

# Liberalism: The Fifteen Strongest Challenges<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction: The Stakes and the Method

### *a. What liberalism is*

The key political issue of the modern era is the fate of liberalism. Liberalism is a newcomer to human history, after millennia of tribalism, feudalism, and many types of dictatorship. Liberalism had a few short-lived successes in classical Greece and Rome and more recently in some Renaissance Italian and Baltic states. Only in the past few centuries has liberalism become a prevailing theory and practice, and only in some parts of the world. It is a work in progress and, aside from resistance from traditional forms of politics, it faces formidable practical and theoretical opposition from other political newcomers, such as modern communalism, fascism, updated military dictatorship, and systems that try to mix them in some combination.

Whether liberalism is viable is an open question. By “liberalism” I mean the social philosophy that makes foundational liberty of the individual in all areas of life—artistic, religious, economic, sexual, political, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

The question of the proper role of government within a society is central to any political theory. A government is a social institution distinguished by two traits: its principles apply to the whole of society and they are enacted by physical force or its threat. Governments claim and practice universality and compulsion.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the second of a two-part series on this topic, with the first part being an overview of fifteen arguments for liberalism and the second part being an overview of fifteen arguments against it. For the first part, see Stephen R. C. Hicks, “Liberalism: The Fifteen Best Arguments,” *Reason Papers* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2015), pp. 108-32, accessed online at: [http://reasonpapers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/rp\\_372\\_9.pdf](http://reasonpapers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/rp_372_9.pdf). (The introductory section there overlaps substantially with this article’s introduction.) I am developing this into a larger project, so I welcome substantive feedback on either (or both) parts of this series. All feedback can be directed to: [shicks@rockford.edu](mailto:shicks@rockford.edu).

<sup>2</sup> I use “liberal” philosophically and not journalistically to report how it is used in different parts of the world. Language evolves, sometimes for peculiarly local or tendentiously ideological reasons. When a term strays from its cognitive roots, it is important to clarify and re-establish its useful meaning.

In these two respects government is distinguished from other social institutions, such as businesses, religious associations, sports teams, and so on, which are particular and voluntary. Not everyone in a society does business with a given company; joins a given church, temple, or mosque; or plays a given sport. When a member disagrees with or breaks from one of those institutions' rules, the most that the institution can do is dissociate itself from that member.

A government, by contrast, claims and enacts the authority to apply its rules to everyone in a society, and it claims and enacts the authority to use physical force against those who break its rules. It is a universal institution of compulsion.

Consequently, the two key questions to answer when defining the proper, principled role of government are: What principles are so important that everyone in society should respect and live by them? What principles are so important that physical force may be used against those who violate them?

The liberal answer to both of those questions is, of course, liberty. All individuals are entitled to liberty and all individuals should respect each other's freedoms. That is the universality element. Any individual who violates the liberty of another can properly be subject to physical force. That is the compulsion element.

In order to protect freedoms, liberal societies devise a network of institutional elements. They specify religious liberties, property rights, free-speech rights, liberties to engage in commercial activities, and more. They set up police, courts, and prisons to investigate those who violate others' freedoms and to restrain those guilty of doing so. They place limitations on the scope and power of government in order to lessen the risk that government itself will violate liberties. They articulate a commitment to the rule of law by making their general principles explicit in a constitution and devising their particular rules by reference to those general principles.

All of that follows from making liberty the foundational political value. Advocates of other systems disagree, and the debate is engaged. Is liberty really the most important social value? What about security, equality, justice, peace, efficiency, prosperity, or spiritual purity? Is liberty compatible with them, and if so, how? Or if it is in tension with them, why prioritize liberty?

***b. Taking up the strongest arguments***

My method starts by taking up the best fifteen arguments for (in Part I of this series) and against liberalism. These are not exhaustive lists, but they include the arguments that have had the most staying power in the debates. The reason they have had that staying power is that each identifies and stresses a genuinely important value at stake in politics.

John Stuart Mill, in his *On Liberty*, best expresses the reason for using such a method.<sup>3</sup> No one is educated who knows only one side of an

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<sup>3</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Penguin, 1974 [1859]), chap. 2.

argument. No one should commit to a position without knowing the competition. Especially in complicated matters like politics, where a huge number of facts about the world must be integrated into a theory, a critical test for any theory is how well it compares with other theories. Does it overlook key facts? Does it make leaps of logic? The best way to answer for oneself those questions is to put the contender theories, with reference to their strongest defenders, in explicit competition with each other.

An advocate of liberalism has to know not only the best arguments for liberalism, but also the best arguments against liberalism—and how to respond to them. While I ultimately advocate liberalism, warts and all, my first goal will be to rise to Mill's challenge. Liberalism has many intelligent, decent, and articulate enemies; their qualms and fears about liberalism must be taken seriously.

We make progress as individuals only when we know the most powerful arguments for and against what we judge to be true, and we can best judge the truth of a position by testing it against its worthy competitors. We often want shortcuts, perhaps out of intellectual laziness, an unwillingness to admit error, or to protect some belief we feel is core to our identity. There are no shortcuts, however, on complicated matters.

We make progress socially only when we are able to articulate our views clearly to others who are trying to understand—and when we ourselves genuinely understand—what others think and why. We tend to talk past each other, and discussion degenerates when one party senses that the other isn't really listening or is addressing a weaker, easily attackable version of one's position.

The test of my method will be this: Could a reader tell, if he or she read only my presentation of the arguments for and against liberalism, which side of the debate I am on?

The next step is to compare the two sets of arguments. Where are the sharpest and most persistent disagreements between liberals and their opponents? Some disagreements turn on issues within economics (e.g., Do free markets lead to monopoly?), within politics (e.g., Was the American Revolution ideologically conservative or libertarian?), or about history (e.g., Were the British Acts of Toleration primarily about religion?), and so on.

My claim will be that the most significant differences between liberals and their opponents are driven by disagreements in philosophy. That is, disagreements about values, human nature, metaphysics, and epistemology drive our deepest and most protracted arguments.

Consider this claim, for example: "Free societies may be practically efficient at generating wealth, but they are not moral." That raises issues of ethics: What conception of morality is at work here, and why is it opposed to the practical? Or consider the opposite claim: "Liberalism is a fine ideal, but it's unrealistic to expect it actually to work in the real world." That raises a set of metaphysical concerns: What is the real world, where do ideals come from, and why are fine ideals not realistic?

Or one can challenge my method sketched above: “This arguments-back-and-forth procedure— isn’t that pointless given human psychology? Don’t studies show that people reject or accept empirical data for or against a policy depending on their prior commitments? So what is the point of reasoning?” This challenge illustrates the importance of epistemology. Political arguments often turn on philosophical assumptions about cognition: Are humans rational or irrational? Or if a mix, what level of rational competency can we expect from them? If we are devising a set of political principles for human beings, then they must be based on an accurate understanding of human nature, which must include an accurate understanding of our cognitive powers. Those with dramatically different epistemologies are almost always led to very different politics, and they advocate them by very different methods.

Historically, philosophy is the mother discipline, giving birth to the specific sciences and nurturing them to maturity. The point about the importance of philosophy, though, is not to assert a professional monopoly on philosophy by professional philosophers. Everyone is philosophical to some extent; we are necessarily philosophical when we think about social theory, whether we do so as professional economists, political scientists, historians, or voting citizens. Philosophy is a practice common to all thinking human beings.

Explicit attention to the philosophical issues embedded within any political theory is necessary for understanding, defending, or attacking that theory competently. The value-added by professional philosophers is part of an overall intellectual division of labor. Economists, political theorists, historians, and others all have specialties that contribute the knowledge necessary to a comprehensive social theory, but labor that has been divided also must be coordinated again. The coordinating work of integrating knowledge from various disciplines is a task that each of us must perform individually. No one can do social theory adequately without being also an economist, a political theorist, a historian—and, especially, a philosopher.

I will initially present arguments (for and) against liberalism in qualitative form only and save relevant quantitative data for later. I will also keep the scholarly apparatus to a minimum by putting in the footnotes relevant quotations from major thinkers who make points supporting or illustrating the argument in question. The footnotes may be useful for those interested in the historically important thinkers who have contributed to the debate. They can be ignored, however, by those interested primarily in focusing quickly on the arguments’ essential points and putting them in collision with each other.

## **2. Fifteen Arguments against Liberalism**

### ***a. Humans are not intelligent enough for freedom***

Liberalism is too idealistic. It gives people a lot of freedom and responsibility and expects them to be able to handle it. However, most people do not have the knowledge, intelligence, and judgment needed to decide the best course of action for their lives. We all like to think that we are smart, but

the math is cruel. Half of us are below median intelligence, and some of us are considerably lower. So why should we think that freedom is a good policy for everyone?

A free society presupposes that people are capable of self-responsible living. That in turn presupposes that they are intelligent enough to do so. A liberal democracy presupposes that the majority will consistently make good political decisions. That also presupposes that they have enough intelligence.

Here is a sobering contrary anecdote. A reader wrote to a columnist with a perplexing math problem he had been debating over dinner with his wife and brother-in-law.<sup>4</sup> Suppose that you pour one cup of 100% bran cereal into a bowl, and then you pour one cup of 40% bran cereal into the same bowl. What percentage of bran is now in the bowl? The reader's wife said 140%—apparently one should add the two percentages to get the right answer. The brother-in-law disagreed, holding that one should subtract the lower from the higher percentage, so the correct answer is 60%. The reader himself thought that both answers were wrong—and that the right answer depends on whether one first pours the 100% bran or the 40% bran into the bowl.

