

the Freeman

SUMMER 2015



GREEN ISSUE

the *Freeman*

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VOLUME 65 | NO. 02

PUBLISHED BY

FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION

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Atlanta, GA 30309 | United States

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This issue of the *Freeman* is dedicated to Mother Earth. We operate with the knowledge that, when it comes to the goals of conservation and protection, wealthier is healthier. That is, when the institutions, innovations, and incentives are correct, we will not only be wealthier, but there will be no contradiction between free markets and a cleaner environment.

The global warming debate, such as it is, seems to have been purchased by those with power. For all the fretting about the influence of oil interests on the debate, public choice theory tells us that coalitions of bootleggers and Baptists will accrete around any actions by the government to save us from environmental catastrophe. Of course, when government and industry collude, truth becomes a moving target. Hysteria goes on auction. And the people pay the costs.

It doesn't matter who does the wagging, the tail or the dog. There are enough true believers in climate catastrophe to feed an army of bureaucrats and to line the pockets of a thousand special interests. At the front of this incestuous line stand the experts: the climatologists are having their day in the sun (no pun). The economists are able suddenly to read the entrails that tell us what a warmer future will bring. They receive major grants, fame, and status from being on the side of the angels. Unfortunately, proven environmental problems such as overfishing get short shrift as the great hysteria nexus keeps everyone preoccupied with the climate.

Let us go forward with this summer edition thinking warm thoughts about how the world is getting better (and greener)—how a creative, entrepreneurial people can be good stewards of the environment, even without (especially without) central energy planning, green dirigisme, and the folly of demand-side management. There is a long road ahead, as the road to catastrophe will be paved with good intentions.

— THE EDITORS

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MANDATORY VACCINES



MANDATORY VACCINATIONS CAN BE COMPATIBLE WITH LIBERTY

By Randal John Meyer

We can take comfort that modern science can handle infectious diseases. Questionable studies such as reports linking vaccinations to autism have been debunked. Despite the empirically demonstrable efficacy of vaccines, some people have decided to forgo vaccinations for themselves or for children under their custody. Accordingly, libertarians have been forced to examine their own tenets to evaluate whether compulsory vaccinations are compatible with the principles of individual freedom.

I believe they are.

A major pitfall for libertarians examining this question is the consideration of whether mandatory vaccinations are too paternalistic. But because vaccinations prevent harm to others with incidental paternalistic effects, I argue that they are justified. Because certain deadly diseases are communicable from human-to-human contact, transmission can be prevented by using medically safe vaccines.

Vaccines do not always and in every case protect individuals who receive them. Bacteria and viruses can mutate, preventing vaccines from conquering them. And, over time, a particular vaccine can become less effective. But when given to a large enough population and updated periodically

to counter mutations, vaccines act like a computer firewall, protecting the entire population. And if a significant enough portion of the population chooses not to be vaccinated, then the whole population becomes more susceptible to an outbreak. Immunization of a critical proportion of the population in this manner is called “herd immunity.” Though it may seem paradoxical, it becomes important to ensure that the vast majority of people get immunized to prevent harm.

Libertarian philosophy holds that it is justifiable to prevent unauthorized harm of one individual against another. Accordingly, even libertarians who have adopted principles such as the nonaggression axiom or the harm principle can see that vaccination is a means of preventing harm. Moreover, even libertarians who follow a strict Rothbardian nonaggression principle consider the *prospect* of aggression to be indistinguishable from actual aggression. And this is reasonable: preventing imminent harm is as good as stopping present harm.

University of Arizona professor Joel Feinberg has argued that “it is always a good reason in support of legislation that it would probably be effective in preventing (eliminating or reducing) harm to persons other than the actor and there is

probably no other means that is equally effective at no greater cost to other values.”

John Stuart Mill famously notes in *On Liberty* that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”

The questions of whether the nonimmunized members of a population pose a risk to others—as well as the effectiveness of vaccinations in preventing that harm—turn on facts. To address such questions, let’s take a look at the disease that has led to most of this recent controversy: measles.

If one imagines a community with an immunity rate of 96–99 percent for measles due to vaccination (and most states fall below this rate), it is statistically unlikely that there will be an outbreak of measles in this population due to herd immunity. When only 95 percent of the population is vaccinated, an outbreak is possible. When the percentage vaccinated falls below 90 percent, the rate of infection per 10,000 children more than doubles.

If the rate falls low enough, we can expect pandemics. “Before mass vaccination was introduced, measles used to follow a cyclic pattern, with [epidemics occurring each] period of about 2 years in Europe and North America,”

according to research by V.A.A. Jansen and N. Stollenwerk.

From 1840 through 1990, measles killed nearly 200 million people globally. But from 2000 through 2012, measles deaths decreased by 78 percent after the UN sponsored immunization. During this period, 68 percent of the populations of member countries were immunized to herd immunity levels. In the United States, the vaccination rate among infants was 91 percent, considerably below the 96–99 percent needed for herd immunity to be maintained. In fact, in some enclaves, such as the Orange County school district, the immunization rate dropped to 50–60 percent among kindergarteners. This failure to vaccinate, at least in part due to the existence of the state philosophical exemption from vaccination, allowed the measles outbreak to occur in 2015 in more than a dozen states.

No individual has the right to expose other individuals to that risk.

Alternatively, there is a parallel argument from the libertarian principles regarding common defense. According to David Boaz in his updated book, *The Libertarian Mind*, “most libertarians” believe that “governments should exist... [to provide] national defense against external threats.” The entire human race is at war with microbes, such as viruses, and has undergone massive assaults. Examples include the bubonic plague, smallpox, and polio. Each day,

an individual’s immune system destroys numerous potential pathogens. Liberty-restraint principles allow for collectivization of defense efforts against equally deadly foes: our immune systems are not alone in this. Vaccines are instruments of that ongoing war.

People should not be compelled to be vaccinated for non-communicable diseases, of course, but we don’t want any of these serious pathogens to reemerge. Measles, mumps, rubella, and pertussis cases are all on the rise in the United States. Polio has returned in more than 10 countries; the World Health Organization believes it constitutes a global health emergency. Childhood vaccines save nearly \$40 billion in direct and indirect costs, in addition to numerous lives.

It is important to note, as well, that compulsory vaccination can accomplish herd immunity by means short of forced procedures. On one level, the civil law could be used to hold nonvaccinated adults and the parents of nonvaccinated children financially liable with punitive damages

for their role in any public health emergency. Exclusion from various types of public space or activities could be justified, yet enforcement would be difficult, if not impossible, particularly in urban areas. On a more restrictive level, the state could use the

criminal law to impose fines on parents or declare that such action constitutes child neglect. Regardless, more extreme measures for noncompliant adults would only be appropriate if more restrictive means could not achieve herd immunity thresholds.

Thus, it can be argued that vaccination policy approaching infringement on individual and parental choice does not pose an issue *per se* with mainstream libertarian thought, given the narrowness of the means of vaccination (how little it imposes on the recipient’s liberty) and the degree of relatively certain harm to others that is thereby prevented.

The harm of nonvaccination for serious communicable diseases poses a significant enough risk for others to become infected that it justifies such small impositions on personal liberty. A policy of voluntary vaccination, or the granting of philosophical exceptions to the general vaccination requirement, causes much more potential harm than requiring people to get a vaccination does. ■

Randal John Meyer is a Young Voices Advocate and a legal research fellow living in New York City.

PREVENTING IMMINENT HARM IS AS GOOD AS STOPPING PRESENT HARM.

MANDATORY VACCINATIONS ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH LIBERTY

Social conflict can be resolved through the fuller application of private property rights

By Robert P. Murphy

Mandatory vaccinations are a gross violation of liberty. On some government policy issues—including mandatory quarantines, airport checkpoints, and NSA email scanning—there is at least a coherent allegation of a trade-off between individual freedom and public safety. But when it comes to mandatory vaccinations, there is little scope for plausible debate.

Mandatory vaccinations involve a supreme violation of liberty, where agents of the state inject substances into someone's body against his or her will. On the other side of the ledger, even in principle, mandatory vaccinations do not offer much benefit in enhanced public welfare, relative to a free society. When we throw in the realistic worries of government incompetence and malfeasance, the case against mandatory vaccinations is overwhelming.

Before making my case, I will explain in basic terms how different groups are likely to treat the proposition, according to major conceptions of the state's proper role. I do this in order to show that, even if we're being charitable to the most inclusive conceptions of liberty as a principle, mandatory vaccinations are still not justifiable.

First, among those who hew strictly to a nonaggression principle and a stateless society, mandatory vaccinations are, of course, a nonstarter. Whether they identify themselves as "strict libertarians," "voluntaryists," or "anarchocapitalists," this group would obviously never condone the state's forcing someone to be vaccinated, because most believe the state is illegitimate.

Second, for minarchists, the proper role for the state is that of a "night watchman," a minimal government that only protects the individual from domestic criminals and foreign threats. In a minarchist framework, it is only legitimate for the state to take action against someone who is violating (or threatening to violate) the rights of another. A person's failure to become vaccinated is hardly *by itself* a violation of someone else's rights. Flipping it around, it would sound odd to say you have the *right* to live in a society where everyone else has had measles shots.

Third, and most interesting, let's consider a broader notion of liberty, which balances a presumption of individual

autonomy against the public welfare. In this approach, there's not a blanket prohibition on the state restricting the liberties of individuals—even when they haven't yet hurt anybody else—so long as such restrictions impose little harm on the recipients and possibly prevent a vast amount of damage. This is the only conception of the state for which the mandatory vaccination debate is possible.

Let's be charitable and assume this more expansive definition, under which, for example, even self-described libertarians might not object to stiff penalties for drunk driving or prohibitions on citizens building atomic bombs in their basements. How does mandatory vaccination fare in

this framework, where we're not arguing in terms of qualitative principles but instead performing a quantitative cost-benefit test?

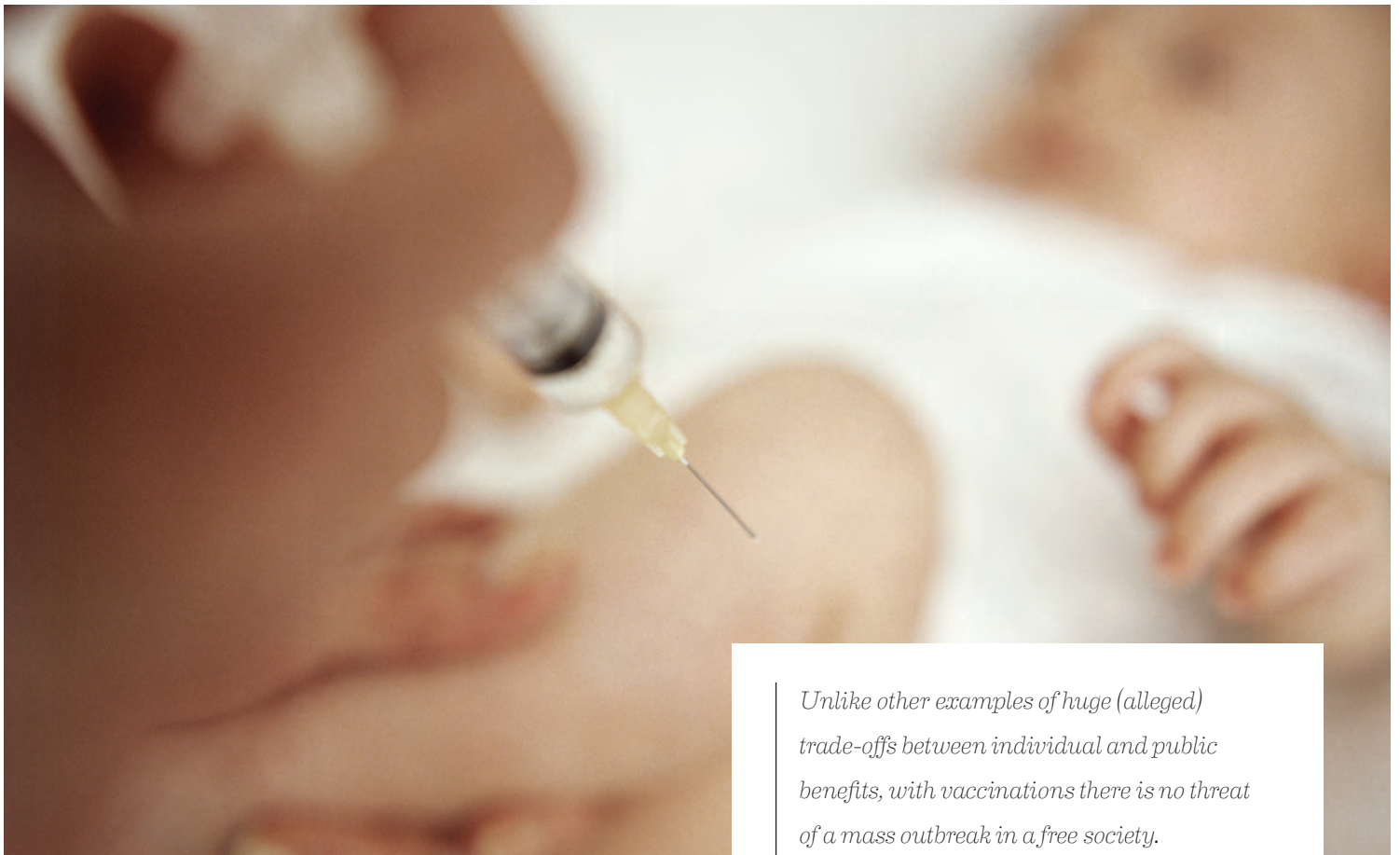
Even here, the case for mandatory vaccinations is weak. First of all, the only realistic scenario where the issue would

even be relevant is where the vast majority of the public thinks it would be a good idea if everyone got vaccinated, but (for whatever reason) a small minority strongly disagreed. This is obvious: if the medical case for a vaccine were so dubious that, say, half the public didn't think it made sense to administer it, then there would hardly be an issue of the government clamoring to inject half the population against their will.

Now, let's push our analysis further. We're dealing with a scenario in which the vast majority of the public thinks it would be a good idea for *all* of the public to become vaccinated. In that environment, if vaccines are voluntary, then we can be confident that just about all of these enthusiasts *would* go ahead and become vaccinated. In other words, any "free riding" would only take place at the margin, if most of the population had gotten the vaccine and thus an outbreak of the relevant disease was unlikely.

This is a crucial point, and it shows why the case for mandatory vaccines is so much weaker than, for example, the case for mandatory restrictions on carbon dioxide emissions or mandatory contributions to the national military. When a person gets vaccinated, the primary beneficiary is *himself*. And this benefit is all the greater the *lower* the rate of vaccination in the population at large. In other words,

MANDATORY VACCINATIONS INVOLVE A SUPREME VIOLATION OF LIBERTY...



Unlike other examples of huge (alleged) trade-offs between individual and public benefits, with vaccinations there is no threat of a mass outbreak in a free society.

among a population of people who all believe that a vaccine is effective, the *individual* cost-benefit analysis of taking the vaccine will only yield a temptation of “free riding” once a sufficient fraction of the population has become vaccinated, thus ensuring “herd immunity.”

Unlike other examples of huge (alleged) trade-offs between individual and public benefits, with vaccinations there is no threat of a mass outbreak in a free society. With vaccines, we have the happy outcome that when someone chooses to vaccinate him or herself, so long as the vaccine is effective, then that person is largely shielded from the consequences of others’ decisions regarding vaccination.

However, the proponents of mandatory vaccinations say that this analysis is too glib. There are people who *can’t* undergo certain vaccinations because of medical conditions, including young people (babies) who are not yet old enough to receive certain shots. It is to protect *these* vulnerable pockets of the population that some want the state to force vaccinations on those who are too ignorant or too selfish to recognize their duty of living in a community.

Notice the irony and how weak the mandatory vaccination case has become. We are no longer being told that vaccines are “safe,” and that anyone who fears medical complications is a conspiracy theorist trusting Jenny McCarthy over guys in white lab coats. On the contrary, the CDC warns certain groups *not* to take popular vaccines because of the health risks. This is no longer a matter of principle—of the

people on the side of science being pro-vaccine, while the tinfoil-hatters are anti-vaccine. Instead it’s a disagreement over which people should be taking the vaccine and which people should *not* take it because the dangers are too great.

Regarding children, social conflict can be resolved through the fuller application of private property rights. If all schools, hospitals, and daycare centers were privately operated and had the legal right to exclude whichever clients they wished, then the owners could decide on vaccination policies. Any parents who were horrified at the idea of little Jimmy playing with an unvaccinated kid could choose Jimmy’s school accordingly.

We have seen that even assuming the best of government officials, it is difficult to state an argument in favor of mandatory vaccinations. Yet, the debate tilts even more when we recall that throughout history, government officials have made horrible decisions in the name of public welfare, either through incompetence or ulterior motives. It should be obvious that no fan of liberty can support injecting substances into an innocent person’s body against his or her will. ■

Robert P. Murphy (FEE.org/Murphy) is the senior economist with the Institute for Energy Research.

REGULATE THE DATING MARKET

A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR ROMANTIC JUSTICE

Julian Adorney writes from Lakewood, Colorado.

This year's Valentine's Day was disastrous—not just for me, but for many ex-couples. But as I sat there last February nursing my broken heart, I realized what's wrong with romance today: not enough regulation.

The United States government has wisely chosen to regulate most other aspects of life, from what wage you are allowed to work for to what medicines a patient is allowed to buy over the counter. Voluntary interactions are all well and good, but the bottom line is that people have to be protected from themselves. The trade-off between liberty and security exists not only in privacy and foreign policy: we must strike a similar balance in the arena of love.

I propose the creation of a new government organization, the Committee to Assure Romantic Equity (CARE), to bring an end to the current Wild West of romance. Three powerful sets of regulations would bring much-needed stability to the chaos of dating.

1. WHO'S ALLOWED TO DATE?

Just as professionals—from hair braiders to interior decorators—must be licensed, so too the government must step in to license daters.

Right now, the dating market is overrun with shoddy specimens. Sleazy men buy women drinks and sleep with them on the first date. Immoral women cheat on their loving boyfriends. Many people lack the discretion to choose good partners for themselves, and their poor decisions can bring out the worst in people. Never mind that they sometimes have children.

To remedy this situation, any dating hopeful should have to submit an application to CARE. A licensing system should be set up whereby applicants pay for classes in order to certify both their good-heartedness and their ability to treat a partner well. In order to enforce this system, CARE agents would inspect couples, fining or jailing any individual engaged in dating without a CARE permit.

This wise step will remove the riffraff from the dating market and ensure that good, kind individuals are never lured into romances they'll regret. And if a few people find themselves forcibly removed from the dating pool, so what? They probably weren't great partners to begin with.

2. DATING TICKETS

It is self-evident by now that free markets aren't qualified to distribute scarce natural resources. Unregulated capitalism causes intense inequality.

Today, some men and women have four or five dates per week. Others may suffer dry spells lasting months. Further, those individuals who go on many dates have an opportunity to hone their skills, making them more attractive and ensuring even more dates in the future, while those who haven't had a date in months simply languish. Their skills deteriorate, making them less and less attractive.

Such a situation is unequal and unfair. It highlights how unfettered markets create a rich-get-richer environment in which a lucky few rise to the top while the majority suffers. It proves that returns to love capital happen only at the top of the distribution, or as Thomas Piketty might summarize this theory, $r > l$, where r is the rate of return on love capital and l is the rate of love growth for the rest of us.

To remedy this situation, every man and woman should be forced to submit to CARE the number of dates

Just as professionals—from hair braiders to interior decorators—must be licensed, so too the government must step in to license daters.

he or she has planned each week. If someone has more than four, one of those dates should be randomly re-assigned to a person who hasn't been on a date in a month or more. This system will ensure a more even distribution of dates, in which each man and woman gets a fair share. (Apps like Tinder and OKCupid will have to be replaced by a single-payer CARE app.)

3. BREAKUPS

Some people—not to name names—plan a beautiful weekend getaway for Valentine's Day, only to be dumped without warning because we're "too political." This situation isn't just immoral; it ought to be illegal!

The government already regulates who can be fired from



Each man or woman preparing to let a partner go should have to fill out several forms showing due cause.

Image credit: Julia Lorenc

a job and under what circumstances. We realize, for example, the tragic consequences of a woman losing her sole means of income, so we take steps to protect employees.

But is losing love any less traumatic? Heartbreak can lead to pain, misery, and even death. With this fact in mind, I propose a few common-sense restrictions on breaking up with a significant other.

Each man or woman preparing to let a partner go should have to fill out several forms showing due cause. No one should have to fear being dumped for trifling reasons such as “too much” political activism. With the guidance of CARE, relationships will be sustained that should be sustained—even as those that have a justifiable reason to end will be allowed to do so.

Similarly, we as a society should no longer tolerate breakups that give no warning. A person seeking to break up with a significant other should have to fill out a written

complaint, notify his or her partner, and wait two weeks before the breakup. This notice will give the injured party time to adjust to the new status quo.

WHAT ABOUT FREEDOM?

Some naysayers complain that this new CARE will limit our freedom. But freedom is not the only value. We have to consider the greater good.

Freedom is tolerable when exercised in ways that serve society, but its excesses must be curbed to prevent its exercise in antisocial ways. Good, decent people need some security in the romance market. If that means a little less independence for everyone else, so be it. Those who demand unfettered freedom are simply apologists for the heartbreak status quo. ■

Decentralization: Why Dumb Networks Are Better

THE SMART CHOICE IS INNOVATION AT THE EDGE

Andreas M. Antonopoulos is the author of Mastering Bitcoin, a technical book published by O'Reilly Media.

“Every device employed to bolster individual freedom must have as its chief purpose the impairment of the absoluteness of power.” —Eric Hoffer

In computer and communications networks, decentralization leads to faster innovation, greater openness, and lower cost. Decentralization creates the conditions for competition and diversity in the services the network provides.

But how can you tell if a network is decentralized, and what makes it more likely to be decentralized? Network “intelligence” is the characteristic that differentiates centralized from decentralized networks—but in a way that is surprising and counterintuitive.

Some networks are “smart.” They offer sophisticated services that can be delivered to very simple end-user devices on the “edge” of the network. Other networks are “dumb”—they offer only a very basic service and require that the end-user devices are intelligent. What’s smart about dumb networks is that they push innovation to the edge, giving end users control over the pace and direction of innovation. Simplicity at the center allows for complexity at the edge, which fosters the vast decentralization of services.

Surprisingly, then, “dumb” networks are the smart choice for innovation and freedom.

The telephone network used to be a smart network supporting dumb devices (telephones). All the intelligence in the telephone network and all the services were contained in the phone company’s switching buildings. The telephone on the consumer’s kitchen table was little more than a speaker and a microphone. Even the most advanced touch-tone telephones were still pretty simple devices, depending entirely on the network services they could “request” through beeping the right tones.

In a smart network like that, there is no room for innovation at the edge. Sure, you can make a phone look like a

cheeseburger or a banana, but you can’t change the services it offers. The services depend entirely on the central switches owned by the phone company. Centralized innovation means slow innovation. It also means innovation directed by the goals of a single company. As a result, anything that doesn’t seem to fit the vision of the company that owns the network is rejected or even actively fought.

In fact, until 1968, AT&T restricted the devices allowed on the network to a handful of approved devices. In 1968, in a landmark decision, the FCC ruled in favor of the Carterfone, an acoustic coupler device for connecting two-way radios to telephones, opening the door for any consumer device that didn’t “cause harm to the system.”

That ruling paved the way for the answering machine, the fax machine, and the modem. But even with the ability to connect smarter devices to the edge, it wasn’t until the modem that innovation really accelerated. The modem represented a complete inversion of the architecture: all the intelligence was moved to the edge, and the phone network was used only as an underlying “dumb” network to carry the data.

Did the telecommunications companies welcome this development? Of course not! They fought it for nearly a decade, using regulation, lobbying, and legal threats against the new competition. In some countries, modem calls across international lines were automatically disconnected to prevent competition in the lucrative long-distance market. In the end, the Internet won. Now, almost the entire phone network runs as an app on top of the Internet.

The Internet is a dumb network, which is its defining and most valuable feature.

The Internet’s protocol (transmission control protocol/Internet protocol, or TCP/IP) doesn’t offer “services.” It doesn’t make decisions about content. It doesn’t distinguish between photos and text, video and audio. It doesn’t have a list of approved applications. It doesn’t even distinguish between client and server, user and host, or individual versus corporation. Every IP address is an equal peer.

TCP/IP acts as an efficient pipeline, moving data from one point to another. Over time, it has had some minor adjustments to offer some differentiated “quality of service” capabilities, but other than that, it remains, for the most part, a dumb data pipeline. Almost all the intelligence is on the edge—all the services, all the applications are created on the edge-devices. Creating a new application does not involve changing the network. The Web, voice, video, and social media were all created as applications on the edge without any need to modify the Internet protocol.

So the dumb network becomes a platform for independent innovation, without permission, at the edge. The result is an incredible range of innovations, carried out at

**Dumb networks
are the smart
choice for
innovation and
freedom.**

an even more incredible pace. People interested in even the tiniest of niche applications can create them on the edge. Applications that only have two participants only need two devices to support them, and they can run on the Internet. Contrast that to the telephone network, where a new “service,” like caller ID, had to be built and deployed on every company switch, incurring maintenance cost for every subscriber. So only the most popular, profitable, and widely used services got deployed.

The financial services industry is built on top of many highly specialized and service-specific networks. Most of these are layered atop the Internet, but they are architected as closed, centralized, and “smart” networks with limited intelligence on the edge.

Take, for example, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), the international wire transfer network. The consortium behind SWIFT has built a closed network of member banks that offers specific services: secure messages, mostly payment orders. Only banks can be members, and the network services are highly centralized.

The SWIFT network is just one of dozens of single-purpose, tightly controlled, and closed networks offered to financial services companies such as banks, brokerage firms, and exchanges. All these networks mediate the services by interposing the service provider between the “users,” and they allow minimal innovation or differentiation at the edge—that is, they are smart networks serving mostly dumb devices.

Bitcoin is the Internet of money. It offers a basic dumb network that connects peers from anywhere in the world. The bitcoin network itself does not define any financial services or applications. It doesn’t require membership registration or identification. It doesn’t control the types of devices or applications that can live on its edge. Bitcoin offers one service: securely time-stamped scripted transactions. Everything else is built on the edge-devices as an application. Bitcoin allows any application to be developed independently, without permission, on the edge of the network. A developer can create a new application using the transactional service as a platform and deploy it on any device. Even niche applications with few users—applications never envisioned by the bitcoin protocol creator—can be built and deployed.

Almost any network architecture can be inverted. You can build a closed network on top of an open network or vice versa, although it is easier to centralize than to decentralize. The modem inverted the phone network, giving us the Internet. The banks have built closed network systems on top of the decentralized Internet. Now bitcoin provides an open network platform for financial services on top of the open and decentralized Internet. The financial services built on top of bitcoin are themselves open because they are not “services”



delivered by the network; they are “apps” running on top of the network. This arrangement opens a market for applications, putting the end user in a position of power to choose the right application without restrictions.

What happens when an industry transitions from using one or more “smart” and centralized networks to using a common, decentralized, open, and dumb network? A tsunami of innovation that was pent up for decades is suddenly released. All the applications that could never get permission in the closed network can now be developed and deployed without permission. At first, this change involves reinventing the previously centralized services with new and open decentralized alternatives. We saw that with the Internet, as traditional telecommunications services were reinvented with email, instant messaging, and video calls.

This first wave is also characterized by *disintermediation*—the removal of entire layers of intermediaries who are no longer necessary. With the Internet, this meant replacing brokers, classified ads publishers, real estate agents, car salespeople, and many others with search engines and online direct markets. In the financial industry, bitcoin will create a similar wave of disintermediation by making clearinghouses, exchanges, and wire transfer services obsolete. The big difference is that some of these disintermediated layers are multibillion-dollar industries that are no longer needed.

Beyond the first wave of innovation, which simply replaces existing services, is another wave that begins to build the applications that were impossible with the previous centralized network. The second wave doesn’t just create applications that compare to existing services; it spawns new industries on the basis of applications that were previously too expensive or too difficult to scale. By eliminating friction in payments, bitcoin doesn’t just make better payments; it introduces market mechanisms and price discovery to economic activities that were too small or inefficient under the previous cost structure.

We used to think “smart” networks would deliver the most value, but making the network “dumb” enabled a massive wave of innovation. Intelligence at the edge brings choice, freedom, and experimentation without permission. In networks, “dumb” is better. ■



FREEDOM *of* **DISASSOCIATION:**
Indiana Edition

By **STEVEN HORWITZ**

Revulsion is not an argument; and some of yesterday's repugnances are today calmly accepted—though, one must add, not always for the better. In crucial cases, however, repugnance is the emotional expression of deep wisdom, beyond reason's power fully to articulate it.

— **LEON KASS**

The passage of Indiana’s version of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act has generated all kinds of commentary from both left and right, and most of it is misguided or overwrought.

I’d like to offer a few of my own thoughts on these matters, which, I think, add up to a call for both tolerance and freedom of association—as well as a rejection of repugnance as the basis for public policy.

Tolerance lies at the core of the libertarian worldview. Living peacefully with each other means accepting our differences and allowing others to engage in behavior that we might dislike but that does not harm third parties. “Anything that’s peaceful” is our lodestar, as Leonard Read often reminded us. Such tolerance does not require that we *associate* with people we disagree with, only that we leave them in peace. And this idea cuts to the core of the debate in Indiana.

If, like me, you think that gays and lesbians are not doing anything harmful to anyone, and that they should be treated just like other human beings, you might call the behavior of those who refuse to, for example, provide photography services at a same-sex marriage “intolerant.” Perhaps it is, but those who have such views are not engaged in any attempt to prevent gays and lesbians from getting married—or anything else—by refusing to provide them with a service. They are, in fact, tolerating them, but also refusing to associate with them. Tolerance does not mandate association.

Any idea of tolerance that mandates association will quickly get us into trouble. If, for example, you object to those who refuse to sell their products or services to gays and lesbians because homosexuality runs counter to their deeply held beliefs, would it not be a far worse form of intolerance to make it illegal for them to act on their religious beliefs? After all, your side is willing implicitly (or explicitly) to back its intolerance of religious convictions with coercion—you know, guns, fines, and prisons—while the other side’s intolerance involves only the simple and peaceful refusal to sell.

To repeat: those who refuse to sell are not preventing people from behaving peacefully; those who would make the refusal to sell illegal are.

If, like me, you are bothered by the behavior of those who won’t deal with gays or lesbians, you shouldn’t make matters worse by using state power to engage in true intolerance. Instead, demonstrate how much you really care about tolerance by using persuasion and disassociation to change the behavior you find intolerant.

To see how real tolerance, persuasion, and disassociation in civil society can work, consider this story from Texas: a narrow-minded store clerk objected to a mom letting her little girl wear a boy’s suit. Mom’s friends heard the story and then gave the store bad reviews online. (And unlike the small, Christian-owned pizzeria in Indiana, no one threatened the

owners or threatened to burn down the store, both of which would have crossed the line that separates real tolerance from coercion.) The store pulled its Facebook page after people left critical comments. Mom was not actually “denied service,” because she immediately declared she wouldn’t patronize the store due to the clerk’s attitude.

What didn’t happen?

No one sued, used violence, called the police, or said, “There ought to be a law.” People used words, reputation, and the power of exit to persuade others of who was right and who was wrong. This is how it should work. We don’t need a law. The mom had choices and exercised them, and the clerk and store paid a price for indulging their views on gender stereotypes. This is peaceful conflict resolution involving the rights of expression, exit, and disassociation—no need to get the state involved. Tolerance, after all, does not mean we have to *like* everything everyone else does. It only means we can’t and shouldn’t stop them from doing anything that’s peaceful.

Too often, we try to make laws on the basis of our mere dislike for others’ behavior. As a favorite Internet meme of mine says, “Everything I like should be mandatory and everything I don’t like should be banned.” This sort of reaction to our repugnance at the behavior of others is a real danger to liberal societies.

Whether it involves outlawing peaceful behavior, forced association, or state-sponsored discrimination, using repugnance as the basis for enacting laws is itself repugnant. What we end up with, after all, is poisonous discourse and a social order that is increasingly coarse and uncivil.

Why were people threatening the owners of a small pizza shop in Indiana who, hypothetically, said they would peacefully refuse to cater a same-sex wedding? What underlies such threats is the belief that repugnance (in whatever form it takes) justifies coercion. That belief also helps explain why others are so vehemently opposed to giving same-sex couples legal equality. Whether it’s repugnance at people’s religious beliefs or repugnance at the thought of two people of the same sex being married, such an emotion does not suffice to trump fundamental freedoms.

Sacrificing fundamental constitutional rights and our commitment to equality before the law isn’t worth the warm glow of an ephemeral “victory.” The trade-off is simply too steep—as is the slippery slope it could put us on. ■

Steven Horwitz (FEE.org/Horwitz) is the author of *Microfoundations and Macroeconomics: An Austrian Perspective*.

Harriet Tubman

RISKED LIFE AND LIMB FOR LIBERTY

By Lawrence W. Reed

When the day arrives that a woman's image adorns Federal Reserve currency for the first time, it might well be that of Harriet Tubman. She's reportedly on the short list. It may, however, be a dubious honor to appear on something that declines so regularly in value. Without a doubt, this woman would impart more esteem to the bill than the bill would to her. Her value is far more solid and enduring.

Slavery was once ubiquitous in the world—and even intellectually respectable. That began to change in the late 18th century, first in Britain, which ended its slave trade in 1807 and liberated the enslaved throughout its jurisdiction in 1834. Before the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in America in 1865, American blacks risked everything attempting to escape from their masters, who sometimes pursued them all the way to the Canadian border. Tubman, herself a fugitive slave, became the most renowned “conductor” on the Underground Railroad, a network of trails for escapees from the antebellum South to the North. As many as 100,000 slaves risked life and limb traveling its routes. It was the most dangerous “railroad” in the world.

Born Araminta Harriet Ross in 1820 in Maryland, Tubman survived the brutalities of bondage for 29 years. Three of her sisters had been sold to distant plantation owners. She herself carried scars for her entire life from frequent whippings. Once, when she refused to restrain a runaway slave, she was bashed in the head with a two-pound weight, causing lifelong pain, migraines, and “buzzing” in

her ears. She bolted for freedom in 1849, making her way to the neighboring free state of Pennsylvania and its city of brotherly love, Philadelphia.

“I had crossed the line of which I had so long been dreaming,” she later wrote.

WORKING FOR THE
UNION ARMY AS A
COOK AND NURSE
DURING THE CIVIL
WAR, TUBMAN
MORPHED QUICKLY
INTO AN ARMED
SCOUT AND SPY.

I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land, and my home after all was down in the old cabin quarter, with the old folks and my brothers and sisters. But to this solemn resolution I came: I was free, and they should be free also; I would make a home for them in the North, and the Lord helping me, I would bring them all there. Oh, how I prayed then, lying all alone on the cold damp ground! ‘Oh, dear Lord’, I said. I haven’t got no friend but you. Come to my help Lord, for I’m in trouble! Oh, Lord! You’ve been with me in six troubles, don’t desert me in the seventh!

Tubman bravely ventured 13 times back into slave states to personally escort at least 70 escapees to Northern states and to Canada. “I was the conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years,” she famously recounted, “and I can say what most conductors can’t say: I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger.” Those passengers included her aging parents, her three brothers, their wives, and many of their children.

Working for the Union Army as a cook and nurse during the Civil War, Tubman morphed quickly into an armed

scout and spy. She became the war's first woman to lead an armed expedition when she guided the Combahee River Raid, an expedition that liberated more than 700 slaves in South Carolina.

For her service to the government—tending to newly freed slaves, scouting into enemy territory, and nursing wounded soldiers—she was treated shamefully and shabbily. She was denied compensation and didn't receive a pension for her war duties until 1899. She took in boarders and worked long hours at odd jobs to make ends meet.

In an August 1868 letter to Tubman, famous abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass paid tribute to her heroism:

Most that I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in public, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day—you in the night. I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by the multitude, while the most that you have done has been witnessed by a few trembling,

scarred, and foot-sore bondmen and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage, and whose heartfelt "God bless you" has been your only reward. The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism.

Tubman spent her last decades caring for others, especially the sick and aged. She often spoke publicly on behalf of women's right to vote. For relief from that head injury mentioned earlier, she endured brain surgery in Boston in the late 1890s. She refused anesthesia, preferring instead simply to bite down on a bullet. In her words, the surgeon "sawed open my skull, and raised it up, and now it feels more comfortable." She died in 1913 at the age of 91—a real hero to the very end.

In 2014, an asteroid was named for Tubman. In my book, that beats a Federal Reserve note hands down. **■**

Lawrence W. Reed (FEE.org/Reed) is the president of FEE.



ADAM SMITH: ZEN MASTER

EAST AND WEST CONVERGE ON THE “POWER OF NOW”

Sandy Ikeda (FEE.org/Ikeda) is a professor of economics at Purchase College, SUNY.

According to Eckhart Tolle, the popular author of spiritual books including *The Power of Now*, happiness is only possible in the present, the Now. Past and future are beyond reach, and so “the present moment is all you ever have.” He writes,

Nothing ever happened in the past; it happened in the Now. Nothing will ever happen in the future; it will happen in the Now.

His message isn’t that we should forget the past or abandon planning for the future. Rather, he’s expressing a psychological attitude consistent with many spiritual and religious traditions, Eastern and Western.

Economists, Ludwig von Mises and Adam Smith among them, have written in similar terms about the meaning and significance of the Now.

THE PRAXEOLOGICAL NOW

It’s true that Mises’s focus on the Now isn’t to explain how to achieve happiness. In fact, in the tradition of Carl Menger that Mises helped to develop, one of the requirements for human action is that we feel uneasy about our current situation, and uneasiness isn’t consistent with most concepts of happiness. But the relevant point for Mises is that human action only takes place in the present. Specifically, “from the praxeological aspect [that is, the aspect relevant to economics] there is between the past and the future a real extended present. Action is as such in the real present because it utilizes the instant and thus embodies its reality,” he writes.

And he doesn’t quite say, with Tolle, that it’s only in the present that we can tap into reality. But he does say that the only time available to us in which to act—to apply the knowledge gained from the past to change the future in accordance with our expectations—is the “real extended present.” The Now exists between memory and expectation.

Smith also wrote about the power of Now, and in much the same spirit as Tolle.

A SMITHIAN PERSPECTIVE

Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, is considered the first extended and systematic treatment of economics. Its lessons are still relevant, and I highly recommend it to anyone who seriously wants to learn about economic theory

and economic history. But it’s not my favorite work by Smith.

My favorite, because of its subject matter and especially its beautiful writing, is Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, published in 1759. I won’t attempt to summarize it except to say that it concerns the nature and origins of sentiments, such as sympathy, and the role they play in our social relations, similar to what today would fall under the heading of “cultural economics.”

The very first chapter, “On Sympathy,” begins,

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner.

If you only know Smith from *The Wealth of Nations*, with its important lesson that “it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest,” it may surprise you to see this opening observation on compassion. Personally, I was surprised by the level of psychological analysis contained in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, especially the insights into human happiness and unhappiness:

The great source of both the misery and disorders of human life, seems to arise from over-rating the difference between one permanent situation and another. Avarice over-rates the difference between poverty and riches: ambition, that between a private and a public station: vain-glory, that between obscurity and extensive reputation.

So avarice and misplaced pride and ambition are the sources of misery to anyone, regardless of status or station. And the social distinctions we make between people in different professions aren’t due to differences in nature, a point Smith makes in a famous passage in *The Wealth of Nations*:

The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature as from habit, custom, and ed-



THE
RELENTLESS
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education. When they came into the world, and for the first six or eight years of their existence, they were, perhaps, very much alike, and neither their parents nor playfellows could perceive any remarkable difference.

This passage reflects Smith's characteristically liberal (in the original, classical sense of the word) belief that all persons are created equal. And that, in turn, leads me to this wise passage in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

What the favourite of the king of Epirus said to his master, may be applied to men in all the ordinary situations of human life. When the King had recounted to him, in their proper order, all the conquests which he proposed to make, and had come to the last of them; And what does your Majesty propose to do then? said the Favourite.—I propose then, said the King, to enjoy myself with my friends, and endeavour to be good company over a bottle.—And what hinders your Majesty from doing so now? replied the Favourite.

How wise! Smith goes on to explain,

In the most glittering and exalted situation that our idle fancy can hold out to us, the pleasures from which we propose to derive our real happiness, are almost always the same with those which, in our actual, though humble station, we have at all times at hand, and in our power.

This isn't merely about stopping to smell the roses. Smith is saying that it's always in our power to be happy, whoever and wherever and whenever we are. Happiness is and can only be here and now, and never "just around the corner." In this sense, the relentless pursuit of happiness is the very source of our misery.

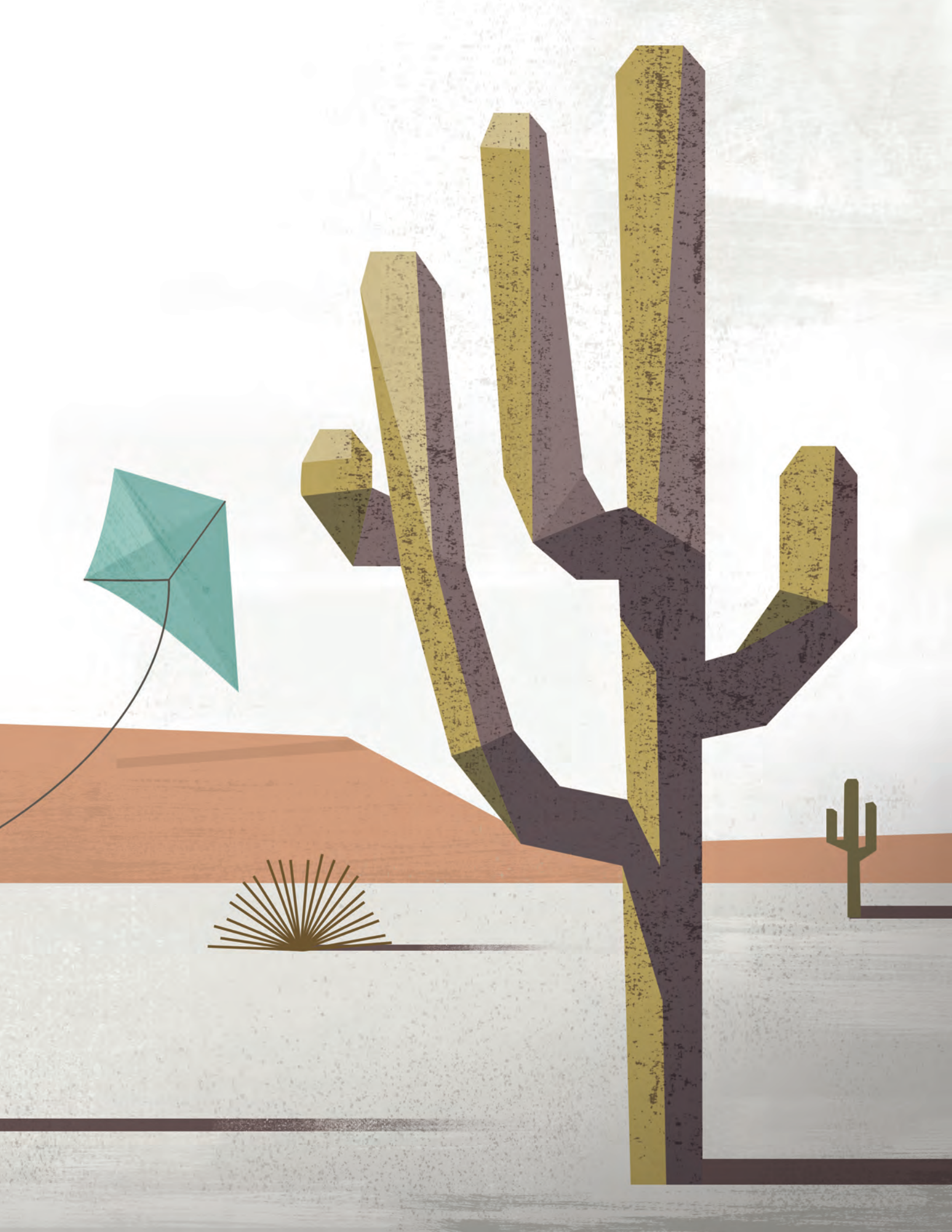
The inscription upon the tomb-stone of the man who had endeavoured to mend a tolerable constitution by taking physic; "*I was well, I wished to be better; here I am*"; may generally be applied with great justness to the distress of disappointed avarice and ambition.

Tolle couldn't have expressed it better. ■

the Freeman

GREEN ISSUE





01

THE CLIMATE-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX STRIKES BACK

Was the *New York Times* piece against Willie Soon a hit job?

By Max Borders

Climate-change skeptic Willie Soon may be an unethical, corporate-bought climate-change denier—or the latest casualty of the Climate-Industrial Complex’s immune response.

The *New York Times*’ Justin Gillis and John Schwartz write,

He has accepted more than \$1.2 million in money from the fossil-fuel industry over the last decade while failing to disclose that conflict of interest in most of his scientific papers. At least 11 papers he has published since 2008 omitted such a disclosure, and in at least eight of those cases, he appears to have violated ethical guidelines of the journals that published his work.

Something’s fishy here. Because *all* researchers get money from *somewhere*, it’s strange that none of the “eight” journals required Soon to disclose as a condition of publication. Given his reputation as a skeptic, didn’t they even think to ask? And, indeed, if there really is a universal ethical standard, aren’t the journals that published Soon also in violation of the ethics?

To find out whether Soon acted inappropriately and outside of research ethics, we really have to know whether

that disclosure standard applies across the board. In other words, of the hundreds of journal articles published over the last few years, how many authors disclosed their funding sources—public, private, corporate, or nonprofit?

If there is indeed a known ethical standard of disclosure to which the vast majority of researchers adhere, then it might be appropriate for the *Times* to single out Soon for a failure to disclose. (The *Times* offers no such context, no such data.) However, if a majority does not disclose its funding sources, then there is clearly no well-defined ethic of disclosure and the *Times* is simply inventing an impropriety to ruin a man’s career as a scientist.

Now, some might argue that people should *only* be required to publish their funding sources if those sources are private or corporate. After all, they’ll argue, government money is used because government grantors only want to find the truth, whereas private grantors only want to bias the process and to obfuscate the truth.

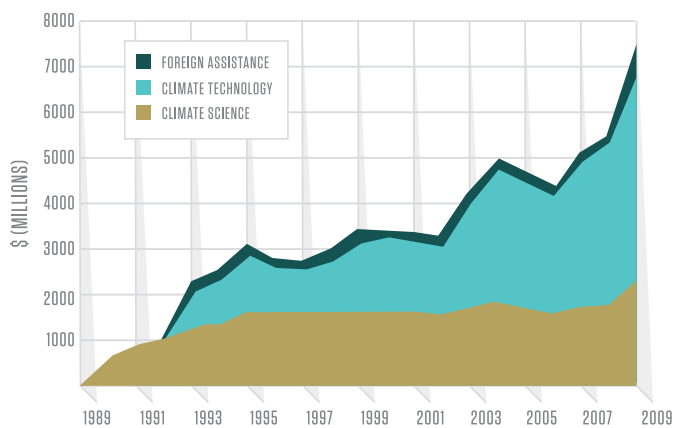
The idea that a government grant comes with no agenda should be preposterous on its face. After all, who has more

to gain from “action on climate change” than the very people providing the research dollars and their solar-powered cronies? The members of the Climate-Industrial Complex have enormous incentives to hide the decline, cook the books, and keep the funds flowing into their department coffers and crony projects. And those with taxing authority—that is, those who hold the government purse strings—have an even bigger incentive.

To put this into perspective, consider the following, reported by *Climate of Corruption* author Larry Bell in *Forbes*:

According to the GAO, annual federal climate spending has increased from \$4.6 billion in 2003 to \$8.8 billion in 2010, amounting to \$106.7 billion over that period. The money was spent in four general categories: technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, science to understand climate changes, international assistance for developing countries, and wildlife adaptation to respond to actual or expected changes. Technology spending, the largest category, grew from \$2.56 billion to \$5.5 billion over this period, increasingly advancing over others in total share. Data compiled by Joanne Nova at the Science and Policy Institute indicates that the U.S. Government spent more than \$32.5 billion on climate studies between 1989 and 2009. This doesn't count about \$79 billion more spent for climate change technology research, foreign aid and tax breaks for “green energy.”

US GOVERNMENT CLIMATE-RELATED EXPENDITURE



These sums are only what the US government is spending. Global spending is simply staggering.

More generally, *anyone* who funds *anything* is almost always looking for a certain kind of result. Therefore, any standard of disclosure must apply to any and all scholars equally, no matter the funding source.

That government money shouldn't corrupt is just

another application of the Unicorn Fallacy so common among well-meaning greens. Unfortunately, because so many people are under the illusion that “public” money is not a corruptive influence in science, it may be that those who receive it are far more willing to disclose a government grant than a private one—whatever the quality of the research. Or, it might be that journal committees simply don't require researchers on the government dole to disclose. (The *Times* offers us no such context in the case of the journals *Soon* contributed to.)

Here is some more eel-like journalism from the *Times*:

Charles R. Alcock, director of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center, acknowledged on Friday that Dr. *Soon* had violated the disclosure standards of some journals.

“I think that's inappropriate behavior,” Dr. Alcock said. “This frankly becomes a personnel matter, which we have to handle with Dr. *Soon* internally.”

Notice the weasel phrase “disclosure standards of some journals.” Some? Isn't this supposed to be a standard that applies to all? And how should Alcock handle the purported violations of *some* of the journals? We don't know because we are only seeing the part of the conversation the *Times* wants us to see, to infer something, ur, uh, “inappropriate.”

Still, what if it is both true that *Soon* violated accepted norms of disclosure relative to peers *and* that he did so because he was afraid that to disclose his sources would lead to accusations of bias? Then we have to separate questions about *Soon*'s integrity from questions about his research.

In the former case, there is an army of fanatical climate-change activists ready to pounce on anyone who presents any evidence that runs counter to their apocalyptic narrative. (Remember, professional climate-change activists have a huge stake in the outcome of this debate, too. Climate-change donations are quite the gravy train. Those Prius payments don't pay for themselves.) Indeed, if climate-change heretics like *Soon* can only get research funding outside the Climate-Industrial Complex, should we expect researchers with unpopular findings to erect billboards advertising their sources?

For us to ask such questions is not meant to absolve *Soon* or anyone else of abandoning generally accepted disclosure standards; it is merely to say that the very climate-change activists who wrote the *Times* piece know full well that this is the sort of incentive they create when they go on witch hunts for “deniers.” Climate-change science has become a hostile environment for skeptics. Science itself becomes the casualty of such hostility, which brings me to the latter point—that is, the quality of *Soon*'s research.

Even if we found evidence that *Soon* was the most avaricious

villain and corporate toady the world had ever seen, would any purported wrongdoing invalidate his actual scholarship?

Anyone who has ever had a course in logic knows the unequivocal answer is no. Research is either accurate or inaccurate, whatever the source.

Notice that at no point in the *Times* article did the authors—or anyone quoted by the authors—actually attack Soon's specific scholarship. Sure, the *Times* makes vague innuendo, as with this quote:

Many experts in the field say that Dr. Soon uses out-of-date data, publishes spurious correlations between solar output and climate indicators, and does not take account of the evidence implicating emissions from human behavior in climate change.

Many experts like whom? The only quote they provide is from Gavin Schmidt of the activist website RealClimate.org, who says, "The science that Willie Soon does is almost pointless." In other words, *this* Gavin Schmidt:

- In 2009, "atmospheric scientist Dr. Hendrik Tennekes, a prominent scientist from the Netherlands, wrote a scathing denunciation of Schmidt in which he said he was 'appalled' by Schmidt's 'lack of knowledge' and added, 'Back to graduate school, Gavin!'"
- Climatologist Roger Pielke Sr. publicly rebuked Schmidt for "erroneously communicating the reality of [how the] climate system is actually behaving."
- Israeli astrophysicist Nir Shaviv has also been critical. "The aim of [Schmidt's] RealClimate.org is not to engage a sincere scientific debate. Their aim is to post a reply full of a straw man so their supporters can claim that your point 'has been refuted by real scientists at RealClimate.org.'"
- And there's much more... including apologetics about the infamous Climategate scandal.

We don't want, like the *Times*, to import an ad hominem fallacy. But of all the innuendo, why are we being asked to believe only that of the world's foremost climate activists? Innuendo is convenient, but it is not conclusive.

Maybe Soon's research is bad or misleading or somehow just wrong. But in science, this is where the rubber hits the road. And the *Times* fails to deliver in demonstrating that Soon's scientific work is incorrect, wherever he got his research money. And that makes this *Times* piece just the sort of agitprop we have come to expect from the Grey Lady.

Now, what if Soon is right, for example, about the relative effects of the sun (versus humans) on the climate system? There are thousands of jobs, thousands of reputations, billions in funding, and trillions of future carbon tax revenues at stake. You think they're going to let this flea continue to irritate the hide of Leviathan?

But let us be clear: the point of the *Times* article was

never to find out whether Soon's research was correct. The point is to use innuendo to push a heretical researcher to the margins of science—or perhaps out altogether—so that the powers behind the Climate-Industrial Complex can get to that multitrillion-dollar pot at the end of the rainbow.

The *Times* goes on to say: "The documents show that Dr. Soon, in correspondence with his corporate funders, described many of his scientific papers as 'deliverables' that he completed in exchange for their money. He used the

Why should questions about financial influence only be applied to skeptics?

same term to describe testimony he prepared for Congress."

The most apparently damning evidence that Soon acted inappropriately and was prepared to bias his research for his corporate masters comes in the accusation that he referred to his research as a "deliverable," and that on another occasion, he referred to his congressional testimony as a "deliverable"?

As everyone knows, deliverables are work products. Sometimes deliverables are paid for by companies, sometimes by governments, sometimes by NGOs. But as someone who has worked in the nonprofit sector for a long time, I can tell you that any time someone gives you a grant, they are expecting you to do some work. And, indeed, they may specify just what sorts of work products you are responsible for producing as a condition of receiving the grant. In other words, they will want deliverables.

Now, does that mean that the "deliverable" in question was research that had packaged into it a specific, predetermined result? Of course not. We should be under no illusions, however: if Soon's deliverables suddenly started containing messages that did not comport with what the grantors want to hear, the grants might very well dry up. But this is no less true for scientists who fail to produce results that jibe with the "consensus" message that government grantors and climate NGOs are fond of. So why should questions about financial influence only be applied to skeptics?

We should very well expect that the Climate-Industrial Complex and its handmaiden, the Grey Lady, will be looking for blood wherever they can find it. And if we want to talk about bias being bought and paid for by corporate masters, one need look no further than the authors of the *Times* article—whose omissions and double standards are so bald that Balance, that fair goddess of journalism, weeps. ■

Max Borders (FEE.org/Borders) is editor of the *Freeman*.



02

THE COSTS OF HYSTERIA

How economists are misleading the public on climate-change policy

By Robert P. Murphy

Suppose the “scientific consensus” on climate change is right. Let’s also stipulate, for the sake of argument, that the computer projections used by the United Nations and the US government are correct, and that economists are able to translate those data into meaningful projections about costs and benefits to people living in the future with climate change.

Despite what the public has been led to believe, the situation is not a crisis at all—and certainly not something that demands drastic government actions to avert serious damage to the environment. In fact, implementing the wrong policy can cause far more damage than it can prevent.

It’s understandable that the public has no idea of the real state of the literature on climate change policy, because even professional economists use utterly misleading rhetoric in this arena. To show what I mean, first, let’s quote from a recent Noah Smith *Bloomberg* article, which urges left-liberals to support the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal:

One of the bigger economic issues under debate right now is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the multilateral trade deal that would include most countries in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the US. Many people both here and abroad are suspicious of trade

deals, while economists usually support them. This time around, however, the dynamic is a little bit different—the TPP is getting some pushback from left-leaning economists such as Paul Krugman.

Krugman’s point is that since US trade is already pretty liberalized ... the effect of further liberalization will be small.... I’m usually more of a free-trade skeptic than the average economist.... But in this case, I’m strongly on the pro-TPP side. There are just too many good arguments in favor.

University of California-Berkeley economist *Brad DeLong* does some quick back-of-the-envelope calculations, and estimates that the TPP would increase the world’s wealth by a total of \$3 trillion. *Though that’s not a big deal in the grand scheme of things, it’s one of the best reforms that’s feasible in the current polarized political situation.* (emphasis added)

To summarize the flavor of Smith’s discussion, he thinks the TPP is “one of the bigger economic issues” today, and that its potential windfall to humanity of \$3 trillion is “not a big deal in the grand scheme of things” but certainly worth pursuing if attainable. Krugman disagrees with Smith’s

assessment, but their differences are clearly quibbles over numbers and strategies; it's not as if Smith thinks Krugman is a "Ricardo denier" or accuses Krugman of hating poor Asians by opposing the trade deal.

We get a much different tone if instead we look at Smith discussing climate-change policy. For example, in June 2014, Smith wrote a *Bloomberg* piece on five ways to fight global warming. In the interest of brevity, let me simply quote Smith's concluding paragraph:

If we do these five things, then the US can still save the world from global warming, even though we're no longer the main cause of the problem. And the short-run cost to our economy will be very moderate. *Saving the world on the cheap sounds like a good idea to me.* (emphasis added)

Clearly, there is a chasm in the rhetoric between Smith's two *Bloomberg* pieces. When discussing the TPP, it's an honest disagreement between experts over a trade agreement that Smith thinks is definitely worthwhile, but in the grand scheme is not that big a deal. In contrast, government policies concerning climate change literally involve the fate of the planet.

At this point, most readers would wonder what the

problem is. After all, isn't man-made climate change a global crisis? Why *shouldn't* Smith use much stronger rhetoric when describing it?

