

trying to regulate drug use for the well-being of the individual—that individuals should be free to make decisions about their own lives, even to harm themselves if they so wish.

An example of this social and moral libertarianism can be seen in the remarks of writer and college professor Camille Paglia, who makes the following distinctions in an interview with the editor of *Reason*, a libertarian magazine:

I feel that government has no right to intrude into the private realm of consensual behavior. Therefore, I say that I'm for the abolition of all sodomy laws. I'm for abortion rights. I'm for the legalization of drugs—consistent with alcohol regulations. I'm for not just the decriminalization but the legalization of prostitution. Again, prostitutes must not intrude into the public realm. I think it's perfectly reasonable to say that civil authorities have the right to say that prostitutes should not be loitering near schools, or on the steps of churches, or blocking entrances to buildings and so on. Prostitution should be perfectly legal, but it cannot interfere with other people's access to the public realm.<sup>10</sup>

This sort of distinction—between private behavior and behavior that harms others—is often important to libertarian arguments. Libertarians may disagree with each other about the *degree* to which there should be liberty from controls and regulations, but they consistently argue for freedom in both the social and the economic realms. Because they advocate liberty so consistently, libertarians may sharply disagree at times with liberals and conservatives.

As you read the following arguments, note what sorts of good libertarians think will come from greater liberty and why. Also remember to keep track of key terms and concepts and to look for newspaper columns and interviews on the three civic stances.

## CAPITALISM AND FREEDOM

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### *Milton Friedman*

*Milton Friedman, an economist and advocate of free enterprise, was awarded the 1976 Nobel Prize in Economics. He has been a professor of economics at the University of Chicago and a fellow at the Hoover Institution, a conservative and libertarian think tank at Stanford University. He is the author of numerous articles and books, including Capitalism and Freedom (1962), from which this reading comes.*

*Friedman did his early economic work during the Cold War period following World War II, when many people thought that the Soviet Union and its Communist allies would do better economically than capitalist countries like the United*

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<sup>10</sup> Camille Paglia, interview with Virginia I. Postrel, *Reason* Aug.-Sept. 1995: 38.

*States. Friedman, however, disagreed with this view. When the Communist economies collapsed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the popularity of libertarianism was renewed because economists like Friedman seemed to have been proved right. Though Friedman is categorized here as a libertarian, his economic ideas are also admired by many conservatives.*

*As you read, you will see that Friedman shows the typical libertarian preference for minimal government. Try to understand what role Friedman believes government should play in citizens' lives and what benefits—both economic and political—he thinks come from a free economy.*

In a much quoted passage in his inaugural address, President Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." It is a striking sign of the temper of our times that the controversy about this passage centered on its origin and not on its content. Neither half of the statement expresses a relation between the citizen and his government that is worthy of the ideals of free men in a free society. The paternalistic "what your country can do for you" implies that government is the patron, the citizen the ward, a view that is at odds with the free man's belief in his own responsibility for his own destiny. The organismic<sup>o</sup> "what you can do for your country" implies that government is the master or the deity, the citizen, the servant or the votary. To the free man, the country is the collection of individuals who compose it, not something over and above them. He is proud of a common heritage and loyal to common traditions. But he regards government as a means, an instrumentality, neither a grantor of favors and gifts, nor a master or god to be blindly worshipped and served. . . .

The free man will ask neither what his country can do for him nor what he can do for his country. He will ask rather, "What can I and my compatriots do through government" to help us discharge our individual responsibilities, to achieve our several goals and purposes, and above all, to protect our freedom? And he will accompany this question with another: How can we keep the government we create from becoming a Frankenstein that will destroy the very freedom we establish it to protect? Freedom is a rare and delicate plant. Our minds tell us, and history confirms, that the great threat to freedom is the concentration of power. Government is necessary to preserve our freedom, it is an instrument through which we can exercise our freedom; yet by concentrating power in political hands, it is also a threat to freedom. Even though the men who wield this power initially be of goodwill and even though they be not corrupted by the power they exercise, the power will both attract and form men of a different stamp.

How can we benefit from the promise of government while avoiding the threat to freedom? Two broad principles embodied in our Constitution give an

<sup>o</sup>organismic: Like a living organism in which individual parts function for the good of the whole.

answer that has preserved our freedom so far, though they have been violated repeatedly in practice while proclaimed as precept.

First, the scope of government must be limited. Its major function must be to protect our freedom both from the enemies outside our gates and from our fellow-citizens: to preserve law and order, to enforce private contracts, to foster competitive markets. Beyond this major function, government may enable us at times to accomplish jointly what we would find it more difficult or expensive to accomplish severally. However, any such use of government is fraught with danger. We should not and cannot avoid using government in this way. But there should be a clear and large balance of advantages before we do. By relying primarily on voluntary cooperation and private enterprise, in both economic and other activities, we can insure that the private sector is a check on the powers of the governmental sector and an effective protection of freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought.

The second broad principle is that government power must be dispersed. If government is to exercise power, better in the county than in the state, better in the state than in Washington. If I do not like what my local community does, be it in sewage disposal, or zoning, or schools, I can move to another local community, and though few may take this step, the mere possibility acts as a check. If I do not like what my state does, I can move to another. If I do not like what Washington imposes, I have few alternatives in this world of jealous nations.