Here are three individuals who cannot do basic math. Do they have the cognitive skills necessary to make good decisions in our complex, high-tech world? Intellectually, they are nearly helpless to navigate the world, but in the name of freedom the liberals want us to leave them to their own devices.

It gets worse. Perhaps *you* can do basic math, but in a democracy the three citizens above can easily outvote you on any public policy issue. What are the chances that their three math-challenged votes will be better than your one math-informed vote? Liberal democracy is nothing more than the slow suicide of the collectively stupid.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, a managed freedom is best for most people. Some of us are smarter than others. The most intelligent can do social good by making the important decisions for their less intelligent brethren, or at least firmly nudging them in the proper direction.<sup>6</sup> That would be more benevolent than

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<sup>4</sup> See Marilyn vos Savant, "Ask Marilyn," *Parade Magazine* (April, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> John Maynard Keynes holds: "It is *not* a correct deduction from the principles of economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest. Nor is it true that self-interest generally *is* enlightened; more often individuals acting separately to promote their own ends are too ignorant or too weak to attain even these"; see John Maynard Keynes, *The End of Laissez-Faire* (1926), sec. 4, accessed online at: <http://www.panarchy.org/keynes/laissezfaire.1926.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein say this about how government regulations can help people by "framing" their decision-making: "Framing works because people tend to be somewhat mindless, passive decision makers. Their Reflective System does not do the work that would be required to check and see whether reframing the questions would produce a different answer. One reason they don't do this is that they wouldn't know what to make of the contradiction. This implies that frames are powerful nudges,

leaving them to their own precarious intelligence. We should therefore design the political system to assign power to the most intelligent and informed.<sup>7</sup> We should take decision-making power away from the less intelligent—for their own good and the good of society as a whole. In ancient times, Plato argued that we need philosopher-kings.<sup>8</sup> For our modern science-and-technology-intensive society, we need philosopher-scientist-kings.<sup>9</sup>

The degree of control assigned to government authorities will be tied to the degree of our confidence in people's intellectual capacities. The more pessimistic we are about the average intelligence, the more wide-ranging decision-making powers we will give to the authorities.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps most people need guidance only on complicated matters. If so, then we can include some democratic elements. We can permit the majority of voters to determine who will have the authority to make important decisions on their behalf. To make voters' choices easier, we can have political parties pre-select suitably intelligent candidates, and voters will then choose the best from among them.

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and must be selected with caution"; see Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> Ortega y Gasset states: "Man, whether he like it or not, is a being forced by his nature to seek some higher authority"; see Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932), p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Republic*, Book 5, 473d, accessed online at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Or psychologist-kings; see, e.g., B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (Indianapolis, IL: Hackett, 1948).

<sup>10</sup> Joseph de Maistre claims: "Man is so muddled, so dependent on the things immediately before his eyes, that every day even the most submissive believer can be seen to risk the torments of the afterlife for the smallest pleasure"; see Joseph de Maistre, "First Dialogue," in Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993 [1821]), accessed online at: [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL1175368M/St.\\_Petersburg\\_dialogues\\_or\\_Conversations\\_on\\_the\\_temporal\\_government\\_of\\_providence](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL1175368M/St._Petersburg_dialogues_or_Conversations_on_the_temporal_government_of_providence).

For the strong version, one can look to Fyodor Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor: "Freedom, free reason, and science will lead them into such a maze, and confront them with such miracles and insoluble mysteries, that some of them, unruly and ferocious, will exterminate themselves; others, unruly but feeble, will exterminate each other; and the remaining third, feeble and wretched, will crawl to our feet and cry out to us: 'Yes, you were right, you alone possess his mystery, and we are coming back to you—save us from ourselves'"; see Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002 [1880]), 2.v.5, p. 258.

Once elected, though, the political representatives will face a problem. The world is complex and many important decisions must be made, but they themselves do not always have the necessary knowledge to decide wisely. So our representatives will create a series of government agencies staffed with intelligent people who are experts about such things as manufacturing and trade, banking and finance, food and drink, pharmaceuticals and medicine, transportation, and the education of our children. The expert agencies will be empowered to make necessary decisions. Citizens can then make choices, but within a framework selected and enforced by their society's most intelligent and informed members. In that system, those of lower intelligence are protected from the consequences of their ignorance in their private lives, and the rest of us are protected from the consequences of their voting in our public lives.

***b. Human nature is too immoral for freedom***

An ancient myth tells of a man who found a magical ring. He was a shepherd, responsible for tending his village's sheep as they grazed in the meadows away in the hills. His job was lonely, poorly paid, and most of the time he smelled like a sheep. In a cave one day he found a gold ring with a jewel in it. He put the ring on his finger and discovered something amazing: when he turned the ring so the jewel faced inward, he became invisible. When he turned the jewel outward, he again became visible. One can predict what happened next: a crime wave. The shepherd abandoned his flock and returned to the village. Expensive things were stolen. Women were raped. People were killed. There were no witnesses. He moved on to greater conquests—stealing, deceiving, and killing his way to the top. He eventually murdered the king, put himself on the throne, and took the dead king's wife to bed as his own queen.

Ancient storytellers from Herodotus to Plato used the myth of the ring to meditate upon political ethics.<sup>11</sup> The shepherd, they argued, is not a peculiar individual; he is everyman and a stand-in for human nature. The ring is a metaphor for power—the power to do what one wants without consequences. What does the shepherd want? He wants what any human being wants: wealth, sex, revenge upon one's enemies, and unendingly more.

The ring's power of invisibility means that he can now satisfy his strongest desires in the easiest ways possible. He need not work hard for money. He need not elaborately woo women. He need not devise complicated plans to kill his enemies. Thus, in philosophy-mathematics: Human Nature plus Power equals Crime. Humans are beings of predatory passions—greed, lust, anger, and more. To the extent that we act on our strongest passions, we make social living either brutish or impossible.

The ring's power gave the shepherd the freedom to do anything he wanted. Clearly, freedom is socially destructive, because it unleashes human

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<sup>11</sup> Plato, *Republic*, Book 2, 359d-360c.

nature and human nature is degenerate. If we want a peaceful and productive society, then freedom is the enemy.

The foregoing is a Greek myth, but we get a similar account of humanity as we move east to other ancient Mediterranean cultures. In the book of Genesis, a common source for the Western world's three major religions, we learn that Eve and Adam, in their first significant act of freedom, stole the fruit.<sup>12</sup> In the next generation, Cain killed Abel.<sup>13</sup> Subsequent generations, left free to their own devices, constantly lied, raped, assaulted, massacred, and more—until God returned in the generation of Noah. God saw the corruption that humans had wrought and decided to kill them and start over.<sup>14</sup> But even in the “do-over” era, human nature again revealed itself and caused the same destructive outcomes, hence the doctrine of Original Sin.

In both religious and secular form, the argument is that human nature is dominated by desires that make us unfit for freedom. Freedom is a kind of power, but power either corrupts us<sup>15</sup> or releases an already-corrupt human nature.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Gen. 3:6.

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 4:8.

<sup>14</sup> Gen. 6:11.

<sup>15</sup> Lord Acton states: “All power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”; see Lord Acton, “Letter to Creighton,” April 5, 1887, accessed online at: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/214>.

<sup>16</sup> De Maistre claims: “Man in general, if reduced to himself, is too wicked to be free. . . . He is a monstrous centaur, born of some unimaginable offence, some abominable miscegenation”; see his “First Dialogue.”

Genghis Khan supposedly said: “The greatest joy a man can know is to conquer his enemies and drive them before him. To ride their horses and take away their possessions, to see the faces of those who were dear to them bedewed with tears, and to clasp their wives and daughters in his arms”; quoted in Steven Dutch, “The Mongols” (1998), accessed online at: <http://www.uwgb.edu/dutchs/WestTech/xmongol.htm>.

Sigmund Freud holds: “Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him. *Homo homini lupus*”; see Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1930), p. 58.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn maintains: “Destructive and irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space. Society has turned out to have scarce defense against the abyss of human decadence, for example against the misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, such as motion pictures full of pornography,



Given this grim truth, what should we do to make social living possible? Let's return to the philosophy-math: If human nature combined with freedom leads to badness,<sup>17</sup> then in order to avoid badness, we either have to change human nature or take away freedom. If we cannot change human nature, then we must focus on stifling its negative manifestations.

One way to accomplish this end is through fear. Before he found the ring, the shepherd did not act upon his passions because he was afraid of being caught. The ring eliminated that fear, and his passions were unleashed. We thus should ensure that humans remain the way the shepherd was before the ring: relatively powerless and afraid of the authorities.

In secular form, we can give the police and the courts great surveillance and punishment powers. In religious form, we can make people believe in a God who is always watching and who will punish them strictly. For example, "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."<sup>18</sup> Whether secular or religious, we must instill the fear of authoritarian forces to counter natural human depravity.

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crime, and horror"; see Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart," commencement address delivered at Harvard University (1978), accessed online at: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/alexandersolzhenitsynharvard.htm>.