I am making this comparison because according to one of the pioneers in climate-change economics, William Nordhaus, even if all governments around the world implemented the textbook-perfect carbon tax, the net gain to humanity would be ... drumroll please ... \$3 trillion. In other words, one of the world's experts on the economics of climate change estimates that the difference to humanity between (a) implementing the perfect carbon-tax policy solution and (b) doing absolutely nothing was about the same difference as DeLong estimated when it comes to the TPP.

To be more specific, the \$3 trillion Nordhaus estimate comes from the 2008 calibration of his Dynamic Integrated Climate-Economy (DICE) model. (The numbers have gone up since then, but I studied his 2008 calibration in great detail.) Note that this isn't some "denier" computer simulation, rejected by the serious scientists. On the contrary, Nordhaus's DICE model was one of only three chosen by the Obama administration when it set up a working group to estimate the monetary damages of carbon dioxide emissions. To help

Despite what the public has been led to believe, the situation is not a crisis at all.

The wrong climate policy can be much, much worse than doing nothing.



— Table 4 —

DICE'S RELATIVE BENEFITS OF DIFFERENT CLIMATE POLICIES

in Trillions of 2005 U.S. \$

CLIMATE POLICY	PDV DIFFERENCE FROM BASELINE	PDV OF ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES	PDV OF ABATEMENT COSTS	SUM OF DAMAGES AND COSTS
No controls baseline	0.00	22.55	0.04	22.59
Optimal tax	+3.07	17.31	2.20	19.52
Limit CO ₂ to 560 ppm	+2.67	15.97	3.95	19.92
Kyoto with the United States	+0.63	21.38	0.58	21.96
Kyoto without the United States	+0.10	22.43	0.07	22.49
<i>Stern Review</i> discount rate	-14.18	9.02	27.74	36.77
Limit temp. to 1.5°C	-14.44	9.95	27.08	37.03
Limit CO ₂ to 420 ppm	-14.60	9.95	27.24	37.19
Gore's 90 percent emissions cut	-21.36	10.05	33.90	43.96

Note: PDV = present discounted value. Source: Adapted from Nordhaus 2008, 89.

the reader understand the trade-offs humanity faces when it comes to climate change, let me reproduce table 4 from my *Independent Review* article (“Rolling the DICE: William Nordhaus’s Dubious Case for a Carbon Tax,” 14[2]: 197–217), which critically evaluated Nordhaus’s model.

The table above shows Nordhaus’s estimates (made in 2008 based on the “consensus” scientific assessments of the time) of the net benefits of various possible governmental climate policy approaches. The first row shows what happens if governments do nothing. There will be \$22.55 trillion (in present value terms, and quoted in 2005 dollars) of environmental damage, but virtually no economic costs of complying with regulations, for a total harm of \$22.59 trillion.

In contrast, if governments around the world implemented Nordhaus’s recommended “optimal” carbon tax, the world would be spared a little more than \$5 trillion in future environmental damage, while future economic output would be \$2.2 trillion lower due to complying with the carbon tax. Adding it all up, humanity would suffer total harms of \$19.52 trillion, meaning the world would be \$3.07 trillion wealthier with the optimal, global carbon tax (because \$22.59 – \$19.52 = \$3.07).

Central to the economic way of thinking is the concept of trade-offs. Every possible policy—including a policy of doing nothing—comes with costs. But the public tends to hear about only one set of costs, not the full array. For example, as the earlier table shows, the *wrong* climate policy can be much, much worse than doing nothing. Nordhaus evaluated Al Gore’s suggestion to cut emissions by 90 percent, and estimated that it would make humanity some \$21 trillion poorer compared to the do-nothing baseline—a net harm seven times greater than the net benefits of the textbook-optimal approach.

My point here is not to trumpet Nordhaus’s numbers as being gospel. (My *Independent Review* article was a full-blown *critique* of his model.) Rather, I am pointing out that even one of the leading models that underpins the so-called consensus on climate-change activism shows that this is hardly the planetary crisis that the rhetoric of Smith and others would suggest. The actual numbers are in the same ballpark as those of trade deals—and nobody thinks the fate of the planet hangs on the passage of a trade deal.

More generally, what even most economists have failed to convey to the public is that climate-change policies at best will affect things *on the margin*. Nordhaus’s table beautifully illustrates this. The optimal carbon tax doesn’t *eliminate* the climate-change damage that his computer simulations predict. On the contrary, the carbon tax only *reduces* it from about \$23 trillion down to \$17 billion. The reason it doesn’t make sense to enact a more aggressive carbon tax is that the (marginal) harm to the conventional economy would exceed the (marginal) environmental benefit. There are several policies in the table that reduce environmental damage below the \$17 trillion mark, but they hurt the economy so much more that, on net, they are inferior approaches.

It is understandable that noneconomists would fail to employ marginal analysis and would engage in overblown rhetoric when discussing something as controversial as climate-change policy. However, too many professional economists have also fallen into this bad habit, including not just Smith but also Krugman and many others. ■

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03

POLITICAL RAIN DANCE

Does California Need Rain, Rationing, or Prices?

By Daniel Bier

California's gorgeous weather has turned against it as the state's fourth year of drought drags on. Looming water shortages are leading to calls for rationing and restrictions on water use. The state has one year of water left—and 35-year megadroughts ahead of it. The *New York Times* bleats, "Reservoirs are low. Landscapes are parched and blighted with fields of dead or dormant orange trees."

Why is there a water shortage? Almost every news story I've read blames the drought.

This sounds like a reasonable assumption, but just because the supply has contracted doesn't mean that there should be a shortage. In normal markets, when supply shrinks, the price rises, and quantity demanded decreases to meet quantity supplied. People naturally use less when something costs more. They conserve and prioritize.

But if, for some reason, the price *can't* rise, usage won't change because the price isn't signaling facts about underlying scarcity and incentivizing different behavior. What made sense to do with a resource when it was relatively abundant—say, 40-minute showers and turning your lawn into a lake—might not make sense when water is scarcer. When the price is held down while supply and demand are changing, you end up with shortages, rationing, and regulations on water use.

As Alex Tabarrok points out at MarginalRevolution.com, California has plenty of water. What it *doesn't* have are prices—or rather, market prices. Although a lot of well-meaning people insist that water is a *right*, I notice that my "right to water" in no way changes the fact I have to pay the government monopoly for it (\$44.91 last month). So even if there is a right to water, there is no natural right to always pay half a cent per gallon for it regardless of supply or demand.

The price controls and subsidies for water use also have behavioral consequences, Tabarrok writes:

As David Zetland points out in an excellent interview with Russ Roberts, people in San Diego county use around 150 gallons of water a day. Meanwhile in Sydney, Australia, with a roughly comparable climate and standard of living, people use about half that amount. Trust me, no one in Sydney is going thirsty.

People in San Diego have lawns and cars and pour tons of water on them—and why not? It's cheap. But when water becomes scarcer, rather than raise prices to reflect this fact and encourage conservation, California cities resort to paternalistic rationing, issuing edicts about when you can water your lawn and how much and how clean your car can be.



When water becomes scarcer, rather than raise prices to reflect this fact and encourage conservation, California cities resort to paternalistic rationing.

“Water conservation” (by any means necessary—as long as they don’t involve prices) is also the basis for the myriad ludicrous federal regulations that have devastated our toilets and showers.

Prices aren’t just a way to avoid shortages and use resources efficiently, as Zetland explains in his wonderful, concise book *Living with Water Scarcity*. Markets treat consumers like free and responsible adults whose choices actually matter, rather than dictating to them what’s “important” or “essential” for their own lives. He writes,

Prices generate revenues and reduce demand, but they also give customers choices. A regulation on outdoor watering may annoy a granny with flowers. A desalination plant may annoy environmentalists. An education campaign is condescending to some and a waste of breath on others. A campaign to install low-flow toilets may install sparkling receptacles in unused second bathrooms.

Prices send a direct signal at the same time as they accommodate many responses. Customers can choose their own mix of technologies and techniques. Some will take shorter showers. Others will install drip irrigation. Some will shower at work. Others will just pay more. A higher price for water, like a higher price for any commodity, allows people to choose how much water to use. Choice is a pleasant option compared to water shortages or tickets from water cops.

Markets can solve the shortage in California even if they can’t make it rain, while water rationing won’t do anything to alleviate the real problem because it exempts the biggest consumers. The use restrictions are all a distraction—you could eliminate all car washes, showers, and lawns and not make a dent, because urban consumers account for just a fraction of California’s water consumption. The *Economist* notes,

The first rule for staying alive in a desert is not to pour the contents of your water flask into the sand. Yet that, bizarrely, is what the government has encouraged farmers to do in the drought-afflicted south-west. *Agriculture accounts for 80% of water consumption in California, for example, but only 2% of*

economic activity. Farmers flood the land to grow rice, alfalfa and other thirsty crops. (emphasis added)

And while it may be sad that some of California’s farms are struggling, there is no good reason why the rest of the state needs to suffer to subsidize crops (and inefficient irrigation techniques) that wouldn’t make economic sense if the farmers had to pay market rates for water.

Tabarrok calculates that if farms used just 12.5 percent less water, Californians could theoretically increase the amount available for all industrial and residential uses by *half*.

Does that arrangement make sense? Probably not, but no planner or regulator could possibly decide how to weigh the demands of millions of people for water or any scarce resource. All we know is that we do not have enough water to satisfy every *possible* use for it.

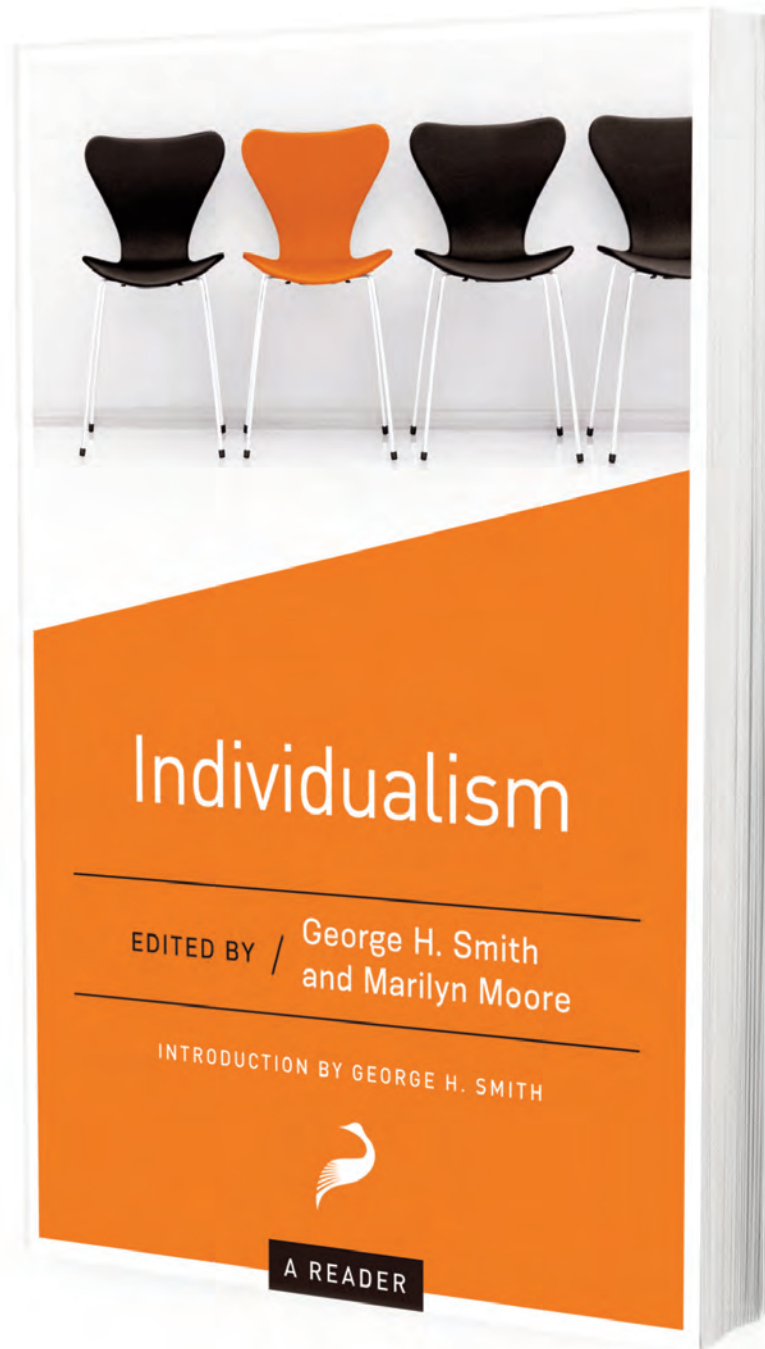
Only the price system is able to coordinate those countless actors, factors, plans, interests, and industries. Maybe when California regulators turn on the tap and find it empty they’ll realize this. ■

Originally appearing on FEE.org’s new idea marketplace, Anything Peaceful, this article was republished in Newsweek.

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What is Individualism?



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Picking Piketty Apart

The superstar
French economist
tortures the data to
fit his narrative

BY PHILLIP MAGNESS

Thomas Piketty, the “rock star” French economist who dominated the news in late 2014, is trying to backpedal on the claims that made him famous. While he sticks with his core arguments about the nature of inequality, his recent article in the *American Economic Review* (“About Capital in the Twenty-First Century,” *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 2015, 105[5]: 1–6) has been widely interpreted as a tempering of the bolder claims in his best-selling *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* about the causes and consequences of economic inequality.

This is an interesting tack for Piketty. It appears to concede a level of nuance that is often missing from his book, which frequently slips into sweeping narratives of history, oversimplified theoretical assumptions, and aggressive political prescriptions premised on their acceptance.

The centerpiece of Piketty’s inequality argument is a sweeping historical narrative of the 20th century, ostensibly rooted in data. Piketty contends that wealth inequality peaked during the Gilded Age conditions of the turn of the 20th century. This was the original version of the capital-hoarding rentier society that is predicted by his theory, in which the returns on capital are said to outpace the rate of economic growth, or the famous $r > g$ formulation.

According to Piketty, the catastrophic destruction of World Wars I and II, as well as the economic disruption of the Great Depression, took direct and heavy tolls on the world’s capital stock. In doing so, these events destroyed part of the wealth-accumulating mechanisms that Piketty

pinpoints as the source of inequality in the Belle Époque. The result was a stabilizing period during which the wealth distribution for most of the developed world converged at a much lower level of inequality from roughly the 1950s through the 1970s.

At this point, taxes become a central part of Piketty’s story—specifically, the rise of high progressive income and estate taxes during the Depression era. Piketty believes that these tax regimes succeeded in impeding the reconstitution of the capital stock after the Depression and two wars. As a result, the theorized “rentier” pattern did not resume.

This all changed, according to Piketty, around 1980, when a series of tax reforms tied to Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain disassembled the mid-century progressive tax regimes. Inequality, he contends, has been on the rise ever since. Piketty calls the resulting pattern a U-shape, as it purports to show the resumption of inequality after a war, depression, and tax-induced stabilization period in the mid-20th century.

Piketty’s historical narrative provides a politically appealing vindication of high progressive income and estate taxes. More importantly, his data presentation purports to demonstrate the U-shape through a couple of different metrics, thus validating his theory.

But a closer look at the underlying inequality data reveals a serious problem in Piketty’s narrative. While his own graphs and charts display the U-shape he predicts, these depictions are the product of substantial data massage.



HOW PIKETTY CREATES AN INEQUALITY DIVERGENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Piketty’s most widely discussed “demonstration” of his inequality narrative occurs in his book’s figure 10.5, a historical depiction of wealth inequality in the United States. The U-shape may be readily seen in this graph, where inequality bottoms out in the 1970s before it resumes an upward trend into the present.

The clear trend in this particular graph has made it one of the most widely cited empirical examples from the book, leading Paul Krugman to denounce Piketty’s critics as “inequality deniers.” It is also notable because it purports to show a clear turn in the 1970s, fitting closely with Piketty’s historical narrative of pinning a claimed rise in inequality on the Reagan-era tax cuts (see figure 01).

Now compare Piketty’s figure 10.5 to the following graph from a 2004 study by economist Wojciech Kopczuk and Piketty’s frequent collaborator Emmanuel Saez. This widely cited study estimates US wealth inequality from estate-tax data since 1916. Contrary to the rebounding U-shape of Piketty’s graph from the 1980s to the present, this graph portrays wealth inequality as virtually flat from the 1980s until its last return in the early 2000s. Indeed, an extension of this series by Saez shows that 2004—the last year with available data—was the most equally distributed point in American history to date, with the top 1 percent holding an all-time low of 18 percent of the wealth (see figure 02).

Piketty’s international narrative is the product of data massaging and statistical contrivance.

The two different trends are particularly telling, as Piketty’s figure 10.5 is actually based in part on the Kopczuk and Saez series. The divergence occurs because Piketty’s graph is a Frankenstein-esque assemblage of bits and pieces of different studies, cherry-picked to tell the story Piketty expects to find.

When the Kopczuk and Saez trend line flattened out in the 1980s, Piketty simply swapped in a number of other studies based on the Federal Reserve’s Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF). The resulting chart is thus a complete contrivance.

Piketty essentially manufactured the upswing of the U-shape by hand selecting his numbers from disparate sources to create the illusion of a 1970s trough (using Kopczuk and Saez) followed by a rebound from the 1980s to the present (using selectively chosen SCF figures). A simple breakdown of his sources reveals no fewer than five such swaps between different data sources to produce the desired result, as figure 03 shows.

While blending and adjustment techniques are sometimes necessary to plug gaps in large data sets, Piketty’s decisions here defy his own stated methodologies elsewhere. When Chris Giles of the *Financial Times* raised the possibility of using survey data in place of estate-tax records as a way of estimating inequality in the United Kingdom, Piketty lashed out:

What is troubling about the FT methodological choices is that

WEALTH INEQUALITY IN THE US, 1910-2010 (Piketty fig. 10.5)

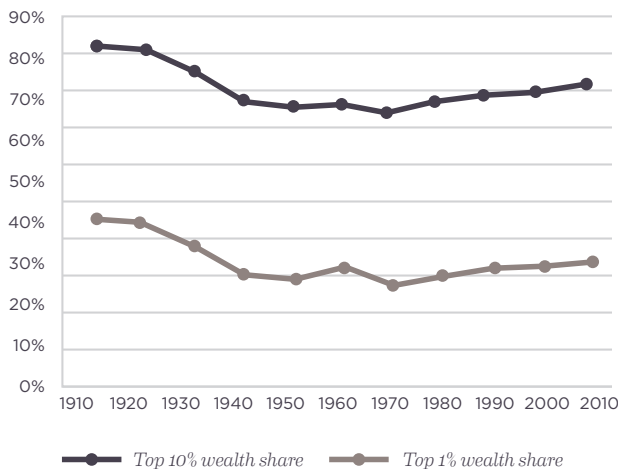


FIGURE 01

TOP 1% WEALTH SHARE IN US, 1916-2000 (Kopczuk-Saez)

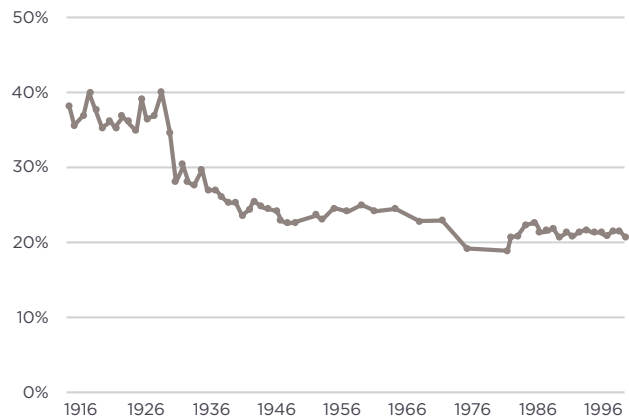


FIGURE 02

they use the estimates based upon estate tax statistics for the older decades (until the 1980s), and then they shift to the survey based estimates for the more recent period. This is problematic because we know that in every country wealth surveys tend to underestimate top wealth shares as compared to estimates based upon administrative fiscal data.

When it comes to the US data, Piketty apparently has no issue with making the very same swap so long as it is convenient for his narrative.

To test the validity of my critique of Piketty’s chart, I recently reconstructed his figure 10.5 from the sources cited in his data files using the same adjustment techniques that he employed to reconcile the different estimation methods. I was able to do so, yet by simply cherry-picking different numbers for the same decades out of the exact same SCF and estate-tax estimates that Piketty employed, I was also able to completely reverse the shape and direction of Piketty’s hypothesized U-shape, as figure 04 shows.

Piketty’s international narrative is likewise the product of data massaging and statistical contrivance.

ARE PIKETTY’S EMPIRICAL PROBLEMS INTENTIONAL?

Piketty’s empirical work suffers from several highly problematic characteristics. Empirical demonstrations of the century-long distributional U-shape for three different countries—his main piece of evidence for his inequality thesis—are rendered unreliable by issues including:

1. suspect and biased adjustment techniques,
2. selective cherry picking to create trends from ambiguous data sets, and
3. grossly insufficient annotation to cross-check and replicate his results where they diverge from their claimed sources.

WEALTH INEQUALITY IN THE US, 1910-2010 (Piketty fig. 10.5 sources)

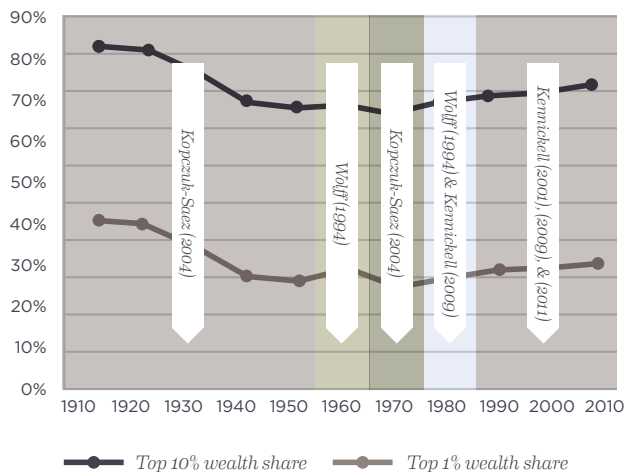


FIGURE 03

Taken together, these issues reflect a severe confirmation bias at play throughout Piketty’s analysis.

Put another way, he seems to construct most of his data presentations around a specific historical narrative that he has already embraced as correct. This is an inversion of scientific inquiry, placing the cart of an ideological conclusion before the data horse and—in some cases—selectively ignoring or omitting data points that diverge from that conclusion.

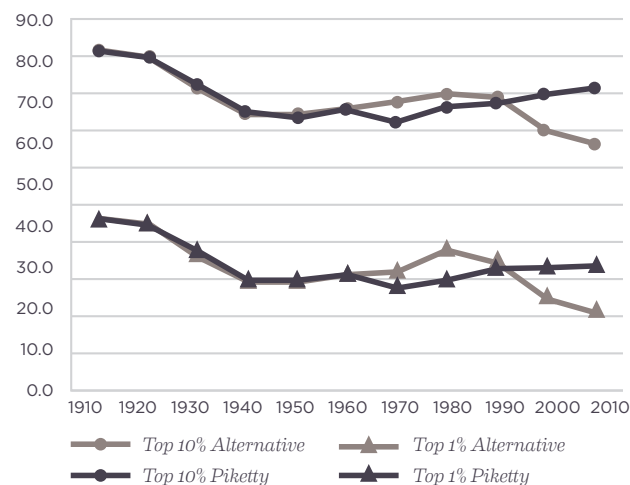
In short, Piketty’s empirical demonstrations of his U-shaped historical pattern suffer from distortions, biases, methodological inconsistencies, and other questionable data decisions that render them unsuitable for drawing interpretive conclusions about his theory or making prescriptive policy recommendations.

While theoretical critiques of Piketty’s argument abound and, in a welcome turn, he appears to be considering some of them, the data problems at the core of his book remain largely unaddressed. Because Piketty’s argument is largely historical, this continued oversight represents not only his failure to prove his original case, but also a growing divergence between his theoretical model and any semblance of empirical validation. ■

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CHERRY PICKING EFFECTS IN PIKETTY’S 10.5:

Piketty vs. Alternative constructions of US Wealth Inequality (identical source data)



Explanatory note: Both trend lines are compiled from the exact same data sources: Kopczuk-Saez (2004), Wolff (1994), Wolff (2010), and Kennickell (2009, 2011). The dark lines represent Piketty’s original compilation, whereas the light lines represent an alternative compilation. The ONLY difference between the two is obtained by selective cherry picking of favored “representative” data points from within the same four data sources. Piketty selected points that tended to show an increase since 1980. The alternative selects points that tend to show a decrease.

FIGURE 04

the Freeman

ARMED AND BLACK

THE HISTORY OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN
SELF -DEFENSE

By B.K. Marcus



In Dallas, Texas, the newly formed Huey Newton Gun Club marches in the streets bearing assault rifles and AR-15s. “This is perfectly legal!” the club leader shouts. “Justice for Michael Brown! Justice for Eric Garner! ...Black power! Black power! Black power! Black power!”

Meanwhile, closer to Washington, DC, the venerable National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) responds to the fatal shooting of two New York City police officers in December by repeating its call for tougher gun-control laws.

How, then, do black Americans feel about guns?

They are divided on the issue, as are Americans generally. But that doesn't mean they're *evenly* divided. The 21st-century NAACP represents what one black scholar calls “the modern orthodoxy of stringent gun control,” whereas the members of the Huey Newton Gun Club are a minority within a minority, as were the Black Panthers of the 1960s, from whose founder the gun club takes its name.

It turns out, however, that the gun-toting resistance may better represent the traditional majority among the American descendants of enslaved Africans—including the original NAACP.

PEACEFUL PEOPLE WITH GUNS

An older and deeper tradition of armed self-defense “has been submerged,” writes scholar Nicholas Johnson, “because it seems hard to reconcile with the dominant narrative of nonviolence in the modern civil-rights movement.”

It is the same tension modern-day progressives see in libertarians' stated principles. Advocates of the freedom philosophy not only see our principles as compatible with gun rights; we see those rights as an extension of the principles. For a government (or anyone else) to take guns away from peaceful people requires the initiation of force.

“But,” progressive friends may object, “how can you talk of *peaceful people with guns*?”

What sounds absurd to them is clear to the libertarian: the pursuit of “anything peaceful” is not the same as pacifism. There is no contradiction in exercising a right of self-defense while holding a principle of nonaggression. In

other words, we believe peaceful people ought not initiate force, but we don't rule out defending ourselves against aggressors. And while a few libertarians are also full-blown pacifists who reject even defensive violence, that does not mean they advocate denying anyone their right to armed self-defense (especially as such a denial would require threatening violence).

THE BLACK TRADITION OF ARMED SELF-DEFENSE

For more than a hundred years, black Americans exemplified the distinction above when it came to gun rights. The paragon of black nonviolence, Martin Luther King Jr., explained it eloquently:

Violence exercised merely in self-defense, all societies, from the most primitive to the most cultured and civilized, accept as moral and legal. The principle of self-defense, even involving weapons and bloodshed, has never been condemned, even by Gandhi.

King not only supported gun rights in theory; he sought to exercise those rights in practice. After his home was firebombed on January 30, 1956, King applied for a permit to keep a concealed gun in his car. The local (white) authorities denied his application, claiming he had not shown “good cause” for needing to carry a firearm.

Modern advocates of gun-control laws will point out that King ultimately regretted his personal history with guns, seeing them as contrary to his commitment to nonviolence, but King understood that his pacifism was not in conflict with anyone else's right to self-defense.





Image credit: Steven Ley

According to his friend and fellow activist Andrew Young, “Martin’s attitude was you can never fault a man for protecting his home and his wife. He saw the Deacons as defending their homes and their wives and children.” The Deacons for Defense and Justice was a private and well-armed organization of black men who advocated gun rights and protected civil rights activists. Even after the Deacons became a source of embarrassment to many in the nonviolence movement, King maintained his support.

“Martin said he would never himself resort to violence even in self-defense,” Young explained, “but he would not demand that of others. That was a religious commitment into which one had to grow.”

While King may have come to see his strategic nonviolence as being of a piece with personal pacifism, most activists in the civil rights movement saw no contradiction between non-violent strategy and well-armed self-defense.

“Because nonviolence worked so well as a tactic for effecting change and was demonstrably improving their lives,” writes Charles E. Cobb Jr., a former field secretary for the

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), “some black people chose to use weapons to defend the nonviolent Freedom Movement. Although it is counterintuitive, any discussion of guns in the movement must therefore also include substantial discussion of nonviolence, and vice versa.”

Voting-rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, for example, advised blacks to confront white hatred and abuse with compassion—“Baby you just got to love ’em. Hating just makes you sick and weak.” But when asked how she survived when white supremacists so often grew violent, Hamer replied, “I’ll tell you why. I keep a shotgun in every corner of my bedroom and the first cracker even look like he wants to throw some dynamite on my porch won’t write his mama again.”

BLACK HISTORY

In *Negroes and the Gun: The Black Tradition of Arms*, Johnson shows that the attitudes of King and Hamer go back for well over a century in the writings, speeches, and attitudes of black leaders, even when their libertarian attitude toward firearms was at odds with the philosophy of their white allies.

MOST ACTIVISTS IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT SAW NO CONTRADICTION BETWEEN NONVIOLENT STRATEGY AND WELL- ARMED SELF-DEFENSE.



Image credit: Ted Eytan

Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave and the most famous black leader of the 19th century, rejected the pacifism of his white abolitionist supporters when he suggested that a good revolver was a Negro's best response to slave catchers.

Harriet Tubman, the celebrated conductor of the Underground Railroad, offered armed protection to the escaped slaves she led to freedom, even as they sought sanctuary in the homes of Quakers and other pacifist abolitionists.

Lest you think religious devotion divided the black community on this subject, a mass church gathering in New York City in the mid-19th century resolved that escaped slaves should resist recapture "with the surest and most deadly weapons."

W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the cofounders of the NAACP in 1909, wrote of his own response to white race riots in the South: "I bought a Winchester double-barreled shotgun and two dozen rounds of shells filled with buckshot. If a white mob had stepped on the campus where I lived I would without hesitation have sprayed their guts over the grass."

If that sounds like simple bloodlust, consider that Du Bois outlined for his readers an understanding of armed violence that should resonate with advocates of the nonaggression principle: "When the mob moves, we propose to meet it with bricks and clubs and guns. But we must tread here with solemn caution. We must never let justifiable self-defense against individuals become blind and lawless offense against

all white folk. We must not seek reform by violence."

Du Bois was not at odds with the larger organization for which he worked. "While he extolled self-defense rhetorically in the *Crisis*," writes Johnson, "the NAACP as an organization expended time, talent, and treasure to uphold the principle on behalf of black folk who defended themselves with guns. That fight consumed much of the young organization's resources." Yes, the NAACP originally devoted itself to defending precisely those same rights that it now consistently threatens.

These examples all predate the nonviolent civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. But as King's

own words show us, support for armed self-defense continued well into the civil rights era. In fact, Charles Cobb argues in *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible*, the success of the civil rights movement depended on well-armed blacks in the South. Cobb writes that the "willingness to use deadly force ensured the survival not only of countless brave men and women but also of the freedom struggle itself." The victories of the civil rights movement, Cobb insists, "could not have been achieved without the complementary and still underappreciated practice of armed self-defense."

Even Rosa Parks, quiet icon of both civil rights and nonviolent resistance, wrote of how her campaign of peaceful civil disobedience was sustained by many well-armed black men. Recalling the first meeting of activists held at her house, Parks wrote, "I didn't even think to offer them anything—refreshments or something to drink.... With the table so covered with guns, I don't know where I would've put any refreshments." The guns didn't go away after her victory in the Supreme Court. "The threatening telephone calls continued.... My husband slept with a gun nearby for a time."

THE ORIGINS OF GUN CONTROL, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

In contrast to the rich black history of peacefully bearing arms, the earliest advocates of gun control in America were Southern whites determined to disarm all blacks. In 1680, the Virginia General Assembly enacted a law that

made it illegal for any black person to carry any type of weapon—or even potential weapon. In 1723, Virginia law specifically forbade black people to possess “any gun, powder, shot, or any club, or any other weapon whatsoever, offensive or defensive.”

These were laws from the colonial era, but even after the Second Amendment, we see the same pattern: Southern whites who reacted to the abolition of slavery “through a variety of state and local laws, restricting every aspect of Negro life, from work to travel, to property rights.” Johnson explains that “gun prohibition was a common theme of these ‘Black Codes.’”

Where the Black Codes fell short in their effectiveness, the Ku Klux Klan and an array of similar organizations “rose during Reconstruction to wage a war of Southern redemption.... Black disarmament was part of their common agenda.”

But while many white people were opposed to the idea of black people with guns, black support for gun rights, according to Johnson, “dominated into the 1960s, right up to the point where the civil rights movement boiled over into violent protests and black radicals openly defied the traditional boundary against political violence.”

That violent and radical turn was the catalyst for a dramatic transition, as the movement ushered in a new black political class. Rising within a progressive political coalition that included the newly minted national gun-control movement, the burgeoning black political class embraced gun bans.... By the mid-1970s, these influences had supplanted the generations-old black tradition of arms with a modern orthodoxy of stringent gun control.

TOP-DOWN VERSUS BOTTOM-UP

In every large group, there is a division of interests, understanding, and goals between an elite and the rank and file.

In American history, those of African descent have been no different in this regard. But for most of that history, the black leadership and the black folks on the ground have been in agreement about the importance and legitimacy of armed self-defense—and equally suspicious of all attempts by any political class to disarm average people.

According to the new orthodoxy, however, any preference that black people demonstrate for personal firearms cannot represent the race—only a criminal or misguided subset. So the black political class consistently supports disarming the citizenry, both black and white—although remarkably, some are even willing to target gun bans to black neighborhoods.

But while the black elite tries to plan what’s best for the black rank and file, some individuals are rejecting the plan and helping to drive history in a different direction. “Recent momentous affirmations of the constitutional right to keep and bear arms,” writes Johnson, “were led by black plaintiffs, Shelly Parker and Otis McDonald, who complained that stringent gun laws in Washington, DC, and Chicago left them disarmed against the criminals who plagued their neighborhoods.”

What do we make of these rebels? Are they traitors to their race? Are they dupes of the majority-white gun lobby? Or were they, as Cobb describes Southern blacks of the 1960s, “laying claim to a tradition that has safeguarded and sustained generations of black people in the United States”?

Neither Parker nor McDonald will be nominated for an NAACP Image Award any time soon, but perhaps they represent a different black consciousness—a more individualist, even libertarian, tradition with a stronger grounding in black history. ■

B.K. Marcus (FEE.org/Marcus) is managing editor of the Freeman.

Image credit: Justin Norman



Stay Put?

SMALL-TOWN NOSTALGIA IS NOT A MORAL IMPERATIVE

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I recently read a column by Gracy Olmstead in the *American Conservative*. It was called “Why Staying Put Matters.” Her argument that we should stay where we are, learn to flourish where we were born, and invest our time and our lives in our local communities troubled me, though I wasn’t quite sure why. With her article on my mind, I got into my car to drive to Chicago from Indianapolis. I thought about Olmstead’s article all through the three-hour drive, which takes you through 180 some miles of farmland, punctuated by the occasional wind farm. It’s hard to believe, as you make the drive, that anything as big as Chicago could be so nearby. Then the traffic begins to thicken, the billboards increase in frequency, and out of nowhere the skyline appears.

Having arrived, I write from the 29th floor of the Sofitel hotel in the Chicago Loop. When I look out my window, I have a stunning view of the Hancock building. Just behind it is Lake Michigan. I see new and old buildings of a stunning range of architectural styles. There’s a highly wrought Gothic church just to my right. To my left, I see a series of office towers and apartment buildings that look like a child’s drawing of a cityscape. I can even see a rooftop garden and some overly optimistic patio furniture.

Chicago is a miracle.

Driving to Chicago, I always feel a little like Carrie Meeber in the first chapter of Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* coming to Chicago from her small town to seek her fortune.

To the child, the genius with imagination, or the wholly untravelled, the approach to a great city for the first time is a wonderful thing. Particularly if it be evening—that mystic period between the glare and gloom of the world when life is changing from one sphere or condition to another. Ah, the promise of the night. What does it not hold for the weary! What old illusion of hope is not here forever repeated! Says the soul of the toiler to itself, “I shall soon be free. I shall be in the ways and the hosts of the merry. The streets, the lamps, the lighted chamber set for dining, are for me. The theatre, the halls, the parties, the ways of rest and the paths of song—these are mine in the night.”

Leaving aside our moral assessments of the choices Carrie makes as she explores the challenges of life in Chicago and climbs over any number of people to achieve success, we can all share her wonder when we think about



our first sight of our first big city.

Now mind you, I’m fond of small towns and the things they offer as well. In mid-sized Indianapolis, I keep a garden in my backyard so I can grow tomatoes. I make jam and pickles. I talk over the backyard fence to my neighbors. I brake for yard sales and for kids with lemonade stands. And there’s no better way to understand America than to visit a small town’s Fourth of July parade.

Please don’t write the *Freeman*’s editors and tell them that I have cast aspersions on your beloved Paris, France—or Paris, Indiana. I like them both.



The best stories always begin with travel.

But I don't like Olmstead's argument. Worried by a recent poll about the American tendency to relocate, Olmstead urges her readers to stay where they are and to bloom where they are planted. She writes:

Staying put—fully inhabiting, loving, and stewarding the place in which you live—is a conservative idea in many respects. It's interwoven with the idea of civic care and involvement, the importance of commitment to the political, economic, and cultural wellbeing of a community. But it is also, increasingly, an option that makes financial sense.

Cities, Olmstead notes, are full of expensive things like restaurants and theaters, “new buildings, attractive downtowns, and thriving commerce areas.” They're also loaded with young professionals to socialize with. But these are just shallow temptations. “We will never live in the city or town of our dreams. The grass will always be greener on the other side of the fence. That's why committing to a place—its people, its quirks, its flaws as well as its strengths—is one of the most freeing options we have.”

Stay put. Don't change. How much better can it be anywhere else?

Reading Olmstead's article made me think instantly of Hayek's essay “Why I Am Not a Conservative.” In it, Hayek points out that “one of the fundamental traits of the conservative attitude is a fear of change, a timid distrust of the new as such.” I have rarely seen a more thoroughgoing example of this kind of timidity than in Olmstead's piece.

Stay where you are because it is where you are. If you leave in order to pursue economic opportunity, a wider range of social networks, a more appealing set of choices in restaurants and stores, or maybe just the chance to stay on the 29th floor of the Sofitel, you are betraying yourself.

But humans have always relocated in order to better their economic position or to find freedom or for countless other reasons that are as varied as the people behind them. Since when have conservatives tried to discourage others from taking the responsibility for improving their own lives?

I will leave aside any comments about how, if my mother's ancestors hadn't hopped a boat from England in 1620, they'd have been imprisoned for heresy, or if my father's forebears had decided to “fully inhabit” their small towns in Russia and Poland, the entire family would have been wiped out in one pogrom or another. I'm fairly sure Olmstead didn't mean to suggest that the kind of stasis she recommends for Americans should apply to those in other countries who wish to seek a better life here.

But why, then, should it apply to any of us?

The best stories always begin with travel. Whether it is Abraham called by God to “go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you,” Bilbo Baggins setting out for adventure with a band of dwarves, or Huck Finn setting out on a raft, exploring new places teaches us about others and about ourselves.

We may, like Bilbo, come back home to the Shire eventually. Or we may, like Huck, light out for the territories. But whichever way our stories end, they will be richer and fuller for our having had the bravery to explore.

I don't think we should try to stop that. I don't think we should even wish that we could. But then, I didn't cry when my daughters learned to ride their bikes. I cheered them on and watched them go. ■

A person with a backpack stands in a narrow, rocky cave passage, looking out towards a bright opening. The cave walls are dark and textured, with some green moss or lichen. The ground is wet and covered with fallen leaves. The person is wearing a dark jacket and a backpack. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and adventurous.

THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LIBERTARIANS

By Jeffrey A. Tucker

What does it mean to be an effective advocate of liberty? It means to love what you do and adopt sustainable patterns of thinking and living that contribute to making the world a freer place.

Sustainability is key. Most of today's attacks on freedom lovers include a dismissal that libertarianism is an ideology for idealistic (or maybe deluded) kids, not one for adults. Sure, you can feel enraptured by the writings of Bastiat or Rand or Rothbard when you are in high school or college. But once you get into the real world, they say, you mature and give up the illusions of a freer world.

I don't believe this. Within the domain of liberty, we find the path to prosperity, social peace, and human flourishing. Every limitation on the freedom of thought, action, and ownership robs the world of creativity, wealth, and progress.

And yet freedom is not baked into a world where various forms of despotism are always threatening. It must be won anew in every generation. Indeed, it's the ones who fancy themselves as grown-ups—able to make big decisions for the rest of humanity—who become the next generation of despots. It is the very foundation of intellectual and moral maturity to resist this level of hubris and to acknowledge the truth of our limitations.

Surely maturity shows us the limits of power. Surely the cause of liberty is worth our lifelong efforts.

But there is a superficial plausibility to the critics' claims because there is a tendency for libertarians to give up hope. I've known many who lost their enthusiasm for liberty for a number of reasons, none of them strictly intellectual. People can begin to feel demoralized on discovering how little they can do to change the world. The gap between dreams and reality grows too large. Idealism fades when you sense you are hitting your head against a brick wall.

What can be done to sustain the passion for liberty throughout a lifetime? Here are my suggestions for seven habits to foster a lifelong attachment to liberty and to live a life that makes the best possible contribution to human well-being.

1 OPPOSE OPPRESSION BUT LOVE LIBERTY EVEN MORE

The dawning of the libertarian consciousness often takes place in two steps.

First, you realize that there is such a thing as a state that is distinct from society at large, a fact that massive swaths

of the social sciences (not to mention mainstream media) try to cover up. Second, there is the new awareness that the state is distinct from every other institution in society because it uses aggressive force to achieve its aims. Further, the state actually does not achieve the aims it promises. Rather, it violates rights, undermines economic achievement, fosters dependency, and serves a ruling class rather than the public at large.

At this point in your intellectual journey, you realize that the mainstream alternatives of left and right leave a lot to be desired; neither is a wholly consistent application of a principled opposition to power.

A new consciousness dawns. It can give rise to righteous anger. You see for the first time the difference between how the world is (which can often look dark and gloomy) and what could be. It can be tempting to focus on the negative: wars, police abuse, corruption, looting of the productive, graft in politics, and so on.

This anger is why so many liberty-minded news feeds consist of terrible news. But how much bad news can one person possibly handle? We have no means to directly right wrongs, to change the world for the better in one fell swoop. To see evil that we cannot change can only lead to despair: a trap that too many libertarians fall into.

It is crucial not only to think about the problem but also to see the solutions being lived out all around us. We need to learn to observe the marvelous businesses starting and succeeding every day, the beauty of spontaneous human interaction, the order and prosperity that emerge from

the exercise of human choice. We should thrill in the many ways that people go about their lives in casual defiance of the central plan. We can glory in the creations all around us that were never mapped out or approved by politicians, or by the experts in their pay.

In other words, focusing on the solutions rather than solely on the problems can brighten your day and give rise to creativity in the service of the good. Liberty is not just the absence of oppression; it is the presence of well-lived lives and institutions that emerge despite every attempt to stop them. In this sense, freedom is blossoming all over the world. If we can focus on making that positive change, rather than dwelling on what's wrong with the world, our task becomes more delightful and a dedication to liberty becomes more sustainable.

*EVERY LIMITATION
ON THE FREEDOM
OF THOUGHT,
ACTION, AND
OWNERSHIP
ROBS THE WORLD
OF CREATIVITY,
WEALTH, AND
PROGRESS.*

2 READ BROADLY AND BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR IDEAS

Political debates can be fun, but they can also be shrill and unproductive, with two sides battling it out and making no intellectual progress. They produce more heat than light. If you are going to change that pattern, you must have the confidence to listen carefully to other ideas and not be threatened by them. With intellectual confidence, you can respond in a way that is sure-footed rather than belligerent. You can be thoughtful rather than reactive.

Think of the difference between the way a street thug behaves and how a martial arts expert carries himself in combat. One is angry, threatening, and reckless. The other is calm, clever, and effective. In a hand-to-hand match between the two, the latter is going to win. Why? Because the martial arts expert has actual skill, whereas the bully only has attitude and emotion. Libertarians should be like skilled experts and exhibit the confidence that comes with that discipline. But becoming a black belt in liberty takes time and learning; it doesn't happen overnight.

We should also know our opponents' arguments better than they do and be prepared to respond to them fairly and without caricature, crafting our own arguments in ways that are actually persuasive rather than just forceful or loud. This requires that we spend some time reading and studying other traditions of thought. Our libraries ought to be broad and sample all disciplines and viewpoints.

POLITICS TENDS TO BE A LAGGING RATHER THAN LEADING INDICATOR OF SOCIAL CHANGE.

We should never shy away from ideas that are different from our own. Sometimes our intellectual opponents—even when they are completely wrong—are our most valued benefactors. They help us think through issues, sharpen our skills, and inspire us to research and read more. This is the way we improve. Then we can approach debates with no fear.

This approach will make us far more effective over the long term. Bombast and bromides can shut down opponents, but do they win hearts and minds? Not likely. As Ludwig von Mises emphasized in his great 1927 book *Liberalism*, it is reason, good arguments, and thoughtfulness—combined with a genuine desire for a better world—that will carry the day.

We don't want to shut down our opponents, causing them to retreat to their comfortable and familiar way of thinking. We want our opponents to keep asking questions

of us, to keep challenging our ideas as we continue to engage them. We want them to keep talking with us and others. The ongoing discussion is a sign of curiosity and openness that we should welcome.

3 LOOK BEYOND POLITICS

For most libertarians, politics is the initial draw. There is nothing wrong with this. It is typical of American culture that it takes campaigns to get people interested in big questions like the role of human freedom, the place of the state, whether war is necessary, and so on.

But it only takes one or two campaigns before people realize that politics is not a very effective way for changing the world for the better. Our votes matter very little, if at all. We are mostly only voting for people, not policies. And people in politics tend to betray principles. If we put too much stock in politicians—even the best of whom confront a system much larger than they can control—we will feel frustrated and powerless. Plus, there is no nastier business on the planet. Calumnies and deceptions define the political world.

Working in campaigns as a consumption good is fine, if that's the sort of thing you like. Some people enjoy it. But let's be realistic. As a production good—a means of effecting good outcomes—it is mostly an illusion. Politics tends to be a lagging rather than leading indicator of social change. The first steps toward change are cultural and political. Politics is reactive, not proactive. If we can make a contribution to changing minds and fostering a culture of liberty, the rest will take care of itself.

There are many other ways to make a difference outside of politics. Think of the way the economy of mobile apps is challenging the status quo in nearly every area of commerce. Municipal taxi monopolies are reeling from the competition from ride-sharing applications. Peer-to-peer housing solutions are making a mess of zoning laws. Cryptocurrency is challenging nationalized money and old-fashioned payment systems. Homeschooling and online education are busting up the state's education system. These efforts have already accomplished more than any top-down reform.

Indeed, every start-up enterprise is a kind of revolutionary act against the status quo that the state's regulations and plunderings have conspired to prevent. Their existence is proof that you can't stop human creativity with any amount of control. At the end of day, we'll look back to see that start-ups have made a mightier contribution to liberty than all the political campaigns combined. Libertarians have long understood that bottom-up solutions to social problems work better than top-down approaches. It's the same with building a free society.



We must resist the temptation to construct a different central plan for freedom.

4 SEE EVERYONE AS AN IDEOLOGICAL FRIEND

Do you know anyone who actually opposes human freedom? I don't. It's just that we all have different ways of understanding that idea and different levels of tolerance for its inconsistent application. We should see everyone as a potential ally in the great cause, regardless of sex, race, religion, or station in life.

Modern democratic politics divides people by interest-group affiliation. According to the prevailing ethos, women should prefer one set of politics and men another. Blacks want things one way, whites another—and Hispanics want yet another. Young and old are each opposed to the other, just as are the rich and the poor. In this way, as Frédéric Bastiat never tired of pointing out, politics divides people, creating a war of all against all.

But the classical liberals always emphasized that freedom means a harmony of interests between all groups. Only true liberals favor the common good of all, because they want to remove the major source of division in society. They favor

allowing all groups and individuals to cooperate, associate, exchange, and produce to their mutual betterment. Society can manage itself better than any central planner can.

To see this today, in a time of cold war between groups, requires some high-minded thinking. Often, it requires acknowledging the justice of victim-group complaints and drawing attention to how the state has created the problem in the first place. This pertains to a huge range of problems in society, from unemployment to institutionalized racism to persistent poverty, exploitation, and war. It is not the case that we all have different goals; it's that we disagree on the means to achieve those goals.

Start all discussions with the presumption that the other person is a potential lover of liberty. When someone says something right and true, seize on it and draw it out. Don't be discouraged if you don't gain a convert immediately. As with all exchanges of ideas, the goal should be to plant seeds, not harvest a crop. It is through such subtle but persistent efforts that we win over hearts and minds to the cause of liberty.

5 DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS

It is typical of nonlibertarians that they demand full and complete answers to all human problems that are currently tackled by statist means. Who will care for the poor? How will education work? How will people get health insurance? What is to be done about the problems of racism, misogyny, and religious intolerance? Above all else, who will build the roads? (Never mind that roads are all built by private companies on contract with the state today.)

It is tempting to try to give complete answers. And history can provide some important hints and guides along the way to giving us a vision of what might be. There is a point to drawing attention to the way government intervention has displaced a whole range of private industries: schools, roads, mutual aid, title companies, courts, and more. At the same time, we must resist the temptation to construct a different central plan for freedom. If we take the bait, we set ourselves up for failure.

We do not have all the answers. In freedom, we discover answers through an ongoing process of trial and error. An open society exists to leave the maximum amount of room for innovation and discovery.

F.A. Hayek was correct in his amazing essay “The Case for Freedom”:

Freedom granted only when it is known beforehand that its effects will be beneficial is not freedom. If we knew how freedom would be used, the case for it would largely disappear.... Our faith in freedom does not rest on the foreseeable results in particular circumstances but on the belief that it will, on balance, release more forces for the good than for the bad.... It is because we do not know how individuals will use their freedom that it is so important.

As FEE's founder, Leonard Read, used to say, the single most notable feature of freedom is its humility. It defers to the results of human action and does not attempt to design them in advance. Freedom does not mean rule by smart libertarians who know better than anyone else. It means the removal of institutionalized sources of power that rule with the arrogant presumption that there is only one way to manage society—and the presumption that society can and should be managed.

There is nothing wrong with responding to critics of freedom, “I don't know the answers, but neither do politicians and bureaucrats, which is why they aren't in a position to impose their ideas on the rest of us. We need freedom to work out social problems for ourselves. If you see a challenge to be met, it's guaranteed that others see the same problem. Let's work together to find the answers. Freedom is a necessary condition for finding the best solutions.”

6 HACK YOUR LIFE

Once you realize that we are living under a central plan for your life and property, you can start to get creative about finding alternatives. You can use technologies to find a new approach to education. You can find better paths toward personal success. You can better manage your finances without the personal debt encouraged by the policies of the Federal Reserve. You can hack your appliances in ways that make them operate better than the regulations allow.



One way that statist lobbying groups have increased the power of government has been to find ways to apply their principles in public life. The greens have become masters of this approach. They have constructed a whole liturgy for our lives whereby we recycle, bike, ration garbage, take short showers, and so on—never mind that these things do next to nothing for the environment. The point is to personalize the political (the opposite of the left’s principle of politicizing the personal).

We libertarians can personalize the political by finding ways around the central plan. These steps are hugely important because they make liberty real in our lives. It is not just an abstraction we hold in our minds, a vague hope of some world that may or may not dawn in the future. The opportunities to live out freedom are all around us. We only need eyes to see and the courage to act.

Before Ayn Rand wrote *Atlas Shrugged*, she knew that it was not enough to write a novel solely about a decaying social order under the iron hand of a corrupt government. She needed characters who felt empowered to do something about it. She ended up with an epic story about a whole generation of entrepreneurs who moved to Galt’s Gulch to build a better world. Their plan of action, as presented in this book, has influenced libertarians for half a century.

No, that doesn’t mean that we must all bail out and move to New Hampshire. It does mean that we must all look for ways to live and innovate without permission from the ruling class, embracing freedom whether our political masters like it or not.

7 BE JOYFUL

Factionalism is a major joy killer. There is a temptation to become overly embedded in a small circle of opinion, to look for differences (however minute), and to argue tempestuously. When debates are civil and fair, they can lead to intellectual growth. When they become personal and involve claims that so-and-so is not a real libertarian, they can produce broken friendships and general acrimony.

No one wins in such joyless struggles. They cause people to lose focus on the critical goal, which is the rise of liberty and the fall of everything that stands in its way. Social media is a wonderful thing, but sometimes technology can exacerbate squabbles rather than build real community. Remember that it takes two to fight, and you can always walk away. That takes discipline and humility, but it preserves relationships. For our own well-being, we need to focus on building a community of ideas, not on purges based on the false hope of purifying the movement.

There is something seriously wrong if the dawning of

libertarian consciousness leads to a dour and dreary attitude toward the world and all its works. It should be easy to adopt a joyful view of the world, especially in our times.

We are seeing the failure of 20th-century statist measures in every area of life. The statist’s fiscal, monetary, and regulatory plans have all failed. Their programs are unraveling. Governments and their leaders have never been more unpopular. Commerce is making an end run around their schemes every day. .

These should be causes of great joy. Libertarians are on the right side of history. We celebrate and seek to defend human rights against all who would take them away. This is a happy pursuit, one that gives our lives added meaning and significance.

Murray Rothbard used to say that fighting the state should be a joyful occupation. In the end, tyranny cannot work. There is just something wonderful about realizing that and seeing how it plays itself out in the real world. Having such joy was effortless for Rothbard because it was part of his personality. For the rest of us, it takes some practice. We should smile at the inevitable failures of the state, feel happy about the liberty all around us, and take comfort in the hope for a future of freedom that is realizable, partly through our own efforts.

ONWARD!

Let us remember that when we are talking about human liberty, we are talking about the whole of what makes life beautiful. That is a gigantic subject. There are many pathways into the philosophy of freedom and many ways of living the ideas, too. That is a beautiful truth, one worthy of lifelong attention and commitment. To make it effective, we should never forget that liberty is about real life, not merely an intellectual abstraction.

Imagine a small group of people going out into the world armed with these seven habits. Soon, that infectious optimism helps grow the group, as more and more people are drawn to its light. Those who doubt, criticize, and clamber for power will come to be seen not as progressive and forward thinking but rather as stuck in old ways that don’t work. And the group of networked change makers will prove their value one experiment at a time. People will turn not to the politicians and the paid experts but to the geeks, volunteers, and entrepreneurs—to those with a vision of a beautiful future. That’s what freedom looks like. And that’s how you change the world with it. ■

Jeffrey A. Tucker (FEE.org/Tucker) is director of digital development for FEE.

WE MUST ALL
LOOK FOR WAYS
TO LIVE AND
INNOVATE WITHOUT
PERMISSION.

THE NIGHT THRESHER

DEVIN MURPHY

The spotlights create a glowing dome of feed corn
and if not for the highway to the east zippering up
the center of the state and the orange flicker
of the refinery's tower along the river
it would be easy to think yourself the only person
alive, how you felt in the Sea of Japan aboard
a Zumwalt Destroyer, seeing the piercing
stadium lights mounted on the squid fishing boats
to call up the strange creatures from the depths,
sharp as latent stars on water, emblazoned umbrellas
shielding the bow and stern until you were close enough
to see men in green slickers toiling with nets
and how close you felt to those strangers who also cut
the night in half for their jobs, then the flow of corn
beneath you delivers the flash of a fawn uncurling
from its nesting before it is taken into the whirling
blades and fills the Illinois night with its bleating.



I
I don't believe in omens, nor fear
foreboding signs. No poisons or lies
will strike me down. There is no death on earth;
everyone's immortal. Nothing will die.
There's no need to fear the end—at seventeen
or seventy. There's only this life, this light
on earth; there's no darkness or death.
We're all already on the seashore,
and I'm among those who haul in the nets
when immortality swims past a shoal.

II
If you live in a house, the house will not fall.
Summon any of the centuries,
I'll enter and build a house in it.
That is why they are with me,
our beloveds and children, around my table
large enough for ancestors and grandchildren:
the future turns its face to us now,
and if I raise my hand a little,
all five rays will dwell among you.
Every day I used my collarbones
as if they were logs to shore up the past—
I measured time with cubits and spans
then crossed its mountain range.

LIFE, LIFE

ARSENY TARKOVSKY

III
I tailored the age to fit my frame,
then we headed south, made the steppe dust fly.
Tall weeds fumed. A grasshopper played;
touching its antenna to a horseshoe, it prophesied;
like a monk, it threatened me with destruction.
I strapped my fate to the saddle.
And even now, in the time to come,
I stand up in stirrups like a boy.

My immortality suits me well—
my blood flows from age to age.
I would have paid with my life, whimsically,
for a warm and sturdy corner—
if the flying needle had not tugged me
like a thread across the universe.

(1965)

Translated from the Russian by Philip Metres & Dimitri Psurtsev.

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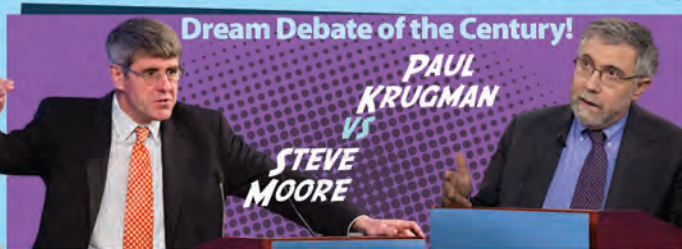
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*The wrong climate
policy could be
much worse for the
environment than
doing nothing.*

— ROBERT P. MURPHY

