persistent poverty and workplace subordination); *and*
- urge different *remedies* for these phenomena (characteristically, a combination of rectifying harms resulting from state-perpetrated and state-tolerated injustice and fostering voluntary, solidaristic action).

Left-libertarians share with other leftists the awareness that there are *predictable winners and losers* in society and that being sorted into the two camps isn't primarily a matter of luck or skill. But left-libertarians emphasize that it's not a consequence of market exchange, either: it's a reflection of state-committed, state-threatened, and state-tolerated aggression. As long as there's a state apparatus in place, the wealthy can capture it, using it to gain power and more wealth, while the politically powerful can use it to acquire wealth and more power. The ruling class – made up of wealthy people empowered by the state, together with high-level state functionaries, and those directly linked to these two groups – is *defined* by its relationship with the state, its essential enabler. Opposing this class thus means opposing the state.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists the recognition that big businesses enjoy substantial privileges that benefit them while harming the public. But they stress that the proper response to corporate privilege is to eliminate subsidies, bailouts, cartelizing regulations, and other state-driven features of the legal, political, and economic environments that prop up corporate power rather than retaining the privileges while increasing state regulatory involvement in the economy – which can be expected to create new opportunities for elite manipulation, leave corporate power intact, stifle upstart alternatives to corporate behemoths, and impoverish the public.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists both outrage at structural poverty and the recognition that the wealthy and well connected help to *shape the rules of the economic and political game* in ways that preserve their wealth and influence while making and keeping others poor. But left-libertarians emphasize that poverty isn't created or perpetuated by the freed market, but rather by large-scale theft and by the privileges and constraints – from licensing requirements to intellectual property rules to land-use controls to building codes – that prevent people from using their skills and assets effectively or that dramatically raise the cost of doing so. Eliminating structural poverty means eliminating state-secured privilege and reversing state-sanctioned theft.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists *the conviction that the redistribution of wealth can be appropriate or even required*. But they deny that redistribution may reasonably be undertaken to bring about a particular *pattern* of wealth distribution, that it may be effected through systemic aggressive interference with people's justly acquired possessions, or that it is properly *the work of the state*. Rather, they suggest, redistribution ought to be effected by the legal system (as it restores to people resources unjustly taken from them or their predecessors in interest, as it makes assets stolen by the state or acquired unjustly by its cronies available for homesteading, and as it denies validity to state-secured privileges that preserve the economic positions of the well-connected while keeping others poor), through solidaristic mutual aid, and through the tendency of a market liberated from privilege to “eat the rich.”

Left-libertarians share with other leftists both *compassionate concern* with economic vulnerability and the recognition that vulnerable people *can't be left to fend for themselves*, that shared responsibility for meeting their needs is morally and practically

essential. But they stress that mutual aid arrangements have dealt very effectively with economic vulnerability in the past. They also emphasize that such arrangements could be expected to be more successful absent taxation (people can and will spend their own money on poverty relief, but they're likely to do so much more efficiently and intelligently than state officials deploying tax revenues), poverty-producing state regulations, and limitations on choice in areas like medical care.

Left-libertarians share with many other leftists – New Leftists and Greens, say – the conviction that *decision-making should be decentralized*, that people should be able to participate to the maximum feasible degree in shaping decisions that affect their lives. But they maintain that this means that, against a backdrop of secure pre-political rights, *all* association should be consensual. Top-down, forcible decision-making is likely to be marred by the fallibility of decision-makers and their tendency to pursue self-interested goals at the public's expense. Small-scale political units are more humanizing than large-scale ones; but decentralization must finally be decentralization to the level of the particular person.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists the realization that *hierarchical workplaces are disempowering and stultifying*, and that supporting workplace hierarchies is thus often morally objectionable. But they stress that state action makes hierarchies more common. Hierarchies limit the ability of workers to use their knowledge and skills to respond flexibly and efficiently to production and distribution challenges and to meet customer needs; the resulting inefficiencies of hierarchies would make them less common aspects of worklife, and increase the odds that people would be able to choose alternatives offering more freedom and dignity (self-employment or work in partnerships or cooperatives), in the absence of privileges that lowered the costs of maintaining hierarchies and raised the costs of opting out of them (as by making self-employment more costly, and so more risky). State action also redirects wealth to those interested in seeing that they and people like them rule the workplace; and the state's union regulations limit the ways unions can challenge workplace hierarchies. Opposing hierarchies thus means opposing the state.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists a commitment to *civil liberties*. But they stress that the state is a predictable foe of these liberties and that the most effective way to safeguard them is to protect

people's control over their bodies and justly acquired possessions.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists a conviction that *the drug war is destructive, racist, and absurdly expensive*. But they emphasize that the best protection against prohibitionist campaigns of all sorts is to respect people's control over their bodies and justly acquired possessions, and that aggression-based limits on *all* disfavored but voluntary exchanges should be disallowed.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists a *concern for the well-being of sex workers*. But they note that state actors engage in violence against sex workers and that state policies, including criminalization and regulation, create or intensify the risks associated with sex work.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists a *passionate opposition to police violence and corruption*. But they emphasize that this is not simply a reflection of poor oversight or the presence in police agencies of "a few bad apples" but instead a reflection of the structural positions of such agencies as guarantors of state power and of the lack of accountability created both by the existence of substantial *de facto* differences in standards for the use of force by police officers and others and by the monopolistic status of police agencies.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists *persistent concerns with environmental quality and animal welfare*. But they stress that environmental harms can be prevented and remedied without state involvement, as long as robust legal protections for bodies and justly acquired possessions are in place; that the existence of the state is not a necessary condition for the protection of non-human animals from abuse; and that state actions and policies are often directly responsible for protecting polluters, promoting environmental harms, and injuring non-human animals.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists a *commitment to the well-being of children*. But left-libertarians underscore the importance of respecting children's rights to control their own bodies and possessions—rejecting *both* attempts to treat children as their parents' property *and* paternalistic state action that interferes unreasonably with children's freedom –

and emphasize the degree to which the state is not the protector of children but is responsible in multiple ways for significant threats to their freedom and well-being, notably through compulsory schooling.

Left-libertarians share with other leftists the awareness that *racism, sexism, heterosexism, nativism, and national chauvinism are morally repugnant*. But they emphasize the crucial role of the state in creating, perpetuating, and capitalizing on these forms of unfairness while stressing that eliminating the privilege-rooted props the state provides for prejudice-driven conduct can play a vital role in combating discrimination. Suspicious of the state and respectful of just possessory claims, they stress non-aggressive solidaristic action as the appropriate means. They promote marriage equality while seeking the departure of the state from the

marriage business. And, while joining other leftists in opposing xenophobia, they stress that all borders should be razed to enable untrammelled migration.

Left-libertarians share with many other leftists (say, those on the New Left) a *passionate opposition to war and empire* and a concern for the victims of both, including native peoples across the globe. But they emphasize the links between warfare, imperialism, and colonialism and the state's continuing infringements on civil and economic liberties – not to mention ruling-class mischief. Interference with people's peaceful conduct *within* the state's borders is objectionable for many of the same reasons as *war beyond* the state's borders. As a form of enslavement, conscription is unjust. The freedom to trade tends to reduce the probability of war. And warfare is a likely consequence of the operation of the state, which seeks predictably to expand its influence by force. Leftist opposition to *war* should be seen as entailing opposition to the state *per se*.



A Libertarian Position

A libertarian position is marked, I suggest, by support for equality of authority; for robust protections for just possessory claims; and for peaceful, voluntary cooperation, including cooperation in and through exchange. Left-libertarians share

these commitments. But left-libertarians may differ from other libertarians insofar as they:

- make different *predictions* about the likely effects of liberating people and eliminating the institutionalized aggression that prevents them from cooperating peacefully and voluntarily (stressing the contingency of hierarchical workplaces, for instance);
- call attention to particular generally accepted *consequences* of building a free society (say, by emphasizing not only freedom but also solidarity, diversity, and poverty relief as among the outcomes of eliminating state-secured privilege);
- tell different *historical or social-scientific stories* about the causes and dynamics of social phenomena (so that the extant distribution of wealth is seen as a product of state action rather than individual virtue); and
- treat certain kinds of social phenomena (arbitrary discrimination, for instance) as *morally objectionable* and argue for non-aggressive but concerted responses to these phenomena.

Left-libertarians share with other libertarians a commitment to *equality of authority* -- to the view that there is no natural right to rule and that non-consensual authority is presumptively illegitimate. This egalitarianism naturally issues in a commitment to anarchism, since state authority is non-consensual. But left-libertarians emphasize that the commitment to *moral* equality that underlies belief in equality of *authority* should entail the rejection of subordination and exclusion on the basis of nationality, gender, race, sexual orientation, workplace status, or other irrelevant characteristics. While left-libertarians agree with other libertarians that people's decisions to avoid associating with others because of such characteristics shouldn't be interfered with *aggressively*, left-libertarians emphasize that such decisions *can* often still be subjected to *moral* critique and should be opposed using non-aggressive means.

Left-libertarians share with other libertarians a commitment to *robust protections for just possessory claims* to physical objects. But they reject "intellectual property" and emphasize that possessory protections shouldn't cover objects acquired with the decisive aid of the state, or otherwise through the use of violence, or to those clearly abandoned. They make

clear that there are just limits to the things people can do to protect their possessions (becoming a trespasser doesn't automatically make one liable to violence). They note that whether claims to land should be held by individuals or groups can only be determined in light of the economics of particular situations and the ways particular claims are established. And they stress that, while just possessory claims should be respected, it's quite possible to oppose aggressive interference with someone's use of her possessions in a given way while *challenging* that use non-aggressively.

Left-libertarians share with other libertarians a commitment to a model of social life rooted in *peaceful, voluntary cooperation*. But they differ with other libertarians in emphasizing that, while force may justly be used only in response to aggression, peaceful, voluntary cooperation is a moral ideal with implications that go beyond simple non-aggression. Left-libertarians urge that associations of *all kinds* be structured in ways that affirm the freedom, dignity, and individuality of all participants, and thus allow participants the option not only of exit but also of voice -- of influencing the associations' trajectories and exercising as much individual discretion within them as possible.

While rejecting capitalism, left-libertarians share with other libertarians an enthusiastic recognition of the value of *markets*. They stress that both parties to a voluntary exchange participate because they prefer it and believe it will benefit them; that prices provide excellent guides for producers and distributors (far better than anything a central planner could offer); and that people should internalize the costs as well as the benefits of their choices. But they emphasize that background injustice can distort markets and constrain traders' options. They also note that commercial exchange does not exhaust the sphere of peaceful, voluntary cooperation and that people can and should cooperate in multiple ways -- playful, solidaristic, compassionate -- that need not be organized along commercial lines.

A Transformed Vision

Left-libertarianism embraces and transforms leftist and libertarian ideals.

Many leftists and libertarians already share some commitments: opposition to war, empire, and corporate privilege; support for civil liberties and grass-roots empowerment. However, many leftists and libertarians also embrace, and often share, various mistaken assumptions.

Left-libertarians challenge these assumptions while embracing the commitments leftists and libertarians share. They seek to demonstrate that it's reasonable both to oppose structural poverty and to favor freed markets, to seek both workplace dignity and robust protections for just possessory claims, to embrace freedom of association while opposing arbitrary discrimination, to foster both peace and economic liberty, to link rejection of war and imperialism with support for peaceful, voluntary cooperation at all levels.

By endorsing leftist *and* libertarian concerns and challenging assumptions that make it difficult for leftists to embrace libertarianism and for libertarians to become leftists, left-libertarianism offers a provocative vision of an appealing politics and of an imaginable world marked by greater freedom and fairness. Δ

CASS trustee and senior fellow Gary Chartier is a Professor of Law and Business Ethics, and Associate Dean of the School of Business, at La Sierra University. He is the author of Economic Justice and Natural Law (Cambridge University Press 2009), The Analogy of Love (Imprint Academic 2007), The Conscience of an Anarchist (Cobden Press 2011) and Anarchy and Legal Order (Cambridge 2012), as well as articles in journals including the Oxford Journal of Legal Studies, Legal Theory, Religious Studies, and the Journal of Social Philosophy. He holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge and a JD from the University of California at Los Angeles.

The Conflation Trap

Roderick T. Long

[7 November 2012, Bleeding Heart Libertarians]

Left-libertarians differ from the (current) libertarian mainstream both in terms of what outcomes they regard as *desirable*, and in terms of what outcomes they think a freed market is *likely* to produce.

With regard to the latter issue, left-libertarians regard the current domination of the economic landscape by large hierarchical firms as the product not of free competition but of government intervention – including not only direct subsidies, grants of monopoly privilege, and barriers to entry, but also a

regulatory framework that enables firms to socialise the scale costs associated with growth and the informational costs associated with hierarchy, while pocketing the benefits – and leaving employees and consumers with a straitened range of options. In the absence of government intervention, we maintain, firms could be expected to be smaller, flatter, and more numerous, with greater worker empowerment.

Thus we tend to wince when libertarians (or many of them, to varying degrees) rush to the defense of elite corporations and prevailing business models and practices as though these were free-market phenomena. First, we think this is factually inaccurate; and second, we think it's strategically suicidal. Ordinary people generally know firsthand the petty tyranny and bureaucratic incompetence that all too often characterise the world of business; libertarians who try to glamourise that world as an arena of economic rationality and managerial heroism risk coming across as clueless at best, and skills for the ruling class at worse.

This is also why we tend to be less than enthusiastic about the word “capitalism” as the term for free-market society; as Friedrich Hayek notes, the term is “misleading,” since it “suggests a system which mainly benefits the capitalists,” whereas a genuine free market is “a system which imposes upon enterprise a discipline under which the managers chafe and which each endeavours to escape.”¹

But it is not only mainstream libertarians (and of course, to a far greater extent, conservatives) that tend to conflate the results of crony corporatism with those of free markets; such conflationism is all too common on the traditional left as well. The difference is that the evaluations are reversed; where the right-wing version of conflationism treats the virtues of free markets as reason to defend the fruits of corporatism, the left-wing version of conflationism treats the objectionable fruits of corporatism as reason to condemn free markets.

Central to both forms of conflationism is the myth that big business and big government are fundamentally at odds. As is often the case, the myth sustains itself by containing a kernel of truth; while big business and big government are partners, each serving to prop up the other, each side would like to be the dominant partner (as with church and state in the Middle Ages, or Dooku and Palpatine in the *Star Wars* prequels), so much – though not, I think, most – of the conflict between them is genuine. But we should not allow these squabbles between different

wings of the ruling class, essentially over how to divide up the loot, to obscure the far greater extent to which the political elite and the corporate elite work together. Conservative politicians, largely agents of the corporate wing, wrap their policies in anti-big-government rhetoric, while liberal politicians, largely agents of the political wing, wrap their policies in anti-big-business rhetoric; the differences in policy often involve nudging the balance of power slightly in one direction or the other (will healthcare be mainly controlled by government directly, or instead by the private beneficiaries of government-granted privilege like insurance companies and the AMA?), but both wings systematically benefit from most of the policies propounded by each side. FDR's presidency, for example, with its cartelising policies, gave a massive boost to corporate power, while the three chief indices of state power – taxes, spending, and debt – all skyrocketed under Reagan's presidency.

But conflationism isn't just a mistake *about* the prevailing system; it's also a means *by* which that system perpetuates itself. People who are attracted to the idea of free markets are hoodwinked by conflationism into supporting big business, and thus becoming foot soldiers of the corporate wing of the ruling class; people who are repelled by the reality of corporatism on the ground are hoodwinked into supporting big government, and thus becoming foot soldiers of the political wing of the ruling class. Thus, thanks to the pincer-movement of right-conflationism and left-conflationism, those who seek to oppose the prevailing system end up in the ranks of its supporters – and the possibility of a radical challenge to the system as a whole is rendered effectively invisible. This is how conflationism *functions*.

My talk of “functioning” is not meant to imply that conflationism is *deliberately* propagated in order to divert potential enemies of the system into the ranks of its supporters (though of course it *sometimes* is).

In a broader sense, whenever some feature A of a system B tends reliably to produce a certain result C, and A's being such as to produce C helps to explain the existence and/or persistence of B, and thereby of A, then we may say that the *function* of A is to produce

C. Thus the fact that thorns tend to protect roses from being eaten explains why roses, with their thorns, exist and persist. It's in that sense that I say that the function of conflationism within the prevailing state/corporate system is to bewilder its foes into becoming supporters, and to render alternatives invisible. Conflationism is an instance of malign spontaneous order.

Philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn describes an intriguing experiment:

Bruner and Postman asked experimental subjects to identify on short and controlled exposure a series of playing cards. Many of the cards were normal, but some were made anomalous, e.g., a



red six of spades and a black four of hearts. ... For the normal cards these identifications were usually correct, but the anomalous cards were almost always identified, without apparent hesitation or puzzlement, as normal. The black four of hearts might, for example, be identified as the four of either spades or hearts. Without any awareness of trouble, it was immediately fitted to one of the conceptual categories prepared by prior experience. ... With a further increase of exposure to the anomalous cards, subjects did begin to hesitate and to display awareness of anomaly. Exposed, for example to the red six of spades, some would say: That's the six of spades,

but there's something wrong with it – the black has a red border. ... A few subjects ... were never able to make the requisite adjustment of their categories.²

In short, people tend to have not only difficulty with, but even aversion to, recognising something that doesn't fit their established categories. This creates a problem for libertarians generally; for many in the political mainstream, the first impulse is to assimilate libertarians to a more familiar “anti-government” category, namely conservatives. When, after longer exposure, mainstreamers realise that libertarians aren't quite conservatives after all, then they begin to see libertarians as the equivalent of “black spades with red borders” – conventionally conservative on some

issues, conventionally liberal on others, rather than representing a radical alternative to existing ideologies. (Libertarians' use of the Nolan Chart as an outreach tool may contribute to this tendency.)

What holds true for libertarians generally, holds to a still greater extent in the case of left-libertarians. The prevalence of conflationism tends to reinforce the impression that anyone who attacks (what we consider) the fruits of corporatism must be anti-free-market, and that anyone who defends free markets must be undertaking a defense of (what we consider) the fruits of corporatism. Thus nonlibertarian leftists tend to see us as corporate apologists in leftist camouflage, while nonleftist libertarians tend to see us as commies in libertarian guise.

Even when mainstream libertarians acknowledge the existence (and badness) of corporatism, *as most do*, communication with left-libertarians still tends to come to grief. Left-libertarians are baffled when mainstream libertarians acknowledge cronyism in one breath, only to slide back in the next breath to into treating criticisms of big business as criticisms of free markets. More mainstream libertarians, for their part, are baffled as to why left-libertarians keep raising the issue of corporatism when the mainstream libertarians have already acknowledged its existence and badness.

Kuhn is helpful here too:

Since remote antiquity most people have seen one or another heavy body swinging back and forth on a string or chain until it finally comes to rest. To the Aristotelians, who believed that a heavy body is moved by its own nature from a higher position to a state of natural rest at a lower one, the swinging body was simply falling with difficulty. Constrained by the chain, it could achieve rest at its low point only after a tortuous motion and a considerable time. Galileo, on the other hand, looking at the swinging body, saw a pendulum, a body that almost succeeded in repeating the same motion over and over again ad infinitum. ... [W]hen Aristotle and Galileo looked at swinging stones, the first saw constrained fall, the second a pendulum ...³

Aristotle and Galileo were observing the same two facts: the stone keeps swinging back and forth for a while, and then it eventually hangs straight down. But for Galileo the swinging was essential and the eventual cessation accidental, a "friction" phenomenon; whereas for Aristotle, progress toward

a state of rest was, and the sideways perturbations accidental.

Likewise, for those operating within a conceptual framework that sees conservative opposition to big government and liberal opposition to big business as essential and deviations from these norms as accidental, evidence that conservative policies promote big government or that liberal policies promote will be dismissed as inessential or anomalous or an excusable. (See, for example, the video⁴ in which Obama supporters condemn right-wing-sounding policies when they think they're Romney's, but either excuse them or go into denial when told that the policies are actually Obama's.)

Similarly, for many mainstream libertarians, free exchange is what essentially characterises the existing economy, while the corporatist policies are so much friction; and just as there's no need for constant references to friction when talking about how a mechanism works, such mainstream libertarians don't constantly bring up corporatism when discussing the working of the existing economy. For left-libertarians, by contrast, corporatism is a far more central feature of the existing economy, and leaving it out radically distorts our understanding. In such cases left-libertarians and more conventional libertarians are arguing from opposite sides of a Gestalt shift, where what looks essential to one side looks accidental to the other.

I don't mean to suggest that these disputes are rationally irresolvable, however. In the playing-card experiments, subjects did eventually come to see the suits correctly after sufficiently long exposure. And sufficient exposure to the evidence marshaled by left-libertarians can prompt the relevant Gestalt shift, as indeed it frequently does; most left-libertarians once started out either less leftist or less libertarian or both. But the prevailing conceptual framework, through which so many (both libertarian and not) look at the economy without seeing what we see, is, I think, no accident; it's part of the means by which the big-government/big-business partnership maintains itself. Δ

Notes

- [1] Friedrich A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, vol.1, p. 62.
- [2] Thomas S. Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 62-63.
- [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 118-121.
- [4] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Skw-0jv9kts>

The Bold and the Desirable: A Prophecy and a Proposal

Charles Johnson

[16 November 2012, Bleeding Heart Libertarians]

Left-libertarians are sometimes known to stick on distinctions and the definitions of words. We contest commonly understood definitions of political ‘rightism’ and ‘leftism;’ we question the terms used in conventional economic debates over ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism,’ ‘free trade agreements,’ ‘intellectual property,’ ‘privatization’ and ‘private ownership’ of the means of production. We have been known to do funny things with verb tenses when it comes to ‘freed’ markets; we brandish subscripts and three-way distinctions at the drop of a hat. Most famously left-wing market anarchists insist that we defend ‘free markets’ but *not* ‘capitalism’ – insisting that these are not synonyms, and drawing a sharp analytic distinction between the *market form* of exchange, and *conventionally capitalist patterns of economic ownership* and social control.

There are some interesting discussions to be had about that distinction; but to-day I’d like to expand on a distinction sometimes left out in discussing distinctions between the “markets” that left-libertarians defend and the “capitalism” that we condemn – two different senses that are often jammed together *within* the first half of that distinction – within the concept of *market relationships*. The distinction between the two is crucial, and both advocates and critics of market economics have neglected it much too often: when we talk about “markets,” and “free markets” especially, there are really two different definitions we might be working with – one broad, and one narrow.

What is “a market,” ultimately? It is a set of human relationships. And it is a notion with a certain history and familiar examples. But in modern social and economic debates, “market” has taken on meanings far beyond any concrete *marketplace*. What has been abstracted away, and what has been held as essential? The kind of relationships we are likely to have in mind varies, depending on which elements of marketplaces we have chosen to focus on – in particular, whether we focus (1) on the elements of

individual choice, negotiated contracts and free competition; or (2) on the elements of *quid pro quo exchange and commercial relationships*.

Focusing on (1) gives us a concept of **markets as free exchange**. When market anarchists talk about markets, or especially about “*the market*,” we often mean the *sum of all voluntary exchanges* – and when we speak of freed markets, we mean the discussion to encompass *any* economic order based – to the extent that it is based – on respect for individual property, consensual exchange, freedom of association, and entrepreneurial discovery. So to say that something ought to be “left up to the market” is simply to say that it should be handled as a matter of choice and negotiated agreements among free individuals, rather than by coercive government.

Focusing on (2) gives us quite a different concept, **markets as the cash nexus**. We often use the term “market” to refer to a particular *form* of acquiring and exchanging property, and the institutions that go along with it – to refer, specifically, to commerce and for-profit business, typically mediated by currency or by financial instruments that are denominated in units of currency. Whereas free exchange is a matter of the *background conditions behind* economic and social agreements (that it is mutually consensual, not coerced), the cash nexus is a matter of *the terms of the agreements* themselves – of agreeing to conduct matters on a paying basis, in a relatively impersonal quid-pro-quo exchange.

Now one of the central points of free market economics is that “markets” in these two senses are positively interrelated. When they take place within the context of a system of *free exchange*, there can be a positive, even essential role for social relationships that are based on the *cash nexus* – producing, investing, buying and selling at market prices – in the sustaining and flourishing of a free society. But while linked, they are distinct. Markets taken broadly – as free exchange – can include cash-nexus relationships – but also much *more*. Free exchange may, in fact, include many features that *compete with*, limit, transform, or even undermine impersonal cash-nexus relationships in particular domains. Family sharing is part of a free market; charity is part of a free market; gifts are part of a free market; informal exchange and barter are part of a free market. In a freed market there would be nothing to outlaw the features of business as usual in our actually-existing economy – wage labor, rent, formalized business organizations, corporate insurance, corporate finance and the like

would all be available as theoretically possible market outcomes.

But so would alternative arrangements for making a living – including many arrangements that clearly have nothing to do with business as usual or capitalism as we know it: worker and consumer co-ops, community free clinics and mutual aid medical coverage are examples of voluntary exchange; so are wildcat, voluntary labor unions. So are consensual communes, narrower or broader experiments with gift economies, and other alternatives to prevailing corporate capitalism. This broad definition of markets is so broad that you might suggestively describe a fully free market, in this sense, as **the space of maximal consensually-sustained social experimentation.**

But while the freedom and growth of spaces for economic and social experimentation is always something to be desired and defended from a libertarian standpoint, the value of a *cash nexus*, in economic and social relationships, depends entirely on the social context within which it is embedded. Free-market anticapitalists have pointed out the central role that “pro-business” government intervention has played in shaping our daily encounters with bills and business, livelihoods and labor, commodities and consumption. Political privileges to corporate business models, government monopolies and captive markets are deeply entrenched, centrally positioned, pervasive in the actually-existing corporate economy, and overwhelming in scale. Moreover, interlocking government interventions systematically act to restrain, crowd out, bulldoze or simply outlaw less hierarchical, less commercial, grassroots or informal-sector alternatives to corporate-dominated rigged markets for daily needs, whether in making a living, or in housing, or health care, or access to credit, or mutual aid, insurance and crisis relief.

These deep, structural features of the economy shove us into labor, housing and financial markets on artificially desperate terms; they deform the markets we are pushed into through an intense concentration of resources in the hands of the privileged, without the fallback of small-scale enterprise and grassroots

alternatives that might otherwise prove far more attractive. Left-libertarians insist on the importance of this point because in discussions of market economics it is so easily missed, mistaken simply as business as usual and everyday life in a market economy. But when it is missed, people who oppose the worst inequities of the rigged-market system too easily blame the inequities on the *freedom*, or *unregulated* character, of market institutions; while those who wish to stand up for freed markets find themselves on the defensive, trying to defend indefensible institutions when they should be pointing out that their worst features are the product of market constraints.

When leftists complain about commercialism gone mad, about the looming presence of bosses and landlords and debts in our day-to-day lives, about the crises that workers face every month just to pay the rent or the medical bills, we must realize that they are talking about real social evils, which arise from markets in one sense, but not in another. They are talking, specifically, about what the *cash nexus* is made into by political privileges and government monopolies, when competing alternatives among businesses, and competing alternatives to conventional business models, have been paralyzed, crowded out, or simply outlawed by the actions of the corporate state. And they are talking about social relationships that libertarians need



not, and should not, waste any energy on defending. Whatever positive and liberating roles cash-nexus relationships may have in the context of free exchange – and it is important that they have many – they can just as easily become instruments of alienation and exploitation when forced on unwilling participants, in areas of their life where they don't need or want them, through the immediate or indirect effects of government force and rigged markets.

Suppose we grant, for argument's sake, the **modest explanatory claim** about the dominant players in the capitalist economy – from the business practices of Fortune 500 corporations, to our daily confrontations with employers, landlords or financial corporations. Their size, competitive dominance, and

much of their everyday business practices, are substantially the result of the subsidies they receive, the structural privileges they enjoy, and the political constraints on competing businesses, or more informal, less commercial alternatives to their business just as such – competitors who might check them, unseat them, or simply dissolve the need for them in the first place. In an age of multitrillion-dollar bank bailouts, it is not hard to accept that much of actually-existing fortunes and business as usual in the corporate economy as we know it – specifically including much of the abusive power condemned by critics on the Left – are not the result of serving willing customers or ruthlessness in market competition; they are to a great extent the product of exploiting political constraints forged by the alliance of interests between big government and big business.

Even if you accept this explanatory claim, you may still wonder why left-libertarians insist as confidently that we do that uncontrolled economic competition will not only alter the position of these incumbents, perhaps with some *ceteris paribus* tendency towards less concentrated wealth and less corporate or businesslike arrangements in economic life – but will positively and *qualitatively* transform the economic landscape. Left-libertarians are radicals and typically quite optimistic that from fully liberated market processes will naturally emerge the grassroots, alternative economies that they favor, with qualitative social shifts away from (among other things) wage-labor, landlordism, corporate ownership, large firms and to some significant extent corporate commerce as a whole. This is a strong claim, stronger than the explanatory claim alone – call it the **bold predictive claim** – not only about *ceteris paribus* tendencies, but about the prospects for mutualistic economies to arise from freed market processes, and to bring about the greater economic equality, social equality, cultural progress, and ecological sustainability that left-libertarians promise to achieve through libertarian means.

Of course, as I have argued at length, there is a straightforward case for a **possibility claim** that they *might* arise. A “market economy” in the *broad* sense need not be an economy dominated by cash nexus relationships, and people *might* choose to adopt any number of radical experiments. And as left-libertarians have repeatedly pointed out, the empirical fact that a qualitatively different economy *hasn't yet* arisen cannot be explained simply by the dynamics of free markets – we don't have a free market, and the

actually-existing dominant model is (as we have granted) dominant precisely because of the regressive redistribution of wealth and the political constraints that state capitalism has imposed.

The boldness of the bold predictive claim comes, I'd argue, from the combination of *two* distinct elements of the left-libertarian position. The first – the **economic tendency claim** – involves a cluster of empirical observations and theoretical developments in economics. It is, really, not so much a single critical claim or a unified theory, as a sort of *research programme* for a mutualistic market economics, drawing attention to a number of areas for study and discussion. If the *modest explanatory claim* demonstrates some *ceteris paribus* tendency towards a weaker and more unstable position for corporations, and towards greater roles for anti-capitalist, non-commercial, informal-sector or independent alternatives, then the stronger *economic tendency claim* would draw attention to factors affecting the *strength* of the tendency, and the strength or weakness of countervailing factors that might keep *ceteris* from staying *paribus* after all. Areas it marks out for attention include principal-agent problems and knowledge problems in large organizations or hierarchical relationships; the assumption of risk, time horizons, transaction costs and other factors in conventional corporate forms and also in alternative, non-corporate models of ownership, management and financing; the possible shifts in risk tolerance, consumption spending, or interest in social capital under conditions of greater freedom and less precarious material conditions; and many other questions for detailed empirical research that I can only hint at within the scope of this essay.

But in addition to the empirical research programme the economic tendency claim suggests, left-libertarians also defend a second, **normative claim**, drawing on the *possibility* of less hierarchical, less formalized, and less commercialized social relationships, and the *desirability* of conscious, concerted, campaigns of stateless social activism to bring about the social conditions we value. Left-libertarians do not only suggest that employers, management hierarchies, or conventional commercial enterprises will tend to face certain ready-made economic difficulties and instabilities in a freed market; we aim to *make* ourselves and our neighborhoods more difficult to deal with, by consciously organizing and becoming the alternatives we hope to see emerge. Our leftism is not a research programme only, but an *activist manifesto*.

The shape of a free society is formed not only by anonymous economic tendencies and “market forces,” but also by conscious social activism and community organizing. “Market forces” are not superhuman entities that push us around from the outside; they are a conveniently abstracted way of talking about the systematic patterns that emerge from our own economic choices. *We are market forces*, and in markets broadly understood as spaces of freewheeling social experimentation, it is in our hands, and up to us, to make different choices; or shift the range of choices available, through the creative practice of hard-driving social activism, culture jamming, workplace organizing, strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, divestiture, the development of humane alternatives, counter-institutions, and the practice of grassroots solidarity and mutual aid.

This is, of course, simply to *state* the normative claim; I’ve only outlined the conclusion, not (yet, here) given an argument in its favor. Left-libertarians’ case for stateless social activism rests on a set of arguments that I can only hint at within the space of this essay, but the normative defense of a broadly leftist programme of social and economic activism may draw support from (1) independent ethical or social considerations in favor of greater autonomy, less hierarchical, less privileged, less rigid, more participatory and more co-operative social relationships. And it may draw support also from (2) arguments in favor of a “thick” conception of libertarianism, drawing from and mutually reinforcing integrated commitments to a radical anti-authoritarianism, and to concerns about broad social dynamics of deference, privilege, participation and autonomy.

At any rate, the *normative* and *activist* element of left-libertarian claims about freed markets may help explain the strength of the *bold predictive claim*, as follows. Market anarchists’ inquiries under the *economic tendency claim* give us reasons to suggest, more or less strongly, that getting rid of rigged markets and interlocking radical monopolies would be sufficient to bring about a sort of *laissez-faire socialism* – the natural tendency of freed markets may well be for ownership to be more widely dispersed and for many forms of concentrated social or economic privilege, stripped of the bail-outs and monopolies that sustained them, to collapse under their own weight. But left-libertarians see freed markets as characterized not only by *laissez-faire socialism*, but also *entrepreneurial anti-capitalism*: whatever reasons we may have to predict that some

concentrations of economic or social power may not simply collapse on their own, left-libertarians, drawing on the resources of grassroots, nonviolent social activism, *intend to knock them over*. The strength of the predictive claim, then, comes from its double origins: it is both a *prophecy* about the likely effects of market freedom; and a *radical proposal* about what to do with what remains. Δ

Charles Johnson is an individualist anarchist writer living and working in Auburn, Alabama. He is a Research Associate with the Molinari Institute, co-editor (with Gary Chartier) of the anthology Markets Not Capitalism (Autonomedia, 2011), and keeps a blog at radgeek.com.

Beyond Bossism

Gary Chartier

[13 November 2012, Bleeding Heart Libertarians]

Professors Horwitz¹ and Shapiro² both raise helpful, thoughtful questions about the persistence of hierarchy in a stateless society.

I can’t, obviously, demonstrate praxeologically that there will be significantly fewer hierarchies in the workplaces of a freed market – that we should definitely expect more self-employment and a greater proportion of partnerships and cooperatives in a free economy. But let me note some reasons to think this *might* be the case.

Large, hierarchical firms seem likely to be beset by the incentive and knowledge problems that complicate the lives of state central planners.

The larger an organization, the more likely it is that managers will lack crucial information. This is both because there will be multiple layers separating various actors with relevant information (with institutional pressures impeding accuracy) and because there will be no system of prices encoding the information and usable for calculation.

In addition, the principal-agent problem besets large firms at multiple levels, fostering inefficiencies as workers – whether senior managers or front-line employees – seek their own goals rather than firm profitability.

Thus, it seems fairly clear that, all other things being equal, the smaller and flatter a firm is, the better the information available to participants will be. The

more production decisions are based on actual market prices rather than on simulated intra-firm transfer prices, the more efficient and responsive to reality they're likely to be. And the more a worker has skin in the economic game, the more likely she will be to make prudent, efficient, customer-responsive decisions.

It might seem, then, that smaller, flatter firms could be expected to out-compete larger, more hierarchical ones. But we don't see lots of smaller, flatter firms in the marketplace. Does this mean that, contrary to expectations, larger firms really are more efficient?

Whether this is so will depend in significant part on empirical questions that can't be sorted out *a priori*. But it does seem as if several factors in our economy might tend to help large firms ignore the diseconomies of scale that would otherwise render them unsustainably inefficient. Tax rules and regulations tend to encourage capital concentration and thus increased firm size. Subsidies reduce the costs inefficiently large firms might otherwise confront – and large firms can more readily mobilize the resources needed to enable them to extract wealth from the political process than small firms. And workers often lack access to the resources needed to start firms precisely because of state-sanctioned theft and state-secured privilege. Eliminating these factors seems likely to make alternatives to the large corporate firm significantly more viable.

And if they're more viable, they can be expected to be more common. Freedom from arbitrary authority is a consumer good. Given the disgust and frustration with which many people view the petty tyrannies of the contemporary workplace, I suspect it's a consumer good many people would like to purchase. At present, the price is high; there are very few opportunities to work in partnerships or cooperatives or to choose self-employment. So the question is: what might reduce the price?

The price is partly affected by the relative frequency of hierarchical versus non-hierarchical workplaces. So eliminating props for hierarchy ought to put more alternatives on the table. At the same time, people often don't choose such alternatives

because of the risks associated with doing so. Saying good-bye to corporate employment means taking responsibility for one's own medical care and retirement (if, of course, you're a worker who even has these options in the first place, as many purportedly part-time workers don't), requires one to front the capital required to make start-up operations possible, and forces one to confront the spectre of unemployment if one's start-up business fails. But medical care and retirement are associated with corporate employment primarily because of the current tax system; and medical care, in particular, would be more affordable by far in the absence of state regulation and state-driven cartelization, so that

the challenge of caring for one's health in connection with a mutual-aid network, say, would be much less daunting than at present. Start-up capital would be more available if state-confiscated resources were marketized and state-engrossed land available for homesteading, and less necessary, in any case, if state regulations didn't drive up capitalization requirements. And unemployment would be more affordable if state regulations didn't raise the minimum cost of living, and could be manageable by means of the

support offered by mutual aid.

Furthermore, it's not clear to me that it would be impossible to raise money in equity markets and from investment banks for partnerships, cooperatives, and solo ventures. There are ways to secure investments that don't involve participation in governance – and of course significant quantities of stock for sale today don't necessarily come with voting rights.

Thus, people who wanted to opt for boss-free workplaces would find it easy to do so in the absence of state-driven props for hierarchy and state-driven barriers to self-employment and employment in partnerships and cooperatives. And the fact that they did so, so that boss-free options were increasingly visible and numerous, would have consequences for boss-dominated workplaces, too. The availability of alternatives that offered people more dignity, more predictability, more security, and more opportunities for participation in decision-making would exert market pressure on conventional corporate firms, encouraging them to make theoretically boss-



dominated workplaces more like those at other kinds of firms. The differences wouldn't disappear, but they might be meaningfully reduced.

In addition, boss-dominated firms might experience greater pressure to democratize in virtue of unionization. To the extent that the state's bargain with unions has been, all things considered, bad for collective action in the workplace, eliminating state labor regulation could open up opportunities for Wobbly-style direct action that could increase unionization and offer workers resultingly more extensive workplace protection. Again, even in non-unionized firms, there would be market pressure to mimic at least some features of unionized firms, both to avoid losing workers to those firms and to forestall union organizing efforts.

Moral suasion typically shouldn't be seen as the primary driver of social change. But active advocacy on behalf of workplace dignity and fairness could obviously lead to changes in social norms and expectations that would further reduce the perceived legitimacy of bossism and encourage the flourishing of alternatives.

A free society wouldn't and couldn't eliminate investor-owned or boss-dominated firms – nor should it, not only because direct, violent interference with these patterns of ownership and control would be unjust but also because workers might often benefit from the ability to shift risk onto employers and investors. But eliminating state-secured privilege and remedying state-sanctioned aggression could create significantly greater opportunities for self-employment and work in partnerships and cooperatives. Δ

Notes

[1] Daniel Shapiro, "Query For Left-Libertarians," at: <http://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/2012/11/query-for-left-libertarians>

[2] Steve Horwitz, "On the Edge of Utopianism," at <http://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/2012/11/on-the-edge-of-utopianism>



Left-Libertarianism: No Masters, No Bosses

Kevin A. Carson

[16 November 2012, C4SS]

In his contribution to the Bleeding Hearts Libertarian seminar on left-libertarianism ("Query for Left-Libertarians," November 11), Daniel Shapiro confessed to puzzlement over our prediction that there would be less bossism in a freed market. First of all, he argues, if workers were free to sell their shares in a cooperative, it's unlikely that most workers would keep all their investments in the firm they worked for. They would likely sell some of their shares in the cooperative, to reduce the risk of having all their eggs in one basket. And retiring workers will cash out their shares. And aside from the creeping tendency toward absentee ownership and demutualization in cooperatives, Shapiro raises the further question of the firms that aren't cooperative to begin with – even if they're a smaller share of the economy than at present. What's to stop either demutualized cooperatives or conventional business firms – both of which are presumably motivated primarily by maximizing shareholder value – from adopting significant levels of hierarchy and managerialism? Even if hierarchy carries certain inefficiency costs, economies of scale mean that bossism and hierarchy may be the least inefficient form of organization, given sufficient firm size for maximum efficiencies.

First of all, to start with Shapiro's argument on the alienation of shares in a cooperative: As a matter of purely technical nitpicking, a worker cooperative can be set up with bylaws that prohibit demutualization, and simply require worker buyins as a condition of membership without creating marketable shares.

But second, Shapiro seems to be assuming without warrant that a very high proportion of the characteristics of our reality under state capitalism would be conserved in a freed market, aside from the narrowest consideration of the specific changes he wants to address. It reminds me of Ralph Kramden's boast to Norton, in anticipating the outcome of one of his get-rich-quick schemes: "Norton, when I'm a rich man, I'll have a telephone installed out here on the fire escape, so I can discuss my big business deals

when I have to sleep out here in the summer.” Ralph was imagining his reality as it would be with the one specific change he was considering, in isolation from everything else and neglecting the likelihood of other associated changes or ripple effects. And that’s what Shapiro’s doing.

Shapiro seems to assume an economic model in which ownership is expressed through marketable shares, the economy tends to be organized around large market areas with mostly anonymous economic transactions occurring mainly through the cash nexus, etc.

And he explicitly assumes (point three) that current firm size and market structure represents economies of scale that are inherent in production technology.

All the secondary assumptions he makes about the kinds of specialized knowledge a boss must have about consumer demand and the marketplace, it seems, reflect the primary assumptions above about the continuity of the hypothetical economy with the conditions of the one we live in.

None of these assumptions are warranted, in my opinion.

First of all, economies of scale would probably be achieved at a fairly modest size. Given advances in small-scale manufacturing technology like desktop machine tools, permaculture, and the like, and given the economies of localized, lean, demand-pull distribution systems over the old supply-push mass production model, it seems likely a large share of present consumption needs would be met by garage factories serving small town or urban neighborhood-sized markets. In this case the typical production unit would not be something even as large and formal as the Northwestern plywood cooperatives, but rather small artisan shops.

In this case it seems a major share of production would take place in family-owned firms or small partnerships. And in a left-libertarian version of the free market, there’s no inherent reason even larger worker-owned firms would be organized along the lines of what we consider the conventional shareholder model. They might well be incorporated under bylaws with inalienable residual claimancy (with prorated pension rights on retirement) vested in the current workforce. There’s no obvious reason a libertarian law code, based on the precedents of free juries of a vicinage, would not recognize this as the basis of ownership. This is especially true, given the larger emphasis given to occupancy as the basis of property

under both mutualistic and radical Lockean variants of left-libertarianism.

Under these conditions, most of the skills associated with marketing under the present model of capitalism would probably be obsolete. In most cases, the artisan machinists in a small town or neighborhood factory would have the same first-hand knowledge of the markets they serve as artisans did before the rise of the factory system.

And the incentives to what we think of as conventional marketing rules would be far weaker under this model. Most of them currently stem from the nature of mass-production technology and the enormous capital outlays it requires for machinery. Because of these huge capital outlays, it’s necessary to maximize capacity utilization to minimize unit costs – and therefore to find ways of creating demand to guarantee the wheels keep turning. The history of 20th century mass-production capitalism was one of finding expedients to guarantee absorption of output – if necessary, by the state either destroying it or buying it up via the permanent war economy and the automobile-highway complex.

But in an economy where production machinery is cheap and general purpose, and can quickly switch between short batches of a variety of products in response to shifts in demand, these pressures do not exist. When capital outlays and overhead costs are low, the minimum revenue stream required to avoid going further in the hole is much smaller. And at the same time, the distinctions between “winners” and “losers,” between being “in business” and “out of business,” are also much lower.

Since the currently prevailing firm size and model of production and distribution is a suboptimal way of doing things, subsidized and protected by the state, it follows that bossism is – in the words of Peter Drucker – a way of doing as efficiently as possible something that ought not to be done at all. We start out with the structural assumptions of an economy in which wealth was concentrated in the hands of a small plutocratic class of investors through a long series of robberies (a.k.a. “primitive accumulation”), and the state’s economic policy was aimed at guaranteeing the profits of this investor-robber class and enabling it to extract maximum rents from the productive elements of society.

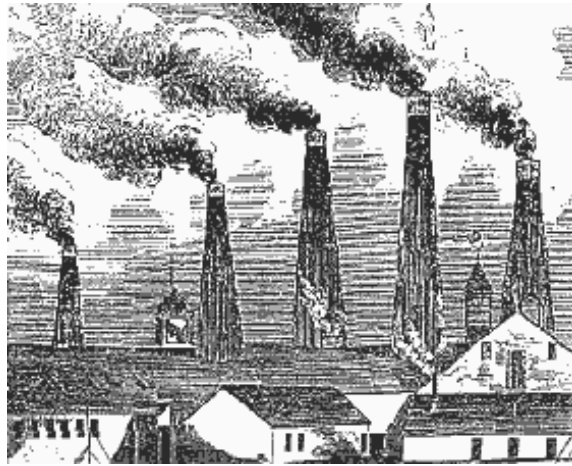
Given the fact of an economy organized into a relatively small number of large, hierarchical firms, authoritarianism may well be the most efficient means for overcoming the inefficiencies of a system that was

authoritarian to start with. In like manner, Soviet economic reformers under Brezhnev sought the most efficient way of running an economy organized around industrial ministries and central planning by Gosplan.

Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations*, detailed a long series of models for land tenure, in which landlords allowed peasants various shares of their total product in order to maximize production – and hence the rents they were able to extract from that production. But all these forms of tenure were limited by one overriding concern: the need of the landed classes to extract rents. Absent these considerations, the most efficient expedient would have been simply to vest full ownership of all land in the people working it and abolish manorial land titles and rents altogether. No doubt a slave cotton plantation in the Old South would have had drastically increased output had the land been given to the cultivators and had they been given full rights to their product. But from the perspective of a plantation owner, the only form of production less efficient than slavery is having to do an honest day's work himself.

Corporate capitalism is organized around the imperatives, not of maximizing efficiency, but of maximizing the extraction of rents. When maximum extraction of rents requires artificial imposition of inefficiency, the capitalists' state is ready and willing.

If we start from the assumption of a system organized around absentee investors and self-aggrandizing managers, the most efficient model for organizing production may be very inefficient indeed for extracting rent from those who produce value. The divorce of ownership and control from both effort and situational knowledge creates enormous knowledge and incentive problems, in which those doing the work and who know best how to do the job have no rational interest in maximizing their own output. Whatever human capital they contribute to increased productivity will simply be expropriated in the form of management salary increases, bonuses and stock options. Under these conditions, a hierarchy is necessary to extract effort from those whose rational interest lies in minimizing effort and hoarding private knowledge.



Shapiro makes the unwarranted assumption – essentially the legitimizing ideology of the Michael Jensen model of capitalism – that shareholder value is the chief motivator in conventional corporate capitalism. It's more likely in my opinion that this is nothing but a legitimizing myth to justify the power of management – the real interest being served in managerial capitalism. Management under corporate capitalism justifies its power in the name of the shareholder, in the same way that management under Soviet state socialism justified its power in the name of the people or the working class. In both cases, the reality was a self-perpetuating oligarchy in control of a large mass of theoretically absentee-owned – but de facto owned by them – capital, and maximizing their own interests while claiming to serve some mythical outside constituency.

Shareholder capitalism is, pure and simple, a fairy tale. The “market for corporate control” was a reality for a relatively brief time after the introduction of junk bonds, but corporate management – with its insider control of the rules – quickly gamed corporate bylaws to avert the threat of hostile takeover. Since then corporate takeovers have in fact been friendly takeovers, acts of collusion between managements of the acquiring and acquired firms.

Corporate management's maximization of quarterly earnings figures – what it calls “shareholder value” – is real. But it's motivated entirely by corporate management's desire to game its own bonuses, not by external pressure. And it actually involves the long-term destruction of shareholder value to achieve illusory short-term returns – much like eating seed corn, or burning every stick of furniture in your house in order to minimize this month's heating bill. And management uses the legitimizing myth of shareholder ownership as a way of protecting itself against genuine stakeholder ownership, which would maximize output for everyone.

There's a wide body of literature (see especially the work of Sanford, Hart and Grossman) arguing that efficiency and output are maximized when ownership rights in the firm are vested in those who create its value. In an age of declining costs of means

of production and increasingly skilled labor, an ever-growing share of the book value of the firm reflects not the investment of capital by absentee owners, but the human capital – tacit, job-related, distributed knowledge of the kind Hayek wrote about. But workers will not contribute this knowledge, or contribute to productivity, under the Cowboy-CEO model of capitalism, because they know that any contribution will be expropriated by management in the form of downsizings, speedups and bonuses. So a class of parasitic managerial bureaucrats operates corporations with the short-term mentality of an Ottoman tax farmer, in order to maximize its short-term interests, but justifies it in terms of “shareholder value.” Shareholder ownership – the myth that they work for the shareholders rather than being de facto residual claimants themselves — is the legitimizing ideology that corporate management uses as a defense against more efficient distribution of control rights among stakeholders within the firm.

Under a genuinely freed market in which the ownership of land and capital reflected rules of just acquisition and the cost of inefficiency were not subsidized, most bosses would find themselves faced with the imperative of doing a productive day's work.

Steve Horwitz (“On the Edge of Utopianism,” Nov. 12), after some kind words for the left-libertarian project and stating his areas of commonality with us, continues:

The problem I often see in left-libertarian writing is the sense that the world of freed markets would look dramatically different from what we have. For example, would large corporations like Walmart exist in a freed market? Left-libertarians are quick to argue no, pointing to the various ways in which the state explicitly and implicitly subsidizes them (e.g., eminent domain, tax breaks, an interstate highway system, and others). They are correct in pointing to those subsidies, and I certainly agree with them that the state should not be favoring particular firms or types of firms. However, to use that as evidence that the overall size of firms in a freed market would be smaller seems to be quite a leap. There are still substantial economies of scale in play here and even if firms had to bear the full costs of, say, finding a new location or transporting goods, I am skeptical that it would significantly dent those advantages. It often feels that desire to make common cause with leftist criticisms of large corporations, leads

left-libertarians to say “oh yes, freed markets are the path to eliminating those guys.” Again, I am not so sure. The gains from operating at that scale, especially with consumer basics, are quite real, as are the benefits to consumers.

Even as I agree with them that we should end the subsidies, I wish left-libertarians would more often acknowledge that firms like Walmart and others have improved the lives of poor Americans in significant ways and lifted hundreds of thousands out of poverty in some of the poorest parts of the world. Those accomplishments seem very much in tune with the left-libertarian project. To argue with such confidence that firms in a freed market would be unable to take advantage of these economies of scale might be cold comfort to the very folks who left-libertarians are rightly concerned about.

Horwitz states his overall difference in emphasis from left-libertarians thusly:

Eliminating every last grain of statism does not magically transform everything we might not like about really existing markets into a form that will match the goals of the traditional left. One grain of statism doesn't mean that the really existing world won't essentially look like it does when markets are freed. My own conviction is that the underlying market processes carry more weight than the distorting effects of the state along more margins than the left-libertarians believe. I might well be wrong, but I worry that the promise of more transformation than a left-libertarian world can deliver repeats the very same utopianism that has plagued the left historically.

My impression of the economy we have is just the opposite. Any single monopoly or privilege, considered in isolation, has such huge centralizing effects that it's difficult to imagine just how libertarian and decentralized things would have been without it. Just consider market economies as they would have developed without the cumulative effects of land expropriation in late medieval and early modern times, land expropriations and preemption of vacant land around the world, and ongoing enforcement of absentee title to unimproved land. Or imagine labor relations if the Industrial Revolution had developed without the Combination Laws, the internal passport system of the Laws of Settlement combined with

parish workhouse slave markets, and all the other totalitarian social controls on free association from the 1790s through the 1820s. Or the role of “intellectual property” in promoting market cartelization, oligopoly, planned obsolescence, and what our economy would look like absent those cumulative effects. Or the railroad land grants, civil aviation system and Interstate Highway System. Or Cleveland’s intervention in the Pullman Strike, assorted state declarations of martial law in the Copper Wars, and Taft-Hartley. And now consider the synergies that result from all of them put together.

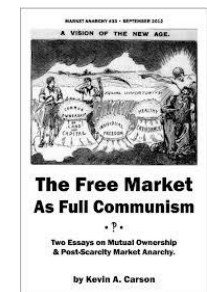
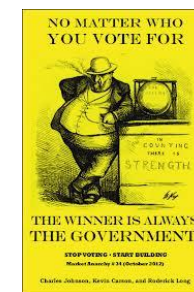
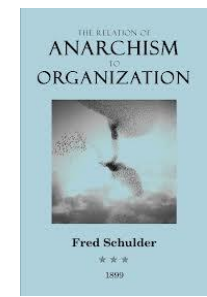
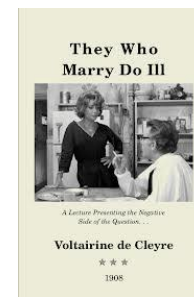
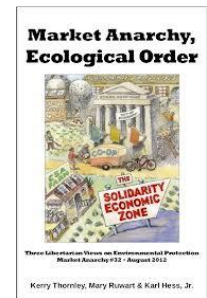
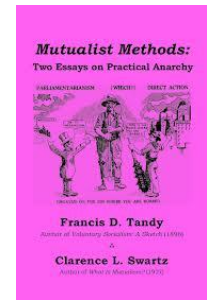
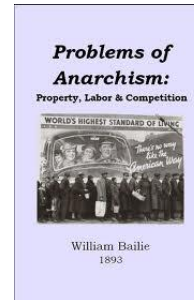
I think it’s more accurate to say our state capitalist economy possesses enormous continuities from the feudal-manorial system, and that it differs from a freed market to almost the same extent the Soviet economy did. Whatever market elements there are exist only within the interstices defined almost entirely by structural privilege, artificial scarcity, and artificial property rights.

To take Walmart in particular, consider all the structural presuppositions behind it. First, it presupposes the creation of a continental-scale corporate economy, largely through the efforts of the state (like the railroad land grants, the use of patents as a tool for market cartelization, etc.). Second, it presupposes the use of patents and trademarks by corporate headquarters to control outsourced production by sweatshops around the world. The Walmart model is only relevant when the main model of production is sweatshops on the other side of the world exporting their output to the U.S. via container ship, and “warehouses on wheels” distributing that output via a nationwide wholesale model that presupposes a high-volume national highway system.

Imagine a counter-example: An economy in which neighborhood garage shops – organized on essentially the same micromanufacturing model as the job shops in Shenzhen – are able to produce identical industrial goods, or generic spare parts, free from corporate “intellectual property” restrictions, for sale in retail outlets on Main Street in the same town. Just about everything Horwitz presupposes in his statement about the benefits of Walmart would be completely irrelevant. John Womack, one of the early celebrants of lean production, argued that trans-oceanic supply chains were incompatible with the lean model. The same is true of “warehouses on wheels.” These distribution models simply shift mass production’s enormous warehouses full of inventory to the supply and distribution chains. Walmart is,

essentially, the leanest possible way of organizing distribution in an economy that is organized on completely contrary principles.

So I think left-libertarians’ fundamental area of disagreement with Shapiro and Horwitz is that our model of freed markets isn’t a slightly tweaked, somewhat more leftist variant on the existing model of corporate capitalism. It implies a revolution in the basic structure of our economy. Δ



These texts and more available at:
distro.libertarianleft.org

PHOTOS FROM RECENT MOLINARI EVENTS



At the Molinari Institute table at Libertopia (San Diego, 11-14 October 2012). Left to right: Roderick T. Long, Sheldon Richman, Gary Chartier, Matt Zwolinski.



More Libertopia, left to right: (unknown), part of Gary Chartier's head, Anthony Gregory, Sheldon Richman (middle distance), Less Antman (far distance), Charles Johnson. *The Industrial Radical* premiered here.



More Libertopia, left to right: Anthony Gregory, Stephan Kinsella, Roderick T. Long, Sheldon Richman.



Liberty Fund conference on Gustave de Molinari (La Jolla, 30 November-2 December 2012). Left to right: Sheldon Richman, Gary Chartier, Charles Johnson, Roderick T. Long, Jennifer McKittrick.

Information for Authors

We solicit submissions of any length, from a bloggish paragraph to a sprawling multipart essay. Articles published will also be made available online. Submission of work for publication in *The Industrial Radical* constitutes agreement to make such work available under the terms of *copyleft* (see below). Previously published submissions are welcome so long as they may be reprinted consistently with our copyright policy. (Artwork also welcome! Likewise letters!)

Topics to be explored include: radical libertarian alternatives to statism, militarism, and intellectual property; the social and cultural requirements of a free and flourishing society; the structure of work, family, and property relationships in such a society; strategies for getting from here to there; and the possibility of “gains from trade” between the left/socialist and right/capitalist traditions within libertarianism. For further possible topics see: praxeology.net/industrial-radical.htm

The Industrial Radical does not impose a party line; we welcome discussion and vigorous debate from all quarters, and in particular from other anarchists and radical libertarians from the left and from the right.

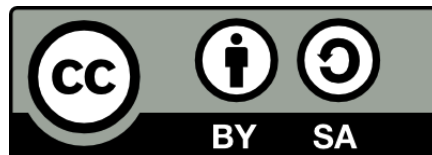
Fees paid to contributors (for previously unpublished pieces): \$10 for articles one page or shorter, \$20 for articles longer than a page.

Send submissions to: iradical@praxeology.net

Copyright Policy

The editors of *The Industrial Radical* reject the concept of “intellectual property,” and we favor the abolition of all patent and copyright restrictions. We regard the intellectual enclosure of patents and copyrights as a constraint on minds and markets, an invasion of individual rights, and an increasingly destructive form of protectionism. A free society means free minds and free culture; so we’ve adopted a policy of *copyleft* for the magazine. To paraphrase the Free Software Foundation’s explanation, proprietary content uses copyright to take away readers’ freedom; free content makes creative use of copyright to guarantee their freedom. That’s why we reverse the name, changing “copyright” to “copyleft.” Everything we print will either be certified in the public domain, or released under a free content license that guarantees your ability to reprint or reuse, without permission or restriction.

All our material is printed under the **CC BY-SA 3.0 license** unless otherwise noted; see our website for details: praxeology.net/irad-copyleft.htm

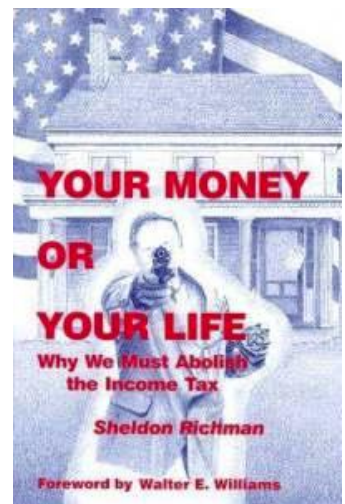
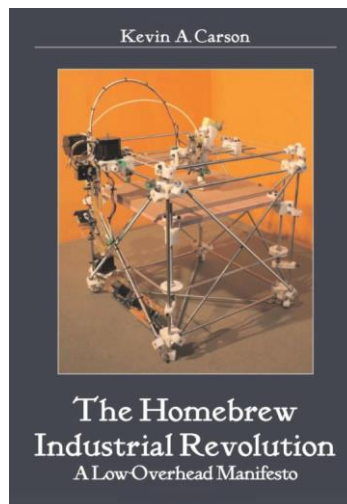
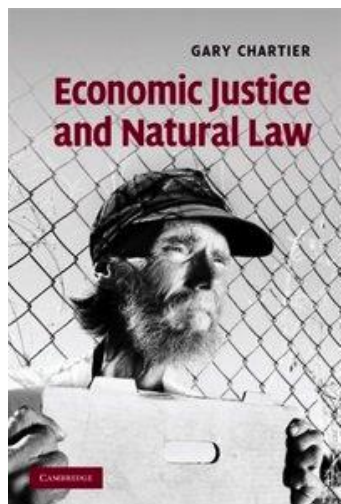
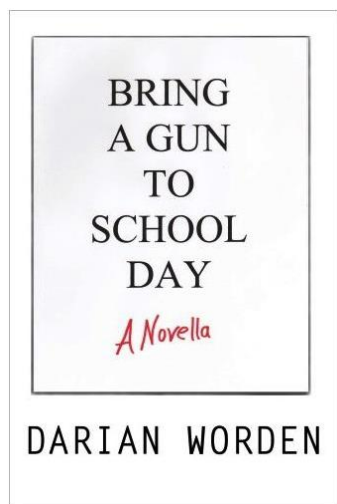
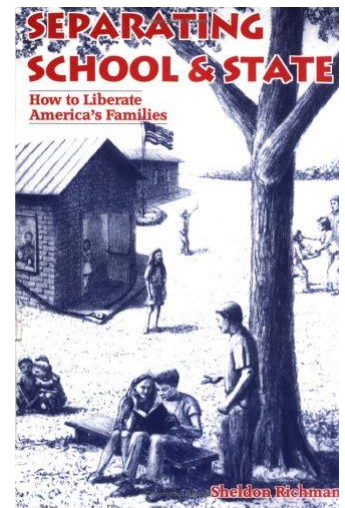
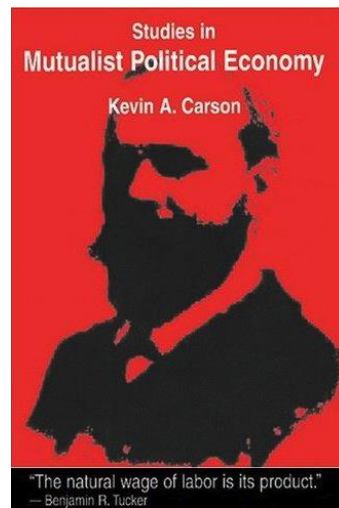
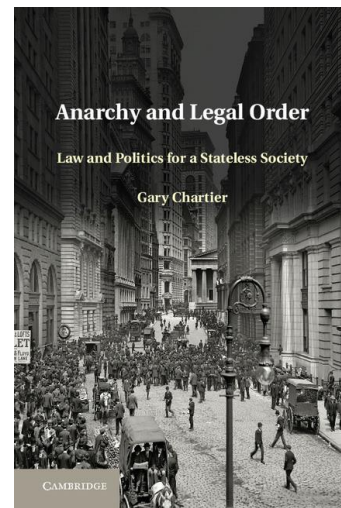
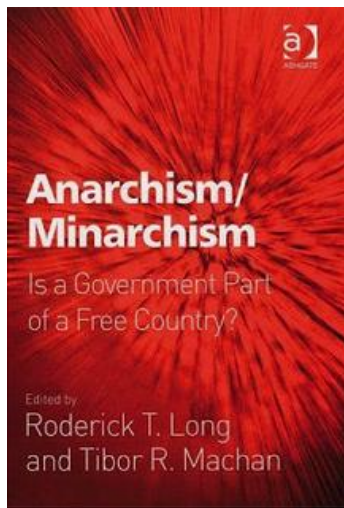
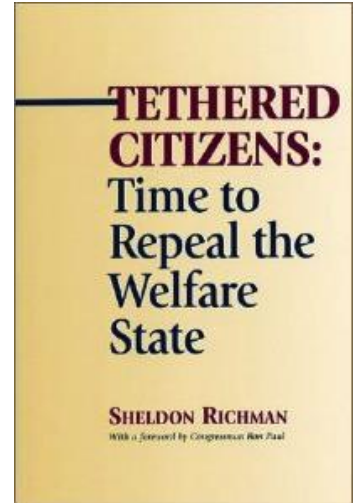
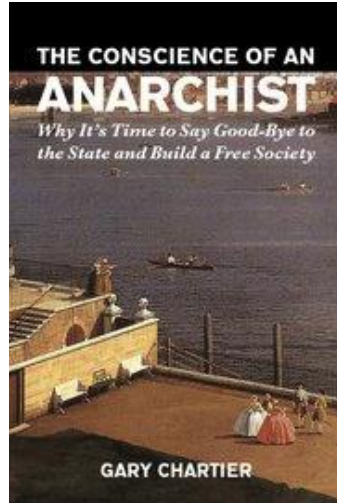
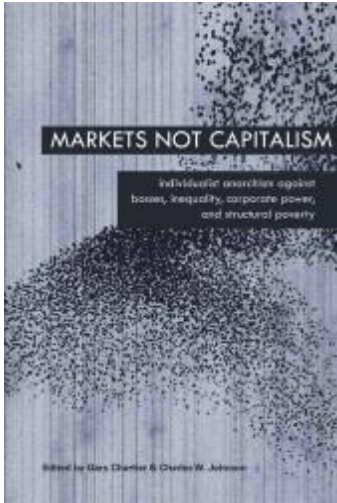


Molinari Institute: praxeology.net/molinari.htm

Center for a Stateless Society: c4ss.org

Alliance of the Libertarian Left: all-left.net

Books by Molinari/C4SS Authors:



To order (or, in some cases, download a free PDF), see:
praxeology.net/molinari-pubs.htm