Robert Bork argues: "Because both libertarians and modern liberals are oblivious to social reality, both demand radical personal autonomy in expression. That is one reason libertarians are not to be confused, as they often are, with conservatives. . . . Free market economists are particularly vulnerable to the libertarian virus" because too often the free market economist "ignores the question of which wants it is moral to satisfy" and fails to recognize that "unconstrained human nature will seek degeneracy often enough to create a disorderly, hedonistic, and dangerous society"; see Robert Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), pp. 150, 151, and 153.

William Golding states: "The desire to squeeze and hurt was overmastering"; see William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), chap. 7.

John Gray asserts: "Cruelty and conflict are basic human traits"; see John Gray, "The Truth about Evil," *The Guardian* (October 21, 2014), accessed online at: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2014/oct/21/-sp-the-truth-about-evil-john-gray>.

<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant claims: "the history of freedom begins with *badness*, for it is *man's* work"; see Immanuel Kant, "Speculative Beginning of Human History," in his *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Prov. 9:10.

Rene Descartes argues: "And since in this life one frequently finds greater rewards offered for vice than for virtue, few persons would prefer the just to the useful if they were not restrained either by the fear of God or by the expectation of another life"; see Rene Descartes, "Letter of Dedication," in his *Meditations*, trans. Laurence J. Lafleur (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1952 [1641]), p. 61.

Fear of external powers like the police or the gods is one check,<sup>19</sup> but we can also use internal checks by teaching people to stifle themselves. Instead of political fear, use moral guilt.<sup>20</sup> If the problem is greed, for example, then from infancy we can teach children a moral lesson: loving money is the root of all evil.<sup>21</sup> When they naturally come to desire money, an internal battle will be waged between their greed and their taught belief that wanting money is immoral. The guilt will not work perfectly, but it will make them more likely to suppress their greed. If the problem is lust, then teach sexual abstinence as the moral ideal.<sup>22</sup> It will not work all of the time, but sexual guilt will help dampen the lust. If the problem is anger, then teach that one should always forgive.<sup>23</sup> The natural desire for vengeance and the taught morality of forgiveness will fight mightily within them, and if we feel guilty about wanting revenge, then they will be less likely to seek it.

In summary, if these various myths capture a deep truth about human nature, then we have only two solutions: a morality of guilt or a politics of fear—or both. Freedom is power, and human nature will abuse it, so liberalism is a non-starter.

***c. Liberalism is amorally self-interested***

Liberals often cite the practical consequences of free societies, such as the increasing quantity of goods available, rising life expectancy, and so on. However, we must question the moral motivation of its agents. The great moral teachers in history have almost always condemned self-interest. Yet liberalism consistently emphasizes the self: *my* freedom,<sup>24</sup> *my* privacy,<sup>25</sup> *my*

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<sup>19</sup> Leo Strauss claims, in the context of assessing Carl Schmitt's politics: "Because mankind is intrinsically wicked, he has to be governed"; quoted in Heinrich Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 124.

<sup>20</sup> Solzhenitsyn says: "I have come to understand the truth of all the religions of the world: They struggle with the *evil inside a human being* (inside every human being). It is impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person;" see Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), Part IV, chap. 1; accessed online at: [https://ia601308.us.archive.org/0/items/TheGulagArchipelago-Threevolumes/The-Gulag-Archipelago\\_vol2\\_III-IV\\_Solzhenitsyn.pdf](https://ia601308.us.archive.org/0/items/TheGulagArchipelago-Threevolumes/The-Gulag-Archipelago_vol2_III-IV_Solzhenitsyn.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> 1 Tim. 6:10.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 18:21-22.

<sup>24</sup> Ortega y Gasset says this about how liberalism has created the mass man: "[A]t the center of his scheme of life there is precisely the aspiration to live without conforming to any moral code," and: "The mass-man is simply without morality, which is always, in essence, a sentiment of submission to something, a consciousness of service and

pursuit of happiness,<sup>26</sup> my right to life.<sup>27</sup> With its individualistic emphasis upon *Me* and *Mine*, liberalism denies the proper moral basis of society.<sup>28</sup>

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obligation”; see Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses*, pp. 187 and 189.

<sup>25</sup> Plato: “The first and highest form of the state and of the government and of the law [is a condition] in which the private and individual is altogether banished from life, and things which are by nature private, such as eyes and ears and hands, have become common, and in some way see and hear and act in common, and all men express praise and blame and feel joy and sorrow on the same occasions, and whatever laws there are unite the city to the utmost”; see Plato, *Laws*, 739c-d, accessed online at: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0166%3Abook%3D5%3Asection%3D739c>.

<sup>26</sup> W. G. Maclagan claims: “[A] man may and should discount altogether his own pleasure or happiness as such when he is deciding what course of action to pursue”; see W. G. Maclagan, “Self and Others: A Defense of Altruism,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1954), pp. 109-10.

Solzhenitsyn on the moral superiority of suffering as exemplified by the Russian experience: “Through deep suffering, people in our own country have now achieved a spiritual development of such intensity that the Western system in its present state of spiritual exhaustion does not look attractive”; see Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart.”

Mother Teresa is quoted as saying: “I think it is very beautiful for the poor to accept their lot, to share it with the passion of Christ. I think the world is being much helped by the suffering of the poor people”; quoted in Christopher Hitchens, *The Missionary Position* (New York: Verso, 1995), p. 11.

Ludwig Wittgenstein claims, wryly: “I don’t know why we are here, but I’m pretty sure that it is not in order to enjoy ourselves,” accessed online at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/greatest\\_philosopher\\_ludwig\\_wittgenstein.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/greatest_philosopher_ludwig_wittgenstein.shtml).

<sup>27</sup> G. W. F. Hegel holds: “A single person, I need hardly say, is something subordinate, and as such he must dedicate himself to the ethical whole. Hence, if the state claims life, the individual must surrender it”; see G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952 [1835]), p. 241.

<sup>28</sup> Iris Murdoch claims: “In the moral life the enemy is the fat, relentless ego”; see Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 52.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte argues: “There is only one virtue—to forget one’s own person, and only one vice—to think of oneself”; quoted in E. Westermarck, *Ethical Relativity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), p. 225.

Arthur Schopenhauer claims: “In war we must first recognize the enemy; in the impending struggle, *egoism*, as the chief force on its own side, will be the principal opponent of the virtue of *justice*, which, in my opinion, is the first and really cardinal virtue”; see Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1995 [1835]), p. 134.

John Rawls suggests: “The idea of justice expressed in the political theories of Hobbes and Locke, the view of Adam Smith that we best serve our fellow-men by enlightened self interest, are all false views of community. Any society which explains

In the economic sphere, for instance, many liberals argue that free-market capitalism has proved to be more economically productive than socialism has. They draw the conclusion that capitalism is better. However, any system that depends upon the profit motive is by definition an unethical system,<sup>29</sup> and any system that strives to replace the profit-motive with non-profit motivation is by definition an ethical system. Therefore, socialism or feudalism—or any non-profit-based system—is more moral, even if it is not as practical.

Furthermore, in the personal sphere, liberals emphasize the pursuit of personal happiness and insist that individuals have the freedom to define their own pleasures and decide how they are going to achieve them. Liberalism therefore subordinates duty to self-interested inclinations, when the opposite is true.<sup>30</sup> Liberalism denies the deep moral truth that morality is about doing what one is obligated to do. Duty means doing what is right whether one wants to or not and whether it brings one any pleasure or not.<sup>31</sup>

Concerning life in general, liberals insist upon each individual's right to life and deny the authority of higher moral entities to insist upon sacrifice when necessary. Yet the willingness to sacrifice oneself selflessly—and the social imperative of sacrifice—are the heart of ethics.<sup>32</sup> While liberalism's

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itself in terms of mutual egoism is heading for certain destruction"; see John Rawls, *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith: With "On My Religion,"* ed. Thomas Nagel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 189.

<sup>29</sup> Amartya Sen: "The self-interest view of rationality involves *inter alia* a firm rejection of the 'ethics-related' view of motivation"; see Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Kant states: "Now an action done from duty must wholly exclude the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will, so that nothing remains which can determine the will except objectively the law, and subjectively pure respect for this practical law, and consequently the maxim that I should follow this law even to the thwarting of all my inclinations"; see Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper, 1956 [1785]), sec. 397.

<sup>31</sup> Kant argues: "the concepts of pleasure and pain, of the desires and inclinations, etc., all of which are of empirical origin, yet in the construction of a system of pure morality these empirical concepts must necessarily be brought into the concept of duty, as representing either a hindrance which we have to overcome, or an allurements, which must not be made into a motive"; see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929 [1781/1787]), secs. A15/B29.

<sup>32</sup> Adam Smith says: "The wise and virtuous man is at all times willing that his own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order or society. He is at all times willing, too, that the interest of this order or society should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the state or sovereignty, of which it is only a subordinate part. He should, therefore, be equally willing that all those inferior interests should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the universe, to the interest of that great society of all sensible and intelligent beings, of which God himself is the

self-interest may be productive, its “What’s-in-it-for-me?” egoism undercuts any moral worth it may have.<sup>33</sup> Manure might produce a flower, but we hold our noses in its presence.

***d. Liberalism’s individualism is atomistic***

Man is primarily a social being, not an individual one. As a result, liberalism undermines one’s humanity by denying one’s deepest social needs and social identity.

In the modern world especially, liberalism has stressed individualism, and as a consequence it has lessened the individual’s identification with family,<sup>34</sup> community,<sup>35</sup> nation,<sup>36</sup> race,<sup>37</sup> and even God.<sup>38</sup> It

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immediate administrator and director”; see Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1982 [1759]), VI.2.3, p. 384, accessed online at: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/smith-adam-1723-1790>.

Alfred Rocco claims: “the necessity, for which the older doctrines make little allowance, of sacrifice, even up to the total immolation of individuals, in behalf of society. . . . For Liberalism, the individual is the end and society the means; nor is it conceivable that the individual, considered in the dignity of an ultimate finality, be lowered to mere instrumentality. For Fascism, society is the end, individuals the means, and its whole life consists in using individuals as instruments for its social ends”; see Alfred Rocco, “The Political Doctrine of Fascism” (1925), accessed online at: <http://fascism-archive.org/books/PoliticalDoctrinesRocco.html>.

<sup>33</sup> C. S. Lewis argues: “Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to—whether it was only your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or everyone. But they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first”; see C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Lakewood, CO: Collier, 1952), p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Russell Kirk claims that in liberal society, man becomes “a social atom, starved for most emotions except envy and ennui, severed from true family-life and reduced to mere household-life, his old landmarks buried, his old faiths dissipated”; see Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1953), p. 228.

<sup>35</sup> Wendell Berry holds: “I believe that the community—the fullest sense: a place and all its creatures—is the smallest unit of health and that to speak of the health of an isolated individual is a contradiction in family or community or in a destroyed or poisoned ecosystem”; see Wendell Berry, *The Ume Reader* (September-October 1995), p. 61.

<sup>36</sup> According to Herder, a nation is a “family writ large,” and its language, culture, and history constitute the individual’s core identity; see Johann Herder, *Outlines for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, in F. M. Bernard, *Herder’s Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1965), p. 54.

<sup>37</sup> Fichte claims that “the individual life has no real existence, since it has no value of itself, but must and *should* sink to nothing; while, on the contrary, the Race alone exists, since it alone *ought to be* looked upon as really living”; see Johann Fichte, *The*

has stressed independence, and so encouraged individuals to see dependence as a weakness to be denied. It has also stressed freedom, and so urged individuals to seek themselves outside of or even in rebellion against the social.

The result is individuals who are alone, isolated, and at their core, empty of true humanity. The rugged individualist who rides off alone into the sunset. The financier who isolates himself with his millions from the rest of society's struggles. The shock artist who feels the need to spit in the face of decent society in order to find her artistic uniqueness. The city-dweller who—even though living among millions—feels alienated. All are products of liberalism's false theory of human individual identity.<sup>39</sup>

The truth is that humans are made by their societies. They are born into social units—families, neighborhoods, and larger social and political units—that define their roles.<sup>40</sup> They are born into a language that shapes their thinking and gives them a social-linguistic group identity.<sup>41</sup> They are born

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*Characteristics of the Present Age*, trans. William Smith (London: John Chapman, 1847 [1806]), p. 36.

<sup>38</sup> Solzhenitsyn concludes: “The West has finally achieved the rights of man, and even excess, but man’s sense of responsibility to God and society has grown dimmer and dimmer. In the past decades, the legalistic selfishness of the Western approach to the world has reached its peak and the world has found itself in a harsh spiritual crisis and a political impasse”; see Solzhenitsyn, “A World Torn Apart.”

<sup>39</sup> Pope Paul VI against “philosophical liberalism,” which is at its “very root an erroneous affirmation of the autonomy of the individual in his activity, his motivation and the exercise of his liberty”; see Pope Paul VI, “Apostolic Letter,” 1971, on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, accessed online at: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/p6oct.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> F. H. Bradley argues that the child “is born not into a desert, but into a living world, a whole which has a true individuality of its own, and into a system and order which it is difficult to look at as anything else than an organism, and which even in England, we are now beginning to call by that name.” Consequently, he concludes: “What is it then that I am to realize? We have said it in ‘my station and its duties.’ To know what a man is . . . you must not take him in isolation. He is one of a people, he was born in a family, he lives in a certain society, in a certain state. What he has to do depends on what his place is, what his function is, and that all comes from his station in the organism”; see F. H. Bradley, “My Station and Its Duties,” in F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1876), p. 155.

<sup>41</sup> Edward Sapir claims: “No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached”; see Edward Sapir, “The Status of Linguistics as a Science,” *Language* 5, no. 4 (1929), p. 207.

Herder’s philosophy of language includes this thesis: “A language, then, is the criterion by means of which a group’s identity as a homogeneous unit can be

malleable in their tastes and values, which are formed by prevailing social practices and norms. Their highest aspirations are realized in achieving their social being.<sup>42</sup> The individual is a myth, and attempts to isolate the individual lead only to pathologies.

Consequently, the best society for human beings will be one that puts the social above the individual,<sup>43</sup> that encourages each of us to put the group's needs before our own,<sup>44</sup> and that when necessary demands that the individual be subordinated to society's higher standing.<sup>45</sup> The atomistic individualism that liberalism leads to is bad not only for individuals, as it undercuts their

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established. Without its own language, a *Volk* is an absurdity (*Unding*"); see Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought*, p. 57.

<sup>42</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre argues: "We all approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity. I am someone's son or daughter, someone else's cousin or uncle; I am citizen of this or that city . . . . Hence what is good for me has to be good for one who inhabits these roles. As such, I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. . . . This thought is likely to appear alien and even surprising from the standpoint of modern individualism"; see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 220.

Charles Taylor argues that we must reject the "atomistic" liberal view that "affirms the self-sufficiency of man alone or, if you will, of the individual"; see Charles Taylor, "Atomism," in Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 189.

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau claims: "Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole"; see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987 [1762]), sec. I.6, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> Karl Marx believes: "My *own existence* is a social activity. For this reason, what I myself produce I produce for society, and with the consciousness of acting as a social being"; see Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), accessed online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/comm.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> Hegel claims that the State is "an absolute unmoved end in itself" and "has supreme right against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be a member of the state"; see Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 258, p. 156.

true identity as social beings,<sup>46</sup> but also for society itself, which is the only vehicle through which the highest human values can be realized.<sup>47</sup>

*e. Liberalism is materialistic*

Liberalism may generate material wealth, but its emphasis upon such prosperity fosters materialistic values that are trivial, ultimately empty, and even undercut our capacity for pursuing truly important values.<sup>48</sup>

Advocates of free markets typically emphasize material measures of success. For example, they measure production and consumption activity, such as gross domestic product, how financial markets are performing, the number of automobiles purchased, and the size of people's homes. That is, they measure value by means of money and physical quantities, with the assumption that more is better.

This sends a wrong signal to consumers. It leads them to define their worth in terms of their possessions, and so to believe that they need unendingly more.<sup>49</sup> That in turn leads to many social pathologies. The basest material desires—for food and sex—are often the easiest to satisfy. Driven by consumer demand, the free market devotes disproportionate amounts of resources to those materialist values. Another is the social-psychology motivation of “keeping up with the Joneses,” which causes unhealthy competition: my neighbor has acquired some material good, so I feel compelled to acquire it myself so as not to be perceived as less worthy. Yet another pathology is a cultural version of Gresham's Law: free-market

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<sup>46</sup> Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor says that “this need for *communality* of worship is the chief torment of each man individually, and of mankind as a whole, from the beginning of the ages”; see Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 254.

<sup>47</sup> John Dewey claims this for real community as consensus: “Individuals do not even compose a social group because they all work for a common end. The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, but they do not form a community. If, however, they were all cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulated their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community”; see John Dewey, *Democracy in Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 6; accessed online at: [https://archive.org/stream/democracyeducati1916dewe/democracyeducati1916dewe\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/democracyeducati1916dewe/democracyeducati1916dewe_djvu.txt).

<sup>48</sup> Kant maintains: “To behold virtue in her proper shape is nothing other than to show morality stripped of all admixture with the sensuous and of all the spurious adornments of reward or self-love”; see Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, sec. 426, footnote.

<sup>49</sup> William Wordsworth indicates this in his poem “The World Is Too Much With Us” (1802): “The world is too much with us; late and soon /Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.”



capitalism is driven largely by the mass market, but mass taste and culture are at best of low-to-moderate standards, so the market for lower-quality material goods tends to drive out higher-quality cultural goods.<sup>50</sup>

A further pathology is that a free-market society increasingly develops sophisticated and powerful institutions devoted to sales and consumerism. That is to say, its advertising industry makes the problem worse.<sup>51</sup> Advertisers use sophisticated psychology and expend large amounts of society's resources, often in the service of selling trivialities. Millions are spent to promote a new style of sneakers or hair gel while budgets are cut for education and the fine arts. Often, we do not even "know" that we need something until advertising induces us to feel that we "need" it.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, we must reject liberalism's insistence upon unlimited freedom in production and consumption choice, and we must reject its insistence upon unbridled freedom of advertising. Good social policy should guide producers and consumers away from base materialism and ensure that advertising directs people toward genuinely valuable goods.<sup>53</sup>

In stronger form, our argument is that the empty materialism of liberal capitalism causes a value crisis for mankind.<sup>54</sup> We are not merely animals but creatures with strong psychological and spiritual needs.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Gresham's Law: "Bad money drives out good."

<sup>51</sup> Robert Heilbroner states: "If I were asked to name the deadliest subversive force within capitalism—the single greatest source of its waning morality—I would without hesitation name advertising"; see Robert Heilbroner, "Demand for the Supply Side," *The New York Review of Books* 38 (June 11, 1981), p. 40.

<sup>52</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith claims this about advertising's "dependence effect": "If the individual's wants are to be urgent they must be original with himself. They cannot be urgent if they must be contrived for him. And above all they must not be contrived by the process of production by which they are satisfied. For this means that the whole case for the urgency of production, based on the urgency of wants, falls to the ground. One cannot defend production as satisfying wants if that production creates the wants"; see John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1958), p. 124.

<sup>53</sup> C. S. Lewis argues that if we imagined a truly Christian society, we would see that "its economic life was very socialistic." He also says that, in such a society, "there will be no manufacture of silly luxury items and then even sillier advertisements to persuade us to buy them"; see C. S. Lewis, "Social Morality," in his *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), Book 3, chap. 3, p. 84.

<sup>54</sup> Irving Kristol, "godfather" of neo-conservatism, states: "The inner spiritual chaos of the times, so powerfully created by the dynamics of capitalism itself, is such as to make nihilism an easy temptation. A 'free society' in Hayek's sense gives birth in massive numbers to 'free spirits'—emptied of moral substance"; see *Capitalism Today*, ed. Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol (New York: Basic Books, 1971), p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Solzhenitsyn claims: "[T]he human soul longs for things higher, warmer, and purer

Capitalism's materialism—while it generates lots of stuff—empties our lives of genuine meaning, leaving us vulnerable to neurosis and nihilism.<sup>56</sup>

If we ask what a life of genuine meaning is, then of course a variety of philosophical possibilities will emerge. But the main thrust of our argument is that the government must take an active hand in human psychological and spiritual development. Just as we cannot leave provision of healthy material needs to the free market, we cannot expect the free market to fulfill humans' true psychological and spiritual needs.<sup>57</sup> "Statecraft," to borrow a line, "is soulcraft."<sup>58</sup>

In moderate form, a non-materialist society will use its government to find a healthy balance between our physical and psychological wants, between our material and spiritual needs. Government policy will be directed toward curbing the materialist excesses of liberal capitalism and toward supplying remedies for its psychological and spiritual deficits.<sup>59</sup>

In strongest form, anti-materialism will require government policy to deny the significance of physical values at all and to direct humanity in a purely spiritual direction. Materialists make physical life on Earth of highest value—note their obsession with increasing life expectancy, as if human beings are merely bodies to be preserved indefinitely. While life on Earth is brief, life after physical death is forever. Our true vocation is to live and die so

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than those offered by today's mass living habits, introduced as by a calling card by the revolting invasion of commercial advertising, by TV stupor, and by intolerable music"; see Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart."

<sup>56</sup> Ortega y Gasset says of modern Europe: "She has adopted blindly a culture which is magnificent, but has no roots"; see Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses*, p. 189.

<sup>57</sup> Amitai Etzioni's left-communitarian version is: "Man and woman do not live by bread alone; it is unwise to believe that all we need is economic rehabilitation. We require our daily acts to be placed into a context of transcendent meaning and their moral import made clear"; see Amitai Etzioni, "Nation in Need of Community Values," *The London Times*, February 20, 1995, accessed online at: <https://www.gwu.edu/~ccps/etzioni/B262.html>.

Kirk's right-conservative version holds: "The conservative is concerned, first of all, with the regeneration of the spirit and character—with the perennial problem of the inner order of the soul, the restoration of the ethical understanding, and the religious sanction upon which any life worth living is founded. This is conservatism at its highest"; see Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, p. 469.

<sup>58</sup> See George F. Will, *Statecraft as Soulcraft* (New York: Touchstone, 1984), p. 94.

<sup>59</sup> For example, in his *My Brother's Keeper: A Memoir and a Message* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), Amitai Etzioni argues for a Third Way politics that is neither capitalist nor communist, but rather more like a "three-legged stool" (p. 372) in which society achieves a balance between the state (the public sector), the market (the private sector), and the community (the social sector).

as to be worthy of ultimate justice.<sup>60</sup> If liberalism leads to materialism and materialism is anti-spiritual, then liberalism must be rejected at its root.

The fundamental three sources of immorality are the desires for wealth, sex, and doing one's own will.<sup>61</sup> Note that the great moral teachers in both the major Eastern<sup>62</sup> and Western religious traditions have always made the anti-materialist, ascetic virtues the first step toward ethical idealism: poverty,<sup>63</sup> chastity,<sup>64</sup> and obedience. Note especially that the first *sin* in the Garden of Eden was disobedience. Consequently, the first virtue is obedience, not liberty. A moral society will be one in which material pursuits are minimized as much as possible, and one in which its members are willing to

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<sup>60</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, in his *The Tragic Sense of Life*, trans. J. E. Crawford Fritch (New York: Dover, 1954 [1913]), claims: "A human soul is worth all the universe, someone—I know not whom—has said and said magnificently. A human soul, mind you! Not a human life. Not this life. And it happens that the less a man believes in the soul—that is to say in his conscious immortality, personal and concrete—the more he will exaggerate the worth of this poor transitory life. This is the source from which springs all that effeminate, sentimental ebullition against war," accessed online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14636>.

<sup>61</sup> I John 2:15-16: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

<sup>62</sup> Jain monks renounce worldly life in its entirety and embrace a rigorously ascetic life, often to the point of not wearing clothing no matter what the weather. A Hindu monk is forbidden from having personal possessions or touching money or other valuables, maintaining personal relationships, eating food for pleasure, and sexual contact with women (or looking at or even thinking about them).

<sup>63</sup> Matt. 6:24: "You cannot serve God and money. Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about life, wondering what you will have to eat or drink, or about what you will have to wear."

<sup>64</sup> Rev. 14:4: "It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb."

Eastern Orthodox Archpriest Avvakum says: "A woman came to confess to me, burdened with many sins, guilty of fornication and all of the sins of the flesh, and, weeping, she began to acquaint me with them all, leaving nothing out, standing before the Gospels. And I, thrice accursed, fell sick myself. I inwardly burned with a lecherous fire, and that hour was bitter to me. I lit three candles and fixed them to the lectern and placed my right hand in the flame, and held it there till the evil passion was burned out, and when I had dismissed the young woman and laid away my vestments, I prayed and went to my house, grievously humbled in spirit"; quoted in Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 62.

sacrifice their physical possessions, their physical satisfactions,<sup>65</sup> and even their physical lives<sup>66</sup> in order to achieve spiritual fulfillment.

***f. Liberal societies are boring***

We do not need to glamorize tribal or feudal life in order to see that modern liberalism's replacement is another form of tedium occasionally sprinkled with low-grade pleasures. The imperative of liberal capitalism is productiveness, which has proceeded to transform the workplace. Agriculture was mechanized. Factories filled were with machines and workers as their semi-robotic adjuncts. Corporations populated their office towers with cubicle farms filled with business-suits.<sup>67</sup>

Everything was more productive—but at a cost: production, sameness, standardization. Even time was made uniform and work became shift-work—whether 9-to-5 or the graveyard shift—with a demand that all workers, whether blue- or white-collar, conform to the pace.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Solzhenitsyn's answer to the question, "What about the main thing in life?" is: "Live with a steady superiority over life—don't be afraid of misfortune, and do not yearn for happiness"; see Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, trans. Ralph Parker (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963), p. 136.

<sup>66</sup> Seyyid Qutb on martyrdom: "When Islam strives for peace, its objective is not that superficial peace which requires that only that part of the earth where the followers of Islam are residing remain secure. The peace which Islam desires is that the religion (i.e., the Law of the society) be purified for God, that the obedience of all people be for God alone." Furthermore, he holds: "The highest form of triumph is the victory of soul over matter, the victory of belief over pain, and the victory of faith over persecution," and finally: "All men die, and of various causes, but not all gain such victory. It is God's choosing and honoring a group of people who share death with the rest of mankind but who are singled out from other people for honor"; see Seyyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus: Dar Al-Ilm, 1964), pp. 63 and 151.

<sup>67</sup> Jean-François Lyotard claims: "The experience of the human subject—individual and collective—and the aura that surrounds this experience, are being dissolved into the calculation of profitability, the satisfaction of needs, self-affirmation through success. Even the virtually theological depth of the worker's condition, and of work, that marked the socialist and union movements for over a century, is becoming devalORIZED, as work becomes a control and manipulation of information. These observations are banal"; see Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," in his *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 102.

<sup>68</sup> Solzhenitsyn says: "There is no open violence, as in the East; however, a selection dictated by fashion and the need to accommodate mass standards frequently prevents the most independent-minded persons from contributing to public life and gives rise to dangerous herd instincts that block dangerous herd development"; see Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart."

The same stultification of liberal capitalism carries over when we turn from production to consumption. The modern world gave mankind freedom, just as liberalism claims. It did lower the barriers of inequality and improve their material condition. However, look at what its free people chose: the soft life of suburban sprawl and shopping malls and lowest-common-denominator entertainment. They chose to be conformist in their tastes and fashions and to avoid causing friction with their neighbors and in-laws. They traded their souls for comforts and quiet, low-grade hedonism. They chose safety and a risk-averse life. And they call it “progress.”<sup>69</sup> We can label this set of values the “bourgeois code.” The bourgeoisie’s top values are security, standardization, conformity, and peace.<sup>70</sup>

But man does not live by bread, internet porn, and cat pictures alone. He needs a quest, a mission, a sense of his life as a grand adventure.<sup>71</sup> Yet modern liberalism has created and enshrined a petty and inauthentic life. A human being in quest of an authentic life must break with liberalism’s stultifying bourgeois lifestyle.<sup>72</sup> He must reject the soft imperialism of liberalism’s standardized culture and its passive-aggressive demands that everyone be nice. Authenticity will embrace uniqueness, risk-taking, danger—and the exalting experience of everything being at stake, even one’s own precious life.

The quest for authenticity can take several forms. One is via Religion—a religion that is born of disgust with the complacency of the apathetic herd and its soul-deadening pursuits. By rejecting everyday society and the ordinary pursuits of bourgeois life, one can free one’s spirit, one’s soul, and one’s true self and become open to enthusiasm, ecstasy, or nirvana.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche disparages the “last men”: “What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?” thus asks the last man, and he blinks. “The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest. “We have invented happiness,” say the last men, and they blink”; see Friedrich Nietzsche, “Preface,” in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, ed. and trans. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006 [1883]), p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Carl Schmitt offers this definition of the bourgeois: “aspiring to a life without political risk”; see Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1927]), p. 51, n. 22.

<sup>71</sup> Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor: “Without a firm idea of what he lives for, man will not consent to live and will sooner destroy himself than remain on earth, even if there is bread all around him”; see Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 254.

<sup>72</sup> Martin Heidegger states that the quest for authenticity first requires “the overcoming of the *whole bourgeois essence*”; see Martin Heidegger, “Reunion Speech” (1934), accessed online at: <http://www.stephenhicks.org/2015/05/27/heideggers-reunion-speech-of-1934/>.

<sup>73</sup> Hermann Hesse says of Buddha’s journey: “Siddhartha had spent the night in his

Another route is via Art. The low-grade art of the bourgeoisie is of course beneath contempt; it is about copying tired old tropes,<sup>74</sup> it is about prettiness and easy beauty,<sup>75</sup> and it is kitsch.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, the journey of one's artistic development may require shocking the bourgeoisie to demonstrate to them, contemptuously, and oneself that one has truly broken with them. Once so freed, one can genuinely seek the original and the sublime.<sup>77</sup>

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house with dancing girls and wine, had acted as if he was superior to them towards the fellow-members of his caste, though this was no longer true, had drunk much wine and gone to bed a long time after midnight, being tired and yet excited, close to weeping and despair, and had for a long time sought to sleep in vain, his heart full of misery which he thought he could not bear any longer, full of a disgust which he felt penetrating his entire body like the lukewarm, repulsive taste of the wine, the just too sweet, dull music, the just too soft smile of the dancing girls, the just too sweet scent of their hair and breasts. But more than by anything else, he was disgusted by himself, by his perfumed hair, by the smell of wine from his mouth, by the flabby tiredness and listlessness of his skin. Like when someone, who has eaten and drunk far too much, vomits it back up again with agonising pain and is nevertheless glad about the relief, thus this sleepless man wished to free himself of these pleasures, these habits and all of this pointless life and himself, in an immense burst of disgust.”

Thus, “Siddhartha had one single goal—to become empty, to become empty of thirst, desire, dreams, pleasure and sorrow—to let the Self die. When all the Self was conquered and dead, when all passions and desires were silent, then at last must awaken, the innermost of Being that is no longer Self—the great secret!”, see Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981 [1922]), p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Clement Greenberg notes: “Twenty-odd years ago all the ambitious young painters I knew in New York saw abstract art as the only way out. Rightly or wrongly, they could see no other way in which to go in order to say something personal. Therefore new, therefore worth saying. Representational art confronted their ambition with too many occupied positions. But it was not so much representation *per se* that cramped them as it was illusion”; see Clement Greenberg, “After Abstract Expressionism,” *Art International* (1962), p. 24.

<sup>75</sup> Barnett Newman claims: “The impulse of modern art is this desire to destroy beauty”; see Barnett Newman, “The Sublime Is Now,” *The Tiger's Eye* (1948), p. 172.

<sup>76</sup> Hermann Broch identifies kitsch as “the evil within the value-system of art” and holds: “The maker of kitsch does not create inferior art, he is not an incompetent or a bungler, he cannot be evaluated by aesthetic standards; rather he is ethically depraved, a criminal willing radical evil”; see Hermann Broch, *Geist and Zeitgeist: The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age, Six Essays by Hermann Broch* (New York: Counterpoint Publishing, 2003), p. 37.

<sup>77</sup> Lyotard argues that the sublime is an attack on “the metaphysics of capital, which is a technology of time.” Furthermore, with the sublime, “the will is defeated. The avant-gardist task remains that of undoing the presumption of the mind with respect to time. The sublime feeling is the name of this privation”; see Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” p. 107.

Yet another authentic possibility is War. Liberals of course want peace so that their money-making trade networks are not disturbed. However, the point of life is not crass money-making. The commercial life is not suited for the highest human development, as it cultivates the softer and, shall we say, more effeminate, shopkeeper traits; it wants orderly ledgers, the comforts of home and ordinary life,<sup>78</sup> and to be distracted from its petty troubles by entertainment.<sup>79</sup> By contrast, war at its best inculcates more vigorous and hardy traits that lift humans to their true potential, individually and communally, as it seeks the great deed and the deadly serious mission.<sup>80</sup> For any of us to live fully, humankind needs predators more than traders,<sup>81</sup> self-sacrificers more than self-seekers,<sup>82</sup> and those who embrace pain and difficulty more than those who want pleasure and ease.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Werner Sombart's 1915 *Merchants and Heroes* is representative. Sombart was early an admirer of Marx, though he drifted to the right after repeatedly being disappointed when the communist revolution failed to materialize. *Merchants and Heroes* contrasts two types—the merchant (represented in his era by the English) and the hero (represented by the Germans). Merchants are of a lower order: they are calculating, interested in profit, money, and the physical comforts of life. Heroes, by contrast, are of higher historical significance, motivated by the ideal of the great deed and sacrifice for a noble calling. Early in *Händler und Helden* Sombart explains his purpose: “at issue in this war are the *merchant* and the *hero*, the mercantile and heroic *Weltanschauung*, and the culture that pertains to each. The reason why I am trying, by means of these terms, to isolate a profound and comprehensive antagonism between world-views and experiences of the world is the subject of the following analysis”; see Werner Sombart, *Händler und Helden* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1915); accessed online at: <https://archive.org/details/hndlerundhelde00somb>.

<sup>79</sup> Carl Schmitt, in 1927, describes a world without war as one of mere entertainment: “A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions and intrigues of every kind, but there would be not a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood, and kill other human beings”; see Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 35.

<sup>80</sup> Already by 1934 Heidegger was calling the Great War “the *first* world war”; see Heidegger, “Reunion Speech” (emphasis added).

<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche urges: “To take the right to new values—that is the most terrible taking for a carrying and reverent spirit. Indeed, it is preying, and the work of a predatory animal”; see Nietzsche, “On the Three Metamorphoses,” in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I.10, p. 17.

<sup>82</sup> Nietzsche argues: “*War essential*. It is vain rhapsodizing and sentimentality to continue to expect much (even more, to expect a very great deal) from mankind, once

***g. Power is the reality, so liberalism is naïve***

Liberalism makes freedom the top social value, but that is naïve because freedom is neither an accurate description of human social reality nor the most desirable value. Instead, life is about power. Weeds and grasses vie for soil and sunlight. The insect eats the grass. The rat eats the insect. The hawk catches the rat and devours it. The man captures the hawk and puts it in a cage—and makes it fly according to *his* will.

Power relations dominate reality. *Within* any power framework, there can be sub-areas of peace, freedom, and affection. The alpha lion may let the other lions eat after he has had his fill, and he may play occasionally with the cubs. But those are interludes with an ongoing power struggle. The younger beta lions are waiting for their chance to dethrone him, neighboring prides are probing for weakness, the pride will soon need to kill again, and battles against diseases and the elements are constant.

Human life is continuous with the rest of organic life, and all of human history is testament to this fact.<sup>84</sup> Life is struggle—a conflict between

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it has learned not to wage war. For the time being, we know of no other means to imbue exhausted peoples, as strongly and surely as every great war does, with that raw energy of the battleground, that deep impersonal hatred, that murderous coldbloodedness with a good conscience, that communal, organized ardor in destroying the enemy, that proud indifference to great losses, to one's own existence and to that of one's friends, that muted, earthquakelike convulsion of the soul"; see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), sec. 477.

<sup>83</sup> According to his translator, David Durst, Ernst Jünger “rejects the liberal values of liberty, security, ease, and comfort, and seeks instead the measure of man in the capacity to withstand pain and sacrifice”; see Ernst Jünger, *On Pain*, trans. David Durst (Candor, NY: Telos Press, 2008 [1934]), back cover.

George Orwell writes that Adolf Hitler “knows that human beings *don't* only want comfort . . . they want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty parades.” His view about all of the totalitarians is: “However they may be as economic theories, Fascism and Nazism are psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life. The same is probably true of Stalin's militarized version of Socialism. All three of the great dictators have enhanced their power by imposing intolerable burdens upon their people. Whereas Socialism, and even capitalism in a more grudging way, have said to people ‘I offer you a good time,’ Hitler has said to them ‘I offer you struggle, danger and death,’ and as a result a whole nation flings itself at his feet”; see George Orwell, “Review of *Mein Kampf*,” 1940, accessed online at: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BzmBhYakPbYtT3k5cDd4SmISRUE/view>.

<sup>84</sup> Nietzsche claims: “Here one must think profoundly to the very basis and resist all sentimental weakness: life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation—but why should one for ever use precisely these words on which for ages a disparaging purpose has been stamped?”; see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York:



life and death and a choice between dominance and submission. War is not merely an extension of politics, but our basic metaphysical condition.<sup>85</sup> The relations between men and women,<sup>86</sup> competing businesses,<sup>87</sup> and even the pursuit of knowledge<sup>88</sup>—with its claimed imperatives of objectivity and intellectual freedom—are manifestations of exploitative power.

So we must reject liberalism's insistence upon the moral rights of individuals to their own freedom.<sup>89</sup> That philosophy may be a rhetorical

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Vintage, 1966), sec. 259, p. 203.

<sup>85</sup> Heraclitus argues: "War is father of all and king of all; and some he manifested as gods, some as men; some he made slaves, some free"; and: "We must know that war [πόλεμος/polemos] is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being through strife necessarily"; see Heraclitus, *The Presocratics*, trans. Philip Wheelwright (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966), frags. B53 and B80.

<sup>86</sup> Millicent Bell claims: "All unions are doomed to be compromises of dominion and submission"; see Millicent Bell, "The Bostonian Story," *Partisan Review* 2 (1985), p. 113.

<sup>87</sup> Carl von Clausewitz holds: "Rather than comparing [war] to art we could more accurately compare it to commerce, which is also a conflict of human interests and activities; and it is still closer to politics, which in turn may be considered as a kind of commerce on a larger scale"; see Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832), Book I, chap. 3, accessed online at: <https://www.clausewitz.com/readings/OnWar1873/TOC.htm>.

Kevin O'Leary claims: "Business is war. I go out there, I want to kill the competitors. I want to make their lives miserable. I want to steal their market share. I want them to fear me and I want everyone on my team thinking we're going to win"; see Kevin O'Leary, "'Business Is War,' Kevin O'Leary Tells University of Waterloo Students," *The Record*, February 5, 2015, accessed online at: <http://www.therecord.com/news-story/5322749--business-is-war-kevin-o-leary-tells-university-of-waterloo-students/>.

<sup>88</sup> Michel Foucault says: "All knowledge rests upon injustice; there is no right, not even in the act of knowing, to truth or a foundation for truth; and the instinct for knowledge is malicious (something murderous, opposed to the happiness of mankind)"; see Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History," in his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980). He also notes: "I am simply a Nietzschean, and I try as far as possible, on a certain number of issues, to see with the help of Nietzsche's texts"; see Foucault, *Foucault Live, Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext[e], 1989), p. 471.

<sup>89</sup> Nietzsche states: "people now rave everywhere, even under the guise of science, about coming conditions of society in which 'the exploiting character' is to be absent:—that sounds to my ear as if they promised to invent a mode of life which should refrain from all organic functions"; see Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 259.

strategy used by the weaker to get what they want<sup>90</sup>—namely, a zone of safety free from the stronger—but the powerful have no need for such devices and will always find a way to wrest what they desire from whatever system happens to be in place. They will do so as a matter of right,<sup>91</sup> as long as we understand right to be a clear-eyed acceptance of realism.<sup>92</sup>

The reality and the glory of life are the acquisition and exercise of power over others. As the cliché has it, all really is fair in love and war. When we define normative concepts such as justice, we might strive to mask the underlying power relations. However, the battle over definitions is simply one more dimension in the struggle for dominance, and definitions that delude our enemies give us an advantage over them. Of course, when we are strong enough we will dispense with the masks and proclaim straightforwardly that justice is whatever the powerful want it to be.<sup>93</sup>

Domination is therefore basic to the political.<sup>94</sup> Those who acquire dominion power will be those who recognize this reality of the human condition and who do not flinch from using the stratagems necessary to

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<sup>90</sup> Foucault claims that “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms”; see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 86.

<sup>91</sup> Schmitt urges: “In case of need, the political entity must demand the sacrifice of life. Such a demand is in no way justifiable by the individualism of liberal thought. No consistent individualism can entrust to someone other than to the individual himself the right to dispose of the physical life of the individual”; see Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 71.

<sup>92</sup> Thucydides renders the Athenian delegates’ speech to the Spartans this way: “We have done nothing extraordinary, nothing contrary to human nature in accepting an empire when it was offered to us and then in refusing to give it up. Three very powerful motives prevent us from doing so—security, honour, and self-interest. And we were not the first to act in this way. Far from it. It has always been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong; and besides, we consider that we are worthy of our power”; see Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: Penguin, 1972), p. 76.

<sup>93</sup> Thrasymachus in Plato’s *Republic* says: “I affirm that the just is nothing else than the advantage of the stronger”; see Plato, *Republic*, 338c.

<sup>94</sup> Leo Strauss summarizes Schmitt’s view this way: “[B]ecause man is by nature evil, he therefore needs *dominion*. But dominion can be established, that is, men can be unified only in a unity against—against other men. Every association of men is necessarily a separation from other men . . . the political thus understood is not the constitutive principle of the state, of order, but a condition of the state”; see Heinrich Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 125.

maintain it.<sup>95</sup> Any other philosophy of life is a foolish and childish attempt to escape from the harsh adult realities of life and death.

***h. Liberalism does not guarantee that everyone's basic needs will be met***

Liberalism attempts to guarantee freedom, but it does not guarantee that everyone's basic needs will be met.<sup>96</sup> Yet on the most fundamental requirements of life, we should not cold-heartedly force anyone to trade off between liberty's risks and being secure in one's basic needs. Security is more important than liberty.

Especially in the wealthy parts of the world, there is no excuse for allowing poverty. Yet in such places, the rich typically indulge themselves in luxuries and frivolities.<sup>97</sup> Survival needs are of greater moral significance than luxuries, though, and morality requires that we sacrifice the inessential to the essential. It is a matter of moral obligation that those with more than they need provide for those with less than they need.<sup>98</sup>

Most people in comfortable material circumstances, however, seem unwilling voluntarily to act to meet the greater needs of others.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, when voluntary sacrifice is not forthcoming in sufficient quantities, some measure of government redistribution is warranted.

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<sup>95</sup> On whether it is more important for a ruler to be feared or loved, Niccolò Machiavelli concludes: "The answer is of course, that it would be best to be both loved and feared. But since the two rarely come together, anyone compelled to choose will find greater security in being feared than in being loved"; see Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Robert M. Adams (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977 [1532]), chap. 17, p. 47.

<sup>96</sup> Rousseau claims: "Every man by nature has a right to everything he needs"; see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987), I.9, p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> Rousseau claims: "[I]t is obviously contrary to the law of nature, however it may be defined, for a child to command an old man, for an imbecile to lead a wise man, and for a handful of people to gorge themselves on superfluities while the starving multitude lacks necessities"; see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, trans. Donald Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1992 [1755]), p. 71.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Singer holds that "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it"; see Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1972), pp. 229-43.

<sup>99</sup> Victor Hugo: "There is always more misery among the lower classes than there is humanity among the rich"; see Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Chas. E. Wilbour (New York: Carleton, 1862), p. 11.

Furthermore, human dignity is a basic right.<sup>100</sup> There is no dignity in poverty and there is no dignity in having to ask for charity, so—as an institution morally responsible for protecting human rights—the government should grant to each human being by right at least the minimum necessary to avoid poverty.

A standard liberal response is to cite capitalism’s productivity and to argue that the poorer parts of the world can become richer by adopting free markets and property rights, but that is to focus on the long term—perhaps the very long term. In the short term, people are suffering and dying.

Another standard liberal response is to cite everyone’s self-responsibility and to assert their competence at satisfying their basic needs. However, this overlooks the vulnerable status of children, especially in poorer nations. If adults in such circumstances struggle and often fail to provide for their own needs, it is too much to expect their children to succeed in doing so. Without their basic needs being met during their crucial developmental stages, children will not grow into adults with a fighting chance at life. Our social responsibility therefore extends at a minimum to providing basic sustenance to the young.<sup>101</sup>

We can argue about what range of services should be considered basic needs, such as food and drink, education, healthcare, infrastructure, safety, and sex. Unlike the vagaries of free markets, only governments have the power and the will to ensure that basic needs are met consistently.<sup>102</sup> Global capitalism, by contrast, has led to a world in which millions are not provided for. A moral social system will recognize the interdependence of all

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<sup>100</sup> According to the United Nations: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation”; and: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”; see United Nations, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” Preamble and art. 25, sec. 1 (1948), accessed online at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Harrington argues: “The basic necessities of life—food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care—are met in my Utopia. I don’t care if they are lazy, promiscuous, irreverent, rotten people. No one should have to go hungry or cold—scoundrel or not. And in my Utopia I wouldn’t change a single facet of human nature as we now know it”; see Michael Harrington et al., “Paradise Tossed: Visions of Utopia,” *Omni Magazine* 10 (April, 1988), pp. 36-108.

<sup>102</sup> Karl Marx says: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!”; see Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875), accessed online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm>.

of humanity<sup>103</sup> and address itself to redressing the under-supply of basic goods to many.<sup>104</sup>

*i. Liberalism is unfair*

Fairness is a basic moral concept.<sup>105</sup> Fairness is often connected to desert, that is, ensuring that people get what they deserve. So as to ensure as much as possible that people do get what they deserve, a fair society will design its rules and institutions with that purpose in mind.

Liberalism is fundamentally unfair in two important ways: (1) Many people start out with undeserved advantages in life. (2) Liberalism's rules both perpetuate the unfairness and enable many to acquire further outsized and undeserved social rewards.

No one deserves his or her starting place in life, however. In the great lottery of human existence, some are born with greater natural endowments than others and some are born into favorable social circumstances. Individuals are born more or less healthy and with more or less potential for intelligence, endurance, and bodily strength. Individuals are born into more or less wealthy families, neighborhoods, and societies and with more or less opportunities for education and character development. Consequently, the decisive factors for each of us are a matter of luck<sup>106</sup>—they are not within our control, and so we cannot claim any form of moral credit for them.

A liberal society simply takes this undeserved initial distribution of social goods as its unquestioned starting point. It then leaves people free to find their own way and considers as fair whatever results follow from free exchanges. Yet if the initial conditions of a society were a matter of undeserved luck, then the resulting distribution of goods is also undeserved.

Since gaining from undeserved advantages is unfair, a society concerned with fairness will make efforts to redress the undeserved

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<sup>103</sup> Roger Scruton formulates a conservative version: “That, in my view, is the truth in socialism, the truth of our mutual dependence, and of the need to do what we can to spread the benefits of social membership to those whose own efforts do not suffice to obtain them”; see Roger Scruton, *How to Be a Conservative* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2014), p. 61.

<sup>104</sup> We should here note the contrast to the above “Liberalism is materialist” and “Liberal societies are boring” arguments, which claim that liberal capitalism *oversupplies* people's basic material needs and so makes them fat and unhealthy, unmotivated and lazy.

<sup>105</sup> John Rawls says: “The duty of fair play stands beside those of fidelity and gratitude as a fundamental moral notion; and like them it implies a constraint on self-interest in particular cases”; see John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness,” *Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. 22 (October, 1957), p. 659.

<sup>106</sup> See, e.g., Thomas Nagel, “Moral Luck,” in Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 24-38.

advantages.<sup>107</sup> This will require either direct redistribution from the advantaged to the disadvantaged or an indirect redistribution by designing rules and institutions to the advantage of the initially disadvantaged.

An additional form of unfairness stems from liberalism's claim about the individual nature of wealth creation. It emphasizes the self-made man and gives outsized recognition and monetary rewards to such. The architect takes the credit for the building, ignoring the hundreds or thousands of workers who actually built the structure. The industrialist puts his name on the factory and takes the largest share of the profits, overlooking the fact that the factory's output is the result of collective effort.<sup>108</sup> The banker and the venture capitalist collect interest and take profits, when the wealth was actually created by the efforts of others.<sup>109</sup> Every one of us is dependent upon the achievements of many others who went before us.

Our initial life circumstance was made possible by our parents and their parents before them. Our upbringing is also due to our parents and

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<sup>107</sup> Rawls says: We should consider "the distribution of natural talents as a common asset," but since human beings are "born into different positions," such "undeserved inequalities call for redress; and since inequalities of birth and natural endowment are undeserved, these inequalities are to be somehow compensated for"; see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 100.

<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth Warren argues: "There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. You built a factory out there? Good for you. But I want to be clear: you moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for; you hired workers the rest of us paid to educate; you were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that marauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory, and hire someone to protect against this, because of the work the rest of us did"; see "You didn't build that," s.v. Wikipedia, accessed online at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You\\_didn%27t\\_build\\_that](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You_didn%27t_build_that).

<sup>109</sup> Aristotle on the barrenness of money-lending: "The most hated sort [of wealth acquisition] and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself and not from the natural object of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange but not to increase at interest. And this term interest [*tokos*], which means the birth of money from money is applied to the breeding of money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of getting wealth, this is the most unnatural"; see Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1258b.

Karl Marx quotes Martin Luther: "There is on earth no greater enemy of man, after the Devil, than a gripe-money and usurer, for he wants to be God over all men. . . . Usury is a great, huge monster, like a werewolf. . . . And since we break on the wheel and behead highwaymen, murderers, and housebreakers, how much more ought we to break on the wheel and kill . . . hunt down, curse, and behead all usurers!"; see Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1: The Process of Capitalist Production*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1916 [1867]), p. 650.

others,<sup>110</sup> including the government's rules about marriage, family, and the requirements of children's nurturance and education.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, we all owe a debt to the broader society to which we belong. Debt brings with it an obligation to repay. Yet liberal capitalism urges us to see ourselves as the authors of our own lives and to take more for ourselves from society rather than recognizing our indebtedness.<sup>112</sup>

***j. Equality is threatened by freedom***

Liberalism does allow for many important equalities. It agrees that we should judge everyone by the same general standards, that adults should be equally free to participate in the political process, and that there should be equality under the law.

However, liberalism does not allow for economic and more radical forms of social equality, and its making freedom more fundamental than equality only guarantees that inequalities will result. Radical equality across all social dimensions should be a fundamental imperative.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Rawls holds: "So you were an educated man, yes, but who paid for your education; so you were a good man and upright, yes, but who taught you your good manners and so provided you with good fortune that you did not need to steal; so you were a man of a loving disposition and not like the hard-hearted, yes, but who raised you in a good family, who showed you care and affection when you were young so that you would grow up to appreciate kindness—must you not admit that what you have, you have received? Then be thankful and cease your boasting"; see Rawls, *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith*, p. 19.

<sup>111</sup> In *Crito*, Socrates rejects his right to escape by having the Law make this argument on behalf of the State: "In the first place did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and begat you. Say whether you have any objection to urge against those of us who regulate marriage?" None, I should reply. "Or against those of us who regulate the system of nurture and education of children in which you were trained? Were not the laws, who have the charge of this, right in commanding your father to train you in music and gymnastic?" Right, I should reply. "Well, then, since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you?"; see Plato, *Crito*, trans. Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 50d-51d, p. 109.

<sup>112</sup> In theological versions, our entire indebtedness is to God. Augustine says: "Why should there be such great glory to a human nature—and this undoubtedly an act of grace, no merit preceding unless it be that those who consider such a question faithfully and soberly might have here a clear manifestation of God's great and sole grace, and this in order that they might understand how they themselves are justified from their sins by the selfsame grace which made it so that the man Christ had no power to sin?"; see Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. Albert C. Outler (1955), chap. 11, sec. 36, accessed online at: [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/augustine\\_enchiridion\\_02\\_trans.htm#C11](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/augustine_enchiridion_02_trans.htm#C11).

<sup>113</sup> Kai Neilson contends: "For contemporary egalitarians, some form of economic

Economic inequality is both morally objectionable in itself and leads to pathological social consequences. We should recognize that the resources of the Earth originally belong to all human beings equally, so those who take from the common stock and assert a private property right are taking from the rest of us.<sup>114</sup>

Liberals sometimes respond that allowing private property unleashes the productive power of the profit motive and the free market, which in turn benefits everyone, including the least advantaged. They assert that some departures from strict equality are thus justified.<sup>115</sup>

Once initiated, though, such departures from equality will be difficult to contain and will lead only to further and worse inequalities. It is the natural tendency of free markets to move toward concentrations of wealth and monopolies. Free-market capitalism is a system of competition between unequals—rather than a system of cooperation with equals—and successive rounds of capitalist competition lead to winners and losers. The economic winners are then able to establish powerful concentrations in major industries and to dominate their markets. Aside from the threats to consumers this poses—monopoly pricing, for example—such big businesses can make it difficult to impossible for new and smaller businesses to gain entry into the market and compete successfully.<sup>116</sup>

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equality is central as part of a package with legal, political, and social equalities”; see Kai Neilson, *Equality and Liberty: A Defense of Radical Egalitarianism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1984), p. 6.

<sup>114</sup> Rousseau says: “The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say *this is mine* and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared, had someone pulled up the stakes or filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow man: ‘Do not listen to this impostor. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one!’”; see Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, p. 44.

Proudhon answers: “If I were asked to answer the following question: *What is slavery?* and I should answer in one word, *It is murder*, my meaning would be understood at once. No extended argument would be required to show that the power to take from a man his thought, his will, his personality, is a power of life and death; and that to enslave a man is to kill him. Why, then, to this other question: *What is property?* may I not likewise answer, *It is robbery*, without the certainty of being misunderstood; the second proposition being no other than a transformation of the first”; see Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “What Is Property?” (1840), chap. 1, accessed online at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/proudhon/property/>.

<sup>115</sup> Rawls claims: “Social and economic inequalities . . . are just only if they result in compensating benefits for everyone, and in particular for the least advantaged members of society”; see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>116</sup> For example, the German Social Democrats on the need to equalize the size of businesses: “Private ownership of the means of production can claim protection by



Inequalