

# A Post-Libertarian Realpolitik

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# Our Agenda Today

1. Ontological Questions
2. An Evolutionary Perspective
3. A Brief History of Oppression
4. Some Examples of Opposition
5. Prospects for Liberty?
6. Bibliography
7. Questions & Answers

# Ontology

# The State as a Fiction

**“I submit that there is no government. ‘The government’ is an illusion, sometimes consensual.**

“In fact, there are only individuals. Individuals in ‘the government’ get away with murder, theft, lies, deceit, fraud, violence, viciousness, and betrayal. Were those individuals without governmental sanction, they would be merely bullies, killers, and thieves. They would deserve no greater respect and no swifter punishment.

“As ‘the government’ however, they are understood to be immune from prosecution, immune from lawsuits, immune from criticism. Even their own treason [is] considered acceptable, whereas it is considered treasonous to accuse them of treason.”

— Jim Davidson, [\*The Morpheus Proposal\*](#)





“I protest, officer! You can’t do this! I have rights! Can’t you see that I’m bleeding? You are hurting me and violating my rights!”

“Rights? What rights? I don’t see no fucking rights. Did you forget them at home? Obey and submit!”

## Rights as a Delusion

# Rights as a Delusion

“Pardon him, Theodotus: he is a barbarian, and thinks that the customs of his tribe and island are the laws of nature.”

— George Bernard Shaw, [\*Caesar and Cleopatra\*](#)

# What are Rights, in the Final Analysis?

- “Rights” are constraints on behavior and action contingent on an internalized acceptance of said precepts.
  - **Superego:** that little voice inside your head that tells you when you ought to feel guilty.  
*(Cautionary note: not everyone has this voice.)*
- Most people are unwilling and unable to grok a categorical distinction between posited negative rights (e.g., the right to not be coerced or killed) and positive rights (e.g., the supposed “rights” to healthcare and free broadband porn).
- The muddled conflation and dilution of rights, combined with the general moral decline of the West (postmodern nihilism plus rising time preferences), means that libertarians are some of last people dogmatically clinging to our precious false reification of rights as a comforter and pacifier

# The Problem (A Self-Diagnosis)

- Libertarians generally are slightly (or not so slightly...) autistic, i.e. many of us are in the “Asperger’s Quadrant”
  - This perhaps inevitably goes hand in hand with above-average systematizing intelligence
- We aspire to rationality in all things and worship Aristotle’s definition of man as the rational animal
  - We believe in the power of correct reasoning as well as in persuasion and education
  - The problem is, modern science has long since debunked man-as-the-rational-animal. This is known as the rationalist delusion. In reality, at best, we are the rationalizing animal: we can make ourselves believe anything, particularly anything that seems advantageous to us
- Abstract philosophical or mathematical systems are attractive to us, practical implementation (it seems) not always so much



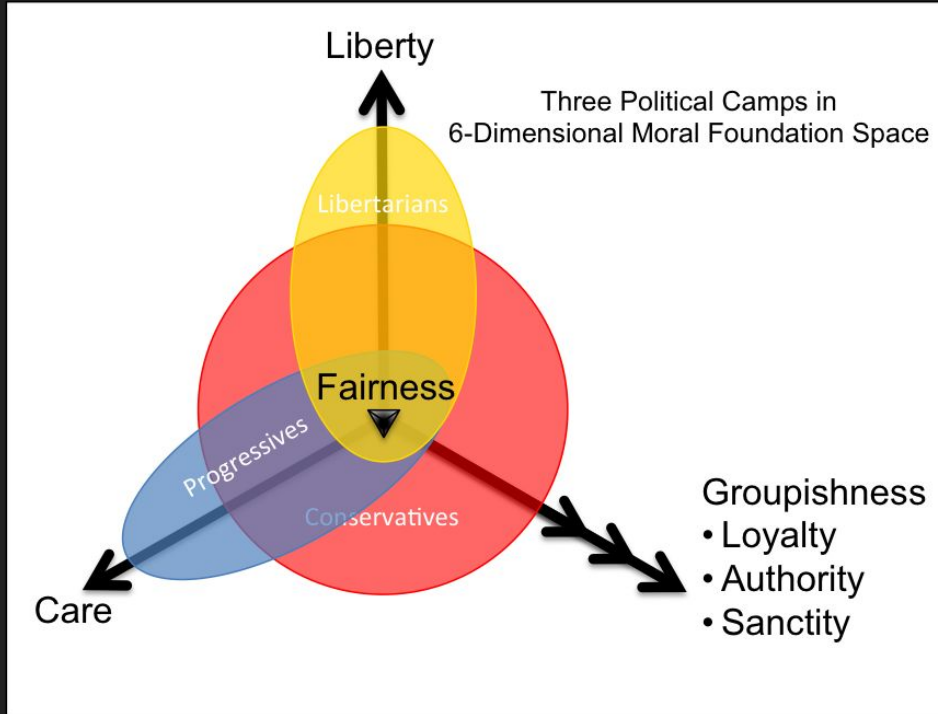
Evolution

# An Evolutionary Perspective of Morality

- If we put aside philosophy and turn for a moment to science, why is it that we as humans have morality in the first place?
- Evolutionary biologists and psychologists have compelling answers
  - [The Moral Animal](#) by Robert Wright is a good starting point
- *“Morality binds and blinds. It binds us into ideological teams that fight each other as though the fate of the world depended on our side winning each battle [...] We do moral reasoning not to reconstruct the actual reasons why we ourselves came to a judgment; we reason to find the best possible reasons why somebody else ought to join us in our judgment.”*  
— Jonathan Haidt

# An Evolutionary Perspective of Morality

- Recent research (in particular, by Haidt et al) on moral intuitions and the moral foundations of politics provides data and analysis that ought to be more widely known
- Research on moral dumbfounding demonstrates that moral intuitions are formed *a priori* and moral reasoning is a rapid, automatic process
  - Moral intuitions are not necessarily accessible or subject to reasoning faculties; subjects confabulate post-hoc rationales for their judgments as needed
- Studies of identical twins for the past four decades support an explanation of variation in moral intuitions as inborn evolutionary strategies
  - Psychopathy is a genetically heritable condition, hence may also be an inborn evolutionary strategy; and perhaps one that has been doing rather well since the advent of settled communities and states...



## Haidt's 6D Moral Foundations model:

- **Care/harm:**  
Cherishing and protecting others
- **Fairness/cheating:**  
Rendering justice according to shared rules
- **Loyalty/betrayal:**  
Standing with your family, group, nation
- **Authority/subversion:**  
Submitting to tradition and legitimate authority
- **Sanctity/degradation:**  
Abhorrence for disgusting things, foods, actions
- **Liberty/oppresion:**  
Valuing autonomy, guarding against tyranny

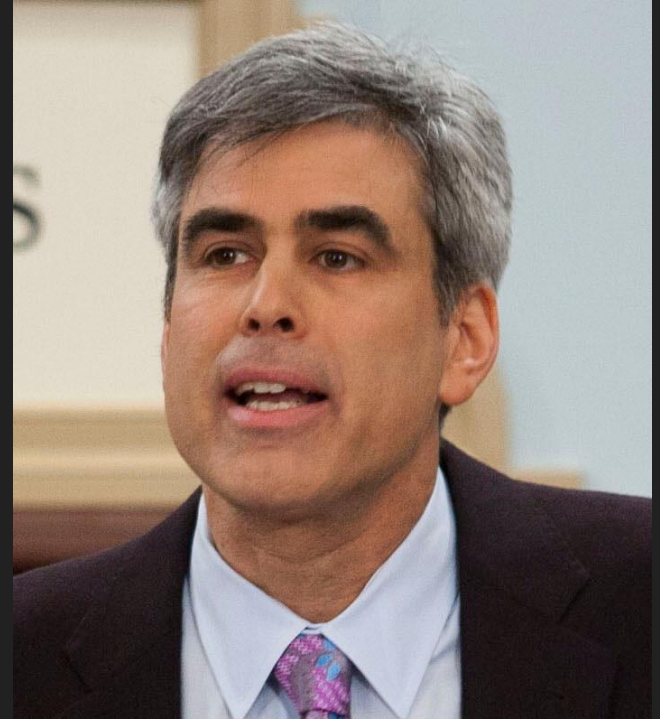
Diagram by Steve Cobb ([@simplulo](#))

# Moral Foundations

# Libertarian Psychometrics (Self-Knowledge)

Of the three groups studied by Haidt (libertarians, liberals, and conservatives), his research has found that:

- Libertarians are predominantly (2/3) male—confirming hard-to-miss anecdotal observations...
- Libertarians score highest of all groups on systematizing ability, lowest on empathizing (true overall, and also true for each sex separately)
- Libertarians are similar to conservatives in understanding **fairness** as being about proportionality (*did you earn this slice of pie?*), while liberals feel it is about equality (*a slice for everyone!*)
- Libertarians are similar to liberals in scoring low on **sanctity** (honoring “sacred” symbols such as the flag), **authority** (hierarchy and patriotism), and group **loyalty**
- There does seem to be some truth to the quip that libertarians are basically liberals who lack bleeding hearts
- Libertarians score lower than other groups in all emotions except for one: reactance (*“If that’s prohibited, that’s exactly what I’ll do”*)



# Libertarian Psychometrics (Conclusions)

- The bottom line is that most people do not want (nor value) what you want
  - Moreover, they will never want it, no matter how good your reasoning or arguments are
  - If someone's moral intuitions aren't already aligned, you have about as much chance persuading them that they ought to value liberty as you have of converting them to your favorite religion or lack thereof. It can happen, but it's pretty damn rare
- Individual autonomy is not in fact the highest moral and political end for most people (*“really, you don't say?”*)
  - This means activist efforts at persuasion and education are useful for recruiting people already looking for rationales and slogans to hang onto their intuitions, but not for much beyond that
  - Any higher ambitions for outreach efforts (“we just have to educate everyone”) are not on firm grounding evidence-wise
  - As it stands, there is not much to suggest that libertarians won't simply continue to be a marginalized and subjugated group indefinitely

Oppression

# The Origins of Human Macroparasitism

“Our only significant macroparasites are other men who, by specializing in violence, are able to secure a living without themselves producing the food and other commodities they consume.

“Hence a study of macroparasitism among human populations turns into a study of the organization of armed force with special attention to changes in the kinds of equipment warriors used. [...]

“Early civilizations existed by virtue of transfer of food from its producers to rulers and men of power who supported themselves, along with a following of military and artisan specialists, on the food so secured.”

— William H. McNeill, [\*The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000\*](#)





# Sargon of Akkad

*Sargon of Akkad, who plundered all the lands of Mesopotamia around his capital city of Kish about 2250 BCE*

“Sargon’s armies can [be] compared to the ravages of an epidemic disease that kills off a significant proportion of the host population yet by its very passage confers an immunity lasting for several years. Sargon’s armies did the same [as] such plundering made it impractical for an army of similar size to pass that way again until such time as population and the area under cultivation had been restored.

“But just as an epidemic disease will become endemic whenever interaction between the infectious organism and the host population becomes sufficiently massive and intimate, so also in war...”

— William H. McNeill, [\*The Pursuit of Power\*](#)



# An Abbreviated Timeline

- **25,000 BCE** (latest): Atlatl (“the Stone-Age Kalashnikov”), able to kill at 40 meters
- **20,000 BCE** (latest): Bows and arrows
- **5,300 BCE**: Domestication of the horses (to be deployed in warfare for the next 7,000 years)
- **5,000 BCE**: Daggers and (later) swords made of bronze
- **2,400 BCE**: War chariots
- **2,240 BCE**: Sargon of Akkad creates the first multi-national empire
- **650 BCE**: Hoplites
- **600 BCE**: Crossbows in China
- **500 BCE**: Trebuchets in China (with a 125m range) and ballistas in Greece
- **800-1300**: Gunpowder in China, and the first firearms and bombs
- **1415**: Longbow zenith at the Battle of Agincourt
- **1440**: Printing press
- **1836**: Samuel Colt’s revolver
- **1851-1861**: The Gatling gun, the first rapid-fire firearm
- **1884**: The Maxim gun, the first fully-automatic machine gun
- **1889**: The Colt-Browning machine gun

# The Balance of Power (Offense)

- The political organization of a society and the autonomy of the individual is ultimately determined by the balance of offensive and defensive technology
- For example:
  - The introduction of the horse-drawn chariot enabled empires that spanned continents
  - The discipline and organization of the phalanx formation, and later Roman legions, proved devastating against less organized defenses
  - No medieval peasant uprising could hope to withstand a regiment of mounted heavy knights

# Ultima Ratio Regum (Louis XIV)

- When the cannon was perfected, a siege of a city could be completed in three hours instead of three years
- The political map of Europe was entirely redrawn in the course of a couple of centuries
- The nation-state arose, but today it itself is under siege, and unlikely to outlive this century as the dominant form of political organization on Planet Earth



Opposition

# The Balance of Power (Defense)

- The marginal cost of oppression has been on the rise for the past couple of centuries, since about the perfection of the personal firearm (e.g., Samuel Colt's "Equalizer") and rifle
- A single guy with a modern \$800 AR-15 rifle, able to effectively engage targets at 400+ yards, is a threat to be taken seriously by anybody today
  - See any of the recent mass atrocities in America...
- This changing technological balance and individual superempowerment is why superstates have been unable to decisively win foreign adventures since about the Korean War (1953)
  - Instead, they get dragged into years or decades of asymmetric guerrilla warfare where the defending force would not survive direct confrontation but neither can it cost-effectively be wiped out (see 4GW, fourth-generation warfare)

# The Baddest Motherfucker in the World

“Until a man is twenty-five, he still thinks, every so often, that under the right circumstances he could be the baddest motherfucker in the world.

“If I moved to a martial-arts monastery in China and studied real hard for ten years. If my family was wiped out by Colombian drug dealers and I swore myself to revenge. If I got a fatal disease, had one year to live, and devoted it to wiping out street crime. If I just dropped out and devoted my life to being bad.

“Hiro used to feel this way, too, but then he ran into Raven. In a way, this was liberating. He no longer has to worry about being the baddest motherfucker in the world. The position is taken.”

— Neal Stephenson, [\*Snow Crash\*](#)



The Baddest Motherfucker in the World



# Case Examples

- Transnational organizations (historical and modern)
  - Knights Templar
  - Knights Hospitaller
  - Red Cross
- Successful closely-bonded ethnic groups
  - The Roma
  - Jews
- Outlaw motorcycle clubs (Hell's Angels, Bandidos, etc), 200-2,500 members
- Organized crime syndicates (Cosa Nostra, Yakuza, Bratva, etc)
- Sovereign citizens
- Outback primitivists

# Case Example: Sovereign Citizens

- A chiefly American movement, 100,000s of people
  - Classified as potential “domestic terrorists” and “top priority” by the FBI and DOJ. To be sure, some pretty nasty individuals have been associated with the movement. (“Not exactly libertarian”)
- John Joe Gray’s case is instructive
  - Allegedly attacked a Texas trooper during a traffic stop on Xmas Eve 1999
  - Charged with assault of a public servant and taking a police officer’s weapon
  - The longest-running (~15 years) state law enforcement standoff in U.S. history; charges not enforced, dropped in 2014 (“unprecedented”)
  - Still lives free at his 47-acre Texas ranch (“compound”) with family
  - Commentator: *“It’s sort of Wild West. It’s what a traditional American family looked like 100 years ago.”*
  - John Joe Gray: *“We fear no man. We believe in an eye for an eye and a bullet for a bullet. Bring extra body bags.”*
  - The fourth county sheriff to not press the matter: *“[He] is not worth it. Ten of him is not worth going up there and getting one of my young deputies killed.”*



# Case Example: Wolves of Vinland

- A Norse neopagan anarcho-primitivist tribe based in Virginia, North America
  - Explicit rejection of postmodernist West as a dying culture, an “Empire of Nothing” populated by hedonistic consumers with a slave mentality
  - *“Mixing together equal parts fight club, strength regimen, motorcycle club, and esoteric order”*
- Strong focus on deeds over talk and on self-sufficiency, competence, and physical culture
  - Fostering a “militant strength culture” valuing strength, courage, honor, and mastery—and the ability to perform well in physical confrontation and violence when necessary
- Portrayed as a “hate group” by statists and as a “creepy white-power wolf cult” by leftist media



Liberty?

# The Balance of Power (Direction)

- The way towards freedom, for anyone who would be free, entails raising the costs of oppression while facilitating access to information and lowering the risks & costs of engaging in peaceful, voluntary interactions; for example:
  - Cypherpunk tech and counter-economics in the agorist tradition lower transaction costs for voluntary interactions while raising policing costs internal to the state and ultimately carried by the nonfree subject population
  - The personal panopticon raises costs of oppression
  - Legal fictions—such as flags of convenience, second passports, and intermediated offshore structures—raise the cost of oppression
- Technological developments in general change the balance of power and hence affect the cost of oppression, for both good and for ill

# The Balance of Power (Conclusion)

- Libertarians as such (in the most stereotypical sense) are unlikely to actually achieve liberty
- Libertarians are predominantly armchair philosophers and soft targets, usually ineffective at group identity or collaboration
  - Achieving more individual autonomy requires being a hard target
- Libertarians don't have a credible deterrence or retaliation strategy or story
  - When coerced and attacked, it is counterproductive to demonstrate weakness, only prompting further attacks going forward
  - Deterrence has to be credible and demonstrated, much like the Cold War standoff between superpowers
  - Speak softly but carry a big stick

# A Realpolitik Perspective on Liberty

- If withdrawing from the world isn't an option, any realistic plan must account for interactions with state populations (for travel, for business, etc)
- Personal liberty is achieved when you enjoy the equivalent of diplomatic immunity in interacting with state populations and their enforcers
  - We need only concern ourselves with the *de facto* situation, never mind *de jure*
- Some perpetual travelers (PTs) already enjoy a few of these benefits, as in many countries (Thailand comes to mind as a nice example) expats and tourists form a privileged class compared to the native livestock (i.e., citizens)
  - This suggests a first step for any motivated individual: just go somewhere else

# Conflict is Expensive, Even for the State

- Barring the development of weakly godlike defensive technologies, it will generally remain the case that the state *could* overpower or eliminate you, as a single individual, at any moment they should choose to
- The trick is to ensure that such an action would be sufficiently expensive (on various cost metrics, not only economic) that their incentives are to leave you be
  - So long as you behave yourself to the same extent that foreign diplomats and dignitaries are tolerated; that is, the (perceived) costs of tolerating you are lower than the costs of engaging in conflict with you
- It's worth remembering that the reason animals have territorial instincts is exactly this: conflict is expensive even for the victor



# Don't Be Lonely Plankton

- An individual alone is quite easy to manage, to coerce and control, to destroy—and ultimately, utterly dependent on the daily continuation of the state system
  - *“He wanders through crowds alone, and alone, he can do very little harm to any established interests. He feels all-powerful, the captain of his own soul, but except in the rarest of cases he is all but inconsequential.”*
- Man is not and never has been a solitary animal
  - We naturally want to belong to a group—without a firm social context, we are disoriented and actions become relatively arbitrary and meaningless
  - People everywhere yearn to be part of something larger than themselves, for meaning and purpose in their lives
- In a sea of billions, an individual alone is mere plankton for Leviathan

# Find or Found Your Tribe

- The concept variously known as a gang, tribe, or phyle means making a commitment to one ingroup of people above and potentially at the expense of all outgroups
  - A radical outlaw idea in this zeitgeist of utopian universalist multiculturalism— a counter-narrative rooted in human nature & history instead of in starry-eyed humanist utopianism
- A clearly delineated “inside” (the ingroup) and “outside” (all outgroups)— an “us” and a “them”, as well as an “us vs them”
  - “We” is who is left when shit gets real
  - Social identity *is* meaning, it is the “why” that follows from the “we”
  - Identity is the rootedness that provides a rationale for action

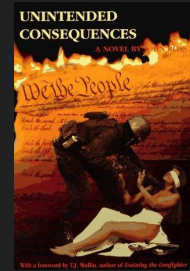
# Ingroup vs Outgroup

- The tribe is primary loyalty—this social bonding activates primal neural machinery largely dormant or misdirected in the modern civilized man
  - Even state agents have been known to turn double agent by the camaraderie and tangible sense of meaning in the tightly-knit group they were assigned to infiltrate
- The ingroup's high trust factor lowers transaction costs—for everything
- A preference for the ingroup concentrates network effects on the ingroup, in a virtuous cycle
- Within the ingroup, focus on cooperation towards shared goals—outside it, focus on competition towards all outgroups (including other tribes)

# Bibliography

# Bibliography (Fiction)

- [\*The Diamond Age\*](#) by Neal Stephenson
- [\*Snow Crash\*](#) by Neal Stephenson
- [\*Daemon\*](#) & [\*Freedom™\*](#) by Daniel Suarez
- [\*The Nexus Trilogy\*](#) by Ramez Naam
- [\*The Peace War\*](#) by Vernor Vinge
- [\*The Weapon Makers\*](#) & [\*The Weapon Shops of Isher\*](#) by A.E. van Vogt
- [\*The Iron Web\*](#) by Larken Rose
- [\*Unintended Consequences\*](#) by John Ross
- [\*Absolved\*](#) by Mike Vanderboegh



# Bibliography (Non-Fiction)

- [\*The Righteous Mind\*](#) by Jonathan Haidt
- [\*The Blank Slate\*](#) by Steven Pinker
- [\*The 10,000 Year Explosion\*](#) by Cochran & Harpending
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- [\*The Sovereign Individual\*](#) by Davidson & Rees-Mogg
- [\*The Rise and Decline of the State\*](#) by Martin van Creveld
- [\*The Pursuit of Power\*](#) by William Hardy McNeill
- [\*The End of Power\*](#) by Moisés Naím
- [\*Brave New War\*](#) by John Robb
- [\*The Way of Men\*](#) & [\*Becoming a Barbarian\*](#) by Jack Donovan
- [\*Operation Werewolf\*](#) by Paul Waggener

# Thank You

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