The very difficulty of avoiding the enactments of the federal government is of course the great attraction of centralization<sup>o</sup> to many of its proponents. It will enable them more effectively, they believe, to legislate programs that—as they see it—are in the interest of the public, whether it be the transfer of income<sup>o</sup> from the rich to the poor or from private to governmental purposes. They are in a sense right. But this coin has two sides. The power to do good is also the power to do harm; those who control the power today may not tomorrow; and, more important, what one man regards as good, another may regard as harm. The great tragedy of the drive to centralization, as of the drive to extend the scope of government in general, is that it is mostly led by men of goodwill who will be the first to rue its consequences.

The preservation of freedom is the protective reason for limiting and decentralizing governmental power. But there is also a constructive reason. The great advances of civilization, whether in architecture or painting, in science or literature, in industry or agriculture, have never come from centralized government. Columbus did not set out to seek a new route to China in response to a majority directive of a parliament, though he was partly financed by an absolute monarch. Newton and Leibnitz, Einstein and Bohr, Shakespeare, Milton, and

<sup>o</sup> centralization: Here, concentrating powers at the national rather than at the state or local levels of government. <sup>o</sup> transfer of income: Redistributing wealth from rich to poor by means of taxation or other government-sponsored programs.

Pasternak, Whitney, McCormick, Edison, and Ford, Jane Addams, Florence Nightingale, and Albert Schweitzer—no one of these opened new frontiers in human knowledge and understanding, in literature, in technical possibilities, or in the relief of human misery in response to governmental directives. Their achievements were the product of individual genius, of strongly held minority views, of a social climate permitting variety and diversity.

Government can never duplicate the variety and diversity of individual action. At any moment in time, by imposing uniform standards in housing, or nutrition, or clothing, government could undoubtedly improve the level of living of many individuals; by imposing uniform standards in schooling, road construction, or sanitation, central government could undoubtedly improve the level of performance in many local areas and perhaps even on the average of all communities. But in the process, government would replace progress by stagnation, it would substitute uniform mediocrity for the variety essential for that experimentation which can bring tomorrow's laggards above today's mean. . . .

It is widely believed that politics and economics are separate and largely unconnected, that individual freedom is a political problem and material welfare an economic problem, and that any kind of political arrangements can be combined with any kind of economic arrangements. . . . The thesis [here] is that such a view is a delusion, that there is an intimate connection between economics and politics, that only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible, and that in particular, a society which is socialist<sup>o</sup> cannot also be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom.

Economic arrangements play a dual role in the promotion of a free society. <sup>10</sup> On the one hand, freedom in economic arrangements is itself a component of freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom.

The first of these roles of economic freedom needs special emphasis because intellectuals in particular have a strong bias against regarding this aspect of freedom as important. They tend to express contempt for what they regard as material aspects of life, and to regard their own pursuit of allegedly higher values as on a different plane of significance and as deserving of special attention. For most citizens of the country, however, if not for the intellectual, the direct importance of economic freedom is at least comparable in significance to the indirect importance of economic freedom as a means to political freedom. . . .

Viewed as a means to the end of political freedom, economic arrangements are important because of their effect on the concentration or dispersion of power. The kind of economic organization that provides economic freedom

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<sup>o</sup>socialist: A type of society in which the government, rather than individuals, owns property and the means of production.

directly, namely, competitive capitalism, also promotes political freedom because it separates economic power from political power and in this way enables the one to offset the other.

Historical evidence speaks with a single voice on the relation between political freedom and a free market.<sup>o</sup> I know of no example in time or place of a society that has been marked by a large measure of political freedom, and that has not also used something comparable to a free market to organize the bulk of economic activity.

Because we live in a largely free society, we tend to forget how limited is the span of time and the part of the globe for which there has ever been anything like political freedom; the typical state of mankind is tyranny, servitude, and misery. The nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the Western world stand out as striking exceptions to the general trend of historical development. Political freedom in this instance clearly came along with the free market and the development of capitalist institutions....

Fundamentally, there are only two ways of coordinating the economic activities of millions. One is central direction involving the use of coercion—the technique of the army and of the modern totalitarian state. The other is voluntary cooperation of individuals—the technique of the marketplace.

The possibility of coordination through voluntary cooperation rests on the elementary—yet frequently denied—proposition that both parties to an economic transaction benefit from it, *provided the transaction is bilaterally voluntary and informed.*

Exchange can therefore bring about coordination without coercion. A working model of a society organized through voluntary exchange is a *free private enterprise exchange economy*—what we have been calling competitive capitalism....

So long as effective freedom of exchange is maintained, the central feature of the market organization of economic activity is that it prevents one person from interfering with another in respect of most of his activities. The consumer is protected from coercion by the seller because of the presence of other sellers with whom he can deal. The seller is protected from coercion by the consumer because of other consumers to whom he can sell. The employee is protected from coercion by the employer because of other employers for whom he can work, and so on. And the market does this impersonally and without centralized authority.

Indeed, a major source of objection to a free economy is precisely that it does this task so well. It gives people what they want instead of what a particular group thinks they ought to want. Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself.

<sup>o</sup>a free market: The free, unplanned economy responding to supply and demand—a capitalist, rather than a socialist, economy.

The existence of a free market does not of course eliminate the need for gov-<sup>20</sup>ernment. On the contrary, government is essential both as a forum for determining the “rules of the game” and as an umpire to interpret and enforce the rules decided on. What the market does is to reduce greatly the range of issues that must be decided through political means, and thereby to minimize the extent to which government need participate directly in the game. The characteristic feature of action through political channels is that it tends to require or enforce substantial conformity. The great advantage of the market, on the other hand, is that it permits wide diversity. It is, in political terms, a system of proportional representation. Each man can vote, as it were, for the color of tie he wants and get it; he does not have to see what color the majority wants and then, if he is in the minority, submit.

It is this feature of the market that we refer to when we say that the market provides economic freedom. But this characteristic also has implications that go far beyond the narrowly economic. Political freedom means the absence of coercion of a man by his fellowmen. The fundamental threat to freedom is power to coerce, be it in the hands of a monarch, a dictator, an oligarchy, or a momentary majority. The preservation of freedom requires the elimination of such concentration of power to the fullest possible extent and the dispersal and distribution of whatever power cannot be eliminated—a system of checks and balances. By removing the organization of economic activity from the control of political authority, the market eliminates this source of coercive power. It enables economic strength to be a check to political power rather than a reinforcement.

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## THE COMING LIBERTARIAN AGE

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*David Boaz*

*David Boaz is executive vice president of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, and the editor of a number of books on libertarian ideas. His articles have appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and the Chicago Tribune. This reading is from his 1997 book *Libertarianism: A Primer*.*

*Boaz begins with assumptions that are based on the political theories of seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke. Locke believed that natural laws take precedence over human laws and that people agree to be governed on the assumption that the government will protect their liberties and not go against natural laws. People's consent to their government was crucial for Locke and became crucial for the Founders of the United States, who drew from Locke's ideas in*

*writing the Declaration of Independence. After developing these ideas in his first few paragraphs, Boaz builds his argument for "a new philosophy of governing."*

*As you read, note why Boaz asserts that government's legitimate role is a limited one. Try to understand why he thinks our current system is failing because it relies on massive transfer programs. You may want to contrast Boaz's libertarian stance to E. J. Dionne Jr.'s liberal stance, or examine how Boaz's view of individual rights (paragraphs 22–23) compares to the liberal views of both Roger Rosenblatt and Dionne.*

Libertarianism is the view that each person has the right to live his life in any way he chooses so long as he respects the equal rights of others. (Throughout this [essay] I use the traditional "he" and "his" to refer to all individuals, male and female; unless the context indicates otherwise, "he" and "his" should be understood to refer to both men and women.) Libertarians defend each person's right to life, liberty, and property—rights that people possess naturally, before governments are created. In the libertarian view, all human relationships should be voluntary; the only actions that should be forbidden by law are those that involve the initiation of force against those who have not themselves used force—actions like murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping, and fraud.

Most people habitually believe in and live by this code of ethics. Libertarians believe this code should be applied consistently—and specifically, that it should be applied to actions by governments as well as by individuals. Governments should exist to protect rights, to protect us from others who might use force against us. When governments use force against people who have not violated the rights of others, then governments themselves become rights violators. Thus libertarians condemn such government actions as censorship, the draft, price controls, confiscation of property, and regulation of our personal and economic lives.

Put so starkly, the libertarian vision may sound otherworldly, like a doctrine for a universe of angels that never was and never will be. Surely, in today's messy and often unpleasant world, government must do a great deal? But here's the surprise: The answer is no. In fact, the more messy and modern the world, the better libertarianism works compared—for instance—with monarchy, dictatorship, and even postwar American-style welfarism. The political awakening in America today is first and foremost the realization that libertarianism is not a relic of the past. It is a philosophy—more, a pragmatic plan—for the future. In American politics it is the leading edge—not a backlash, but a vanguard. . . .

Libertarianism is an old philosophy, but its framework for liberty under law and economic progress makes it especially suited for the dynamic world—call it the Information Age, or the Third Wave, or the Third Industrial Revolution—we are now entering.

### THE RESURGENCE OF LIBERTARIANISM

Some readers may well wonder why people in a generally free and prosperous country like the United States need to adopt a new philosophy of government. Aren't we doing reasonably well with our current system? We do indeed have a society that has brought unprecedented prosperity to a larger number of people than ever before. But we face problems—from high taxes to poor schools to racial tensions to environmental destruction—that our current approach is not handling adequately. Libertarianism has solutions to those problems, as I'll try to demonstrate. For now I'll offer three reasons that libertarianism is the right approach for America on the eve of the new millennium.

First, we are not nearly as prosperous as we could be. If our economy were growing at the rate it grew from 1945 to 1973, our gross domestic product<sup>o</sup> would be 40 percent larger than it is. But that comparison doesn't give the true picture of the economic harm that excessive government is doing to us. In a world of global markets and accelerating technological change, we shouldn't be growing at the same pace we did forty years ago—we should be growing faster. More reliance on markets and individual enterprise would mean more wealth for all of us, which is especially important for those who have the least today.

Second, our government has become far too powerful, and it increasingly threatens our freedom. . . . Government taxes too much, regulates too much, interferes too much. Politicians from Jesse Helms to Jesse Jackson seek to impose their own moral agenda on 250 million Americans. Events like the assault on the Branch Davidians,<sup>o</sup> the shootings of Vicki Weaver<sup>o</sup> and Donald Scott,<sup>o</sup> the beating of Rodney King,<sup>o</sup> and the government's increasing attempts to take private property without judicial process make us fear an out-of-control government and remind us of the need to reestablish strict limits on power.

Third, in a fast-changing world where every individual will have unprecedented access to information, centralized bureaucracies<sup>o</sup> and coercive regulations<sup>o</sup> just won't be able to keep up with the real economy. The existence of global capital markets means that investors won't be held hostage by national governments and their confiscatory tax systems. New opportunities for

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<sup>o</sup>gross domestic product: A measure of the total value of goods and services produced within a country in a year. <sup>o</sup>Branch Davidians: Members of a religious group in Waco, Texas, who were killed in 1993 during a siege by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). <sup>o</sup>Vicki Weaver: The wife of white separatist Randy Weaver, she was killed in 1992 by FBI agents who were trying to arrest her husband in Ruby Ridge, Idaho. <sup>o</sup>Donald Scott: A rancher in Malibu, California, who was killed by a Los Angeles sheriff's deputy during a hunt for marijuana, which was not found. <sup>o</sup>Rodney King: An African American who was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers after they stopped him for a suspected traffic violation. <sup>o</sup>centralized bureaucracies: Federal bureaucracies such as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the U.S. Postal Service. <sup>o</sup>coercive regulations: Government regulations such as minimum wage laws that employers must observe.



telecommuting will mean that more and more workers will also have the ability to flee high taxes and other intrusive government policies. Prosperous nations in the twenty-first century will be those that attract productive people. We need a limited government to usher in an unlimited future.

The twentieth century has been the century of state power, from Hitler and Stalin to the totalitarian states behind the Iron Curtain,<sup>o</sup> from dictatorships across Africa to the bureaucratic welfare states of North America and Western Europe. Many people assume that as time goes on, and the world becomes more complex, governments naturally get bigger and more powerful. In fact, however, the twentieth century was in many ways a detour from the 2,500-year history of the Western world. From the time of the Greeks, the history of the West has largely been a story of increasing freedom, with a progressively limited role for coercive and arbitrary government. 10

Today, at the end of the twentieth century, there are signs that we may be returning to the path of limiting government and increasing liberty. With the collapse of communism, there is hardly any support left for central planning. Third World countries are privatizing state industries<sup>o</sup> and freeing up markets. Practicing capitalism, the Pacific Rim countries have moved from poverty to world economic leadership in a generation.

In the United States, the bureaucratic leviathan<sup>o</sup> is threatened by a resurgence of the libertarian ideas upon which the country was founded. We are witnessing a breakdown of all the cherished beliefs of the welfare-warfare state. Americans have seen the failure of big government. . . .

Why is there a libertarian revival now? The main reason is that the alternatives to libertarianism—fascism, communism, socialism, the welfare state—have all been tried in the twentieth century and have all failed to produce peace, prosperity, and freedom.

Fascism, as exemplified in Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, was the first to go. Its economic centralization and racial collectivism now seem repellent to every civilized person, so we may forget that before World War II many Western intellectuals admired the "new forms of economic organization in Germany and Italy," as the magazine the *Nation* put it in 1934. . . .

The other great totalitarian system of the twentieth century was communism, as outlined by Karl Marx and implemented in the Soviet Union and its satellites. Communism maintained its appeal to idealists far longer than fascism. At least until the revelations of Stalin's purges in the 1950s, many American intellectuals viewed communism as a noble if sometimes excessive attempt

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<sup>o</sup>states behind the Iron Curtain: The Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries dominated by it after World War II. <sup>o</sup>privatizing state industries: The process whereby industries formerly owned by the state are turned over to private ownership and encouraged to make profits. <sup>o</sup>leviathan: A state with a large bureaucracy and an undemocratic government that is not responsive to the people.

to eliminate the inequalities and “alienation” of capitalism. As late as the 1980s, some American economists continued to praise the Soviet Union for its supposed economic growth and efficiency—right up to the system’s collapse, in fact.

When communism suddenly imploded in 1989–91, libertarians were not surprised. Communism, they had argued for years, was not only inimical to human freedom and dignity but ~~devastatingly inefficient~~ and its inefficiency would only get worse over time, while the capitalist world progressed. The collapse of communism had a profound impact on the ideological landscape of the entire world: It virtually eliminated full-blown socialism as one end point of the ideological debate. It’s obvious now that total statism<sup>o</sup> is a total disaster, leading more and more people to wonder why a society would want to implement *some* socialism if full socialism is so catastrophic.

But what about the welfare states of the West? The remaining ideological battles may be relatively narrow, but they are still important. Shouldn’t government temper the market? Aren’t the welfare states more humane than libertarian states would be? Although Western Europe and the United States never tried complete socialism, such concerns did cause government control of people’s economic lives to increase dramatically during the twentieth century. . . .

Yet today, all over the developed world, welfare states are faltering. The tax rates necessary to sustain the massive transfer programs<sup>o</sup> are crippling Western economies. Dependence on government has devalued family, work, and thrift. From Germany to Sweden to Australia the promises of the welfare state can no longer be kept.

In the United States, Social Security will start running deficits by 2012—only fifteen years from now—and will be out of money by 2029. Official projections show that Medicare will be out of money as early as 2001 and will be running a deficit of \$443 billion by 2006. Economists calculate that an American born in 1975 would have to pay 82 percent of his lifetime income in taxes to keep entitlement programs going, which is why young people are balking at the prospect of working most of their lives to pay for transfer programs that will eventually go bankrupt anyway. A 1994 poll found that 63 percent of Americans between eighteen and thirty-four don’t believe Social Security will exist by the time they retire; more of them (46 percent) believe in UFOs than in Social Security (28 percent).

Getting out of the welfare state is going to be a tricky economic and political problem, but more and more people—in the United States and elsewhere—recognize that Western-style big government is going through a slow-motion version of communism’s collapse. . . .

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<sup>o</sup> statism: A system in which there is centralized government control over economics and planning.

<sup>o</sup> transfer programs: Programs that tax some groups of people in order to help other groups.

### KEY CONCEPTS OF LIBERTARIANISM

With that background in mind, I want to spell out some of the key concepts of 20  
libertarianism, themes that . . . have developed over many centuries. . . .

**Individualism.** Libertarian thought emphasizes the dignity of each individual, which entails both rights and responsibility. The progressive extension of dignity to more people—to women, to people of different religions and different races—is one of the great libertarian triumphs of the Western world.

**Individual Rights.** . . . Individuals . . . have a right to be secure in their life, liberty, and property. These rights are not granted by government or by society; they are inherent in the nature of human beings. It is intuitively right that individuals enjoy the security of such rights; the burden of explanation should lie with those who would take rights away.

**Spontaneous Order.** A great degree of order in society is necessary for individuals to survive and flourish. It's easy to assume that order must be imposed by a central authority, the way we impose order on a stamp collection or a football team. The great insight of libertarian social analysis is that order in society arises spontaneously, out of the actions of thousands or millions of individuals who coordinate their actions with those of others in order to achieve their purposes. Over human history, we have gradually opted for more freedom and yet managed to develop a complex society with intricate organization. The most important institutions in human society—language, law, money, and markets—all developed spontaneously, without central direction. Civil society—the complex network of associations and connections among people—is another example of spontaneous order; the associations within civil society are formed for a purpose, but civil society itself is not an organization and does not have a purpose of its own.

**The Rule of Law.** Libertarianism is not libertinism or hedonism. It is not a claim that “people can do anything they want to, and nobody else can say anything.” Rather, libertarianism proposes a society of liberty under law, in which individuals are free to pursue their own lives so long as they respect the equal rights of others. The rule of law means that individuals are governed by generally applicable and spontaneously developed legal rules, not by arbitrary commands; and that those rules should protect the freedom of individuals to pursue happiness in their own ways, not aim at any particular result or outcome.

**Limited Government.** To protect rights, individuals form governments. But gov- 25  
ernment is a dangerous institution. Libertarians have a great antipathy to concentrated power, for as Lord Acton said, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute

power corrupts absolutely.” Thus they want to divide and limit power, and that means especially to limit government, generally through a written constitution enumerating and limiting the powers that the people delegate to government. Limited government is the basic *political* implication of libertarianism, and libertarians point to the historical fact that it was the dispersion of power in Europe—more than other parts of the world—that led to individual liberty and sustained economic growth.

***Free Markets.*** To survive and to flourish, individuals need to engage in economic activity. The right to property entails the right to exchange property by mutual agreement. Free markets are the economic system of free individuals, and they are necessary to create wealth. Libertarians believe that people will be both freer and more prosperous if government intervention in people’s economic choices is minimized.

***The Virtue of Production.*** Much of the impetus for libertarianism in the seventeenth century was a reaction against monarchs and aristocrats who lived off the productive labor of other people. Libertarians defended the right of people to keep the fruits of their labor. This effort developed into a respect for the dignity of work and production and especially for the growing middle class, who were looked down upon by aristocrats. . . . Modern libertarians defend the right of productive people to keep what they earn, against a new class of politicians and bureaucrats who would seize their earnings to transfer them to nonproducers.

***Natural Harmony of Interests.*** Libertarians believe that there is a natural harmony of interests among peaceful, productive people in a just society. One person’s individual plans—which may involve getting a job, starting a business, buying a house, and so on—may conflict with the plans of others, so the market makes many of us change our plans. But we all prosper from the operation of the free market, and there are no necessary conflicts between farmers and merchants, manufacturers and importers. Only when government begins to hand out rewards on the basis of political pressure do we find ourselves involved in group conflict, pushed to organize and contend with other groups for a piece of political power.

***Peace.*** Libertarians have always battled the age-old scourge of war. They understood that war brought death and destruction on a grand scale, disrupted family and economic life, and put more power in the hands of the ruling class—which might explain why the rulers did not always share the popular sentiment for peace. Free men and women, of course, have often had to defend their own societies against foreign threats; but throughout history, war has usually been the common enemy of peaceful, productive people on all sides of the conflict. . . .

It may be appropriate to acknowledge at this point the reader's likely suspi-<sup>30</sup> cion that libertarianism seems to be just the standard framework of modern thought—individualism, private property, capitalism, equality under the law. Indeed, after centuries of intellectual, political, and sometimes violent struggle, these core libertarian principles have become the basic structure of modern political thought and of modern government, at least in the West and increasingly in other parts of the world. However, three additional points need to be made: First, libertarianism is not just these broad liberal principles. Libertarianism *applies* these principles fully and consistently, far more so than most modern thinkers and certainly more so than any modern government. Second, while our society remains generally based on equal rights and capitalism, every day new exceptions to those principles are carved out in Washington and in Albany, Sacramento, and Austin (not to mention London, Bonn, Tokyo, and elsewhere). Each new government directive takes a little bit of our freedom, and we should think carefully before giving up any liberty. Third, liberal society is resilient; it can withstand many burdens and continue to flourish; but it is not infinitely resilient. Those who claim to believe in liberal principles but advocate more and more confiscation of the wealth created by productive people, more and more restrictions on voluntary interaction, more and more exceptions to property rights and the rule of law, more and more transfer of power from society to state, are unwittingly engaged in the ultimately deadly undermining of civilization.

## THE VISION OF THE ANOINTED

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*Thomas Sowell*

*Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, an economist, and the author of a number of articles and books, including The Economics and Politics of Race (1983), Preferential Policies: An International Perspective (1990), Inside American Education (1993), and Race and Culture (1994).*

*This reading is from Sowell's 1995 book The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy. The "anointed" Sowell refers to in his title are the intellectuals and opinion leaders in politics who, in Sowell's view, are so arrogant about their beliefs that they ignore evidence that does not fit their vision. Sowell's distaste for the arrogance of those who believe that they are the "anointed" comes through in this reading as he criticizes government programs on sex education.*

*As you read, notice that Sowell is very critical of the size and the cost of government programs as well as their effectiveness. Note as well that his libertarian position and Jacqueline R. Kasun's conservative stance have many similarities. Sowell, however, puts more emphasis than Kasun on the indoctrination he sees in sex education, the arrogance he finds in its advocates, and the cost of the bureaucracy that oversees such programs. The differences between Sowell's and Kristin Luker's views will be far more obvious.*

Among the many crusades which gathered new steam during the 1960s was the crusade to spread sex education into the public schools and through other channels. Among the first acts of the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1964 was making a grant to a Planned Parenthood unit in Texas. From a total expenditure of less than half a million dollars in fiscal year 1965, OEO expanded its financing of sex education more than five-fold by fiscal year 1966. Not only did the federal government begin in the late 1960s to greatly expand its own expenditures on sex education—often known as “family planning” or by other euphemisms—but it also began to mandate that states promote such programs as well. The number of patients served by “family planning” clinics increased approximately five-fold between 1968 and 1978.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1968, the National Education Association in its *NEA Journal* was saying that a federally funded project in a Washington school “demonstrated the need for sex education as an integral part of school curriculum beginning in the early grades.” Some of the pregnant girls counseled “reported feeling that if they had studied human sexuality with understanding teachers during elementary school, they would not have become pregnant.”<sup>2</sup> Sex education and “family planning” clinics—so called despite their being established to prevent having babies—not only grew rapidly but also changed in the clientele they served. As a study of this era put it:

Family planning services grew phenomenally from the mid-60s to the mid-70s. In 1964, the federal government made its first family planning grant, which served only married women. By 1970, Congress had passed the first national family planning and population legislation. Federal expenditures grew from \$16 million to close to \$200 million. In 1969, there were less than a quarter of a million teenagers using family planning clinics; by 1976 this had swollen to 1.2 million.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a leading research and advocacy organization<sup>o</sup> promoting sex education, the federal government's support

<sup>o</sup>advocacy organization: An organization that exists to promote particular policies.

<sup>1</sup>Aida Tores, Jacqueline Darroch Forrest, and Susan Eisman, “Family Planning Services in the United States, 1978–79,” *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (May/June 1981), pp. 139, 141.

<sup>2</sup>Patricia Schiller, “Sex Education That Makes Sense,” *NEA Journal*, February 1968, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Ooms, *Teenage Pregnancy in a Family Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), p. 26.

of "family planning services" rose from less than \$14 million in 1968 to \$279 million a decade later<sup>4</sup>—nearly a twenty-fold increase. By the early 1980s, nearly two-thirds of the money received by "family planning" agencies came from the federal government.<sup>5</sup> What was the purpose of all this activity? "Sex education is considered one of the primary tools to help adolescents avoid unwanted pregnancy," according to a typical comment of the period.<sup>6</sup> Once more, we have the four-stage pattern.<sup>6</sup>

### STAGE 1. THE "CRISIS"

In 1968, it was claimed that "contraception education and counseling is now urgently needed to help prevent pregnancy and illegitimacy in high school girls."<sup>7</sup> The head of Planned Parenthood testified before a congressional subcommittee in 1966 as to the need for sex education "to assist our young people in reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock births and early marriage necessitated by pregnancy."<sup>8</sup> The incidence of venereal disease among young people was cited by the head of the New York City Board of Education as showing the need for "a crash educational program." An article in the *American School Board Journal* in 1969 depicted sex education as a way of combatting "illegitimacy and venereal disease."<sup>9</sup> *PTA Magazine* likewise urged sex education to combat "the spiraling rate of venereal diseases, the pregnancies before marriage, the emotionally disastrous results of irresponsible sexual behavior."<sup>10</sup>

Similar statements abounded from a variety of sources. But what was in fact the situation when this kind of "crisis" mentality was being used to push for more sex education in the schools? Fertility rates among teenage girls had been declining for more than a decade since 1957.<sup>11</sup> Venereal disease was also declining. The rate of infection for gonorrhea, for example, declined every year from

<sup>6</sup>the four-stage pattern: Earlier in his book, Sowell argues that the "crusades" typically championed by the "anointed" tend to have four stages.

<sup>4</sup>Alan Guttmacher Institute, *Informing Public Change* (New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1980), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Cheryl D. Hayes, editor, *Risking the Future: Adolescent Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Childbearing* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1987), p. 160.

<sup>6</sup>Ooms, pp. 39–40.

<sup>7</sup>H. S. Hoyman, "Should We Teach About Birth Control in High School Sex Education?" *Education Digest*, February 1969, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup>United States Senate, Eighty-ninth Congress, second session, *Family Planning Program: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 84.

<sup>9</sup>Joanne Zazzaro, "Critics or No Critics, Most Americans Still Firmly Support Sex Education in Schools," *American School Board Journal*, September 1969, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup>Robert P. Hildrup, "Why Sex Education Belongs in the Schools," *PTA Magazine*, February 1974, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>Jacqueline Kasun, *The War Against Population* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 144.

1950 through 1959, and the rate of syphilis infection was, by 1960, less than half of what it had been in 1950.<sup>12</sup> This was the "crisis" which federal aid was to solve.

### STAGE 2: THE "SOLUTION"

Massive federal aid to sex education programs in the schools, and to "family planning" clinics, was advocated to combat teenage pregnancy and venereal disease. After sex education, according to a "Professor of Family Life," a boy "will find decreased need for casual, irresponsible and self-centered experimentation with sex."<sup>13</sup> Critics opposed such actions on various grounds, including a belief that sex education would lead to more sexual activity, rather than less, and to more teenage pregnancy as well. Such views were dismissed in the media and in politics, as well as by the advocates of sex education. The *New York Times* editorially rejected "emotions and unexamined tradition" in this area<sup>14</sup> and its education editor declared: "To fear that sex education will become synonymous with greater sexual permissiveness is to misunderstand the fundamental purpose of the entire enterprise."<sup>15</sup> As in many other cases, *intentions* were the touchstone<sup>o</sup> of the vision of the anointed.

### STAGE 3: THE RESULTS

As early as 1968, nearly half of all schools in the country—public and private, religious and secular—had sex education, and it was rapidly growing.<sup>16</sup> As sex education programs spread widely through the American educational system during the 1970s, the pregnancy rate among 15- to 19-year-old females rose from approximately 68 per thousand in 1970 to approximately 96 per thousand by 1980.<sup>17</sup> Among unmarried girls in the 15- to 17-year-old bracket, birth rates rose 29 percent between 1970 and 1984,<sup>18</sup> despite a massive increase in abortions, which more than doubled during the same period. Among girls under 15, the number of abortions surpassed the number of live births by 1974.<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>o</sup> touchstone: The crucial test of something.

<sup>12</sup> Today's VD Control Problem: Joint Statement by American Public Health Association, American Social Health Association, American Venereal Disease Association, Association of State and Territorial Health Officers in Co-operation with the American Medical Association, February 1966, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Lester A. Kirkendall, "Sex Education: A Reappraisal," *The Humanist*, Spring 1965, p. 82.

<sup>14</sup> "Three's a Crowd," *New York Times*, March 17, 1972, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> Fred M. Hechinger, "Introduction," *Sex Education and the Schools*, edited by Virginia Hilu (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. xiv.

<sup>16</sup> John Kobler, "Sex Invades the Schoolhouse," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 29, 1968, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Kasun, pp. 142, 144.

<sup>18</sup> Hayes, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.



reason was not hard to find: According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the percentage of unmarried teenage girls who had engaged in sex was higher at every age from 15 through 19 by 1976 than it was just five years earlier.<sup>20</sup> The rate of teenage gonorrhea tripled between 1956 and 1975.<sup>21</sup> Sargent Shriver, former head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, which led the early charge for more sex education and "family planning" clinics, testified candidly to a congressional committee in 1978: "Just as venereal disease has skyrocketed 350% in the last 15 years when we have had more clinics, more pills, and more sex education than ever in history, teen-age pregnancy has risen."<sup>22</sup> Such candor was, however, the exception rather than the rule among those who had pushed for sex education and birth control ("family planning") clinics.

#### STAGE 4. THE RESPONSE

Sex education advocates continue to treat as axiomatic<sup>o</sup> the need for more sex education to combat teenage pregnancy and venereal disease. As late as 1980, and in spite of mounting evidence, the Alan Guttmacher Institute proclaimed: "Teenage pregnancy can, through better education and preventive services, be, if not altogether avoided, at least reduced, and through better maternity, abortion and social services, be reduced in its personal impact on the teenager who does get pregnant." Opposition to sex education continued to be dismissed as a "simplistic view" in the *American Biology Teacher* journal.<sup>23</sup> Congressman James H. Scheuer of New York found that the alarming statistics on rising teenage pregnancy only "highlight the need for strong leadership by the Federal Government in solving this problem."<sup>24</sup> The very possibility that "strong" federal "leadership" might have worsened the situation was not even mentioned. To the Alan Guttmacher Institute as well, an "almost quadrupling" of venereal disease between 1960 and 1972<sup>25</sup> only showed that more "broadly based national programs channeled through the public school system are needed and are long overdue."<sup>26</sup> Opposition to sex education has been depicted as "a threat to a democratic society."<sup>27</sup> When confronted

<sup>o</sup> axiomatic: So obvious that evidence is not needed.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Guttmacher Institute, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Hearings before the Select Committee on Population, Ninety-fifth Congress, second session, *Fertility and Contraception in America: Adolescent and Pre-Adolescent Pregnancy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), Vol. II, p. 253.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 625.

<sup>23</sup> Les Picker, "Human Sexuality Education Implications for Biology Teaching," *American Biology Teacher*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (February 1984), p. 92.

<sup>24</sup> Hearings before the Select Committee on Population, Ninety-fifth Congress, second session.

<sup>25</sup> Paul A. Reichelt and Harriet H. Wetley, "Contraception, Abortion and Venereal Disease: Teenagers' Knowledge and the Effect of Education," *Family Planning Perspectives*, March/April 1975, p. 83.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Scales, "The New Opposition to Sex Education: A Powerful Threat to a Democratic Society," *Journal of School Health*, April 1981, p. 303.

with the evidence that pregnancy and abortions increased during the 1970s, sex education advocates often deny that sex education was widespread during that decade, by restricting the term "sex education" to *compulsory* sex education, which tended to be mandated later.

Although sex education programs have been sold to the public, to Congress, and to education officials as ways of reducing such tangible social ills as teenage pregnancy and venereal disease, many of the leaders of this movement have long had a more expansive agenda. As a congressional committee report noted gingerly:

The primary objective of Federal efforts in family life and sex education has been to reduce unwanted pregnancy rates among teenagers, while the primary goal of most sex educators appears to be encouragement of healthy attitudes about sex and sexuality.<sup>28</sup>

In short, however politically useful public concern about teenage pregnancy and venereal disease might be in obtaining government money and access to a captive audience in the public schools, the real goal was to change students' attitudes—put bluntly, to brainwash them with the vision of the anointed, in order to supplant the values they had been taught at home. In the words of an article in the *Journal of School Health*, sex education presents "an exciting opportunity to develop new norms."<sup>29</sup> Only in the light of this agenda does it make sense that so-called "sex education" should be advocated to take place throughout the school years—from kindergarten to college—when it could not possibly take that much time to teach basic biological or medical information about sex. What takes that long is a constant indoctrination in new attitudes.<sup>30</sup> An example of such indoctrination may be useful:

A popular sex instructional program for junior high school students, aged 13 and 14, shows film strips of four naked couples, two homosexual and two heterosexual, performing a variety of sexually explicit acts, and teachers are warned with a cautionary note from the sex educators not to show the material to parents or friends: "Many of the materials of this program shown to people outside the context of the program itself can evoke misunderstanding and difficulties."<sup>31</sup>

Parents who learned of this program and protested were quickly labeled 10 "fundamentalists" and "right-wing extremists," even though they were in fact affluent Episcopalians in Connecticut. Here is an almost textbook example of the vision of the anointed, preempting the decisions of parents as to when and

<sup>28</sup>*Fertility and Contraception in the United States: Report Prepared by the Select Committee on Population* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup>Sylvia S. Hacker, "It Isn't Sex Education Unless..." *Journal of School Health*, April 1981, p. 208.

<sup>30</sup>See, for example, Thomas Sowell, *Inside American Education* (New York: Free Press, 1992), Chapter 3.

<sup>31</sup>Suzanne Fields, "War! Pits Parents vs. Public Policy," *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 17, 1992, p. 19.

how their own children shall be introduced to sex—and dismissing out of hand those with different views. Nor was this episode peculiar to this particular school. Similar things have happened all over the country. Parents are denigrated both in discussions of public policy and in the materials given to students in the schools. A typical comment from “experts” is that “sex and sexuality have become far too complex and technical to leave to the typical parent, who is either uninformed or too bashful to share useful sexual information with his child.”<sup>32</sup>

This utter certainty of being right, even to the point of circumventing parents, is completely consistent with the vision, however inconsistent it is with decades of empirical evidence<sup>o</sup> on the actual consequences of “healthy attitudes toward sex” as promoted by “experts.” The key point about the sex education crusade, from the standpoint of understanding the vision of the anointed, is that evidence proved to be as irrelevant here as on other issues.

## A WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

### Libertarianism

The following tasks are designed to help you think about the readings and identify and start to work up material you might use in your own essay. If you need help with tasks that require summarizing, see Appendix 1.

1. *Summarize part of Milton Friedman's argument and compare it to E. J. Dionne Jr.'s.* Friedman favors economic freedom and makes the sort of argument about marketplace supremacy that Dionne, who espouses liberalism, opposes. If you completed the earlier writer's notebook task asking you to summarize Dionne's objection to marketplace supremacy, review what you wrote now. Then write a page or so summarizing what good Friedman expects to come from economic freedom and telling how his stance differs from Dionne's. You might concentrate on paragraphs 4 and 10–21 in Friedman and paragraphs 8–12 in Dionne.
2. *Consider David Boaz's essay.* In paragraph 16, Boaz addresses a question he expects from his readers: “Aren't the welfare states more humane than libertarian states would be?” Write a few sentences explaining how Boaz answers this question.
3. *Evaluate Thomas Sowell's argument and compare it to Kristin Luker's.* Sowell may be the sort of writer Luker characterizes as wanting to “reverse the gains of the recent past,” whereas Luker may be the sort of writer Sowell characterizes as feeling possessed of a morally superior vision. Write a page or so telling which writer you agree with more and why. As you evaluate each argument,

<sup>o</sup>empirical evidence: Evidence gained from observation and research.

<sup>32</sup>James Hottos and Neal A. Milner, *The Sex Education Controversy: A Study of Politics, Education, and Morality* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1975), p. 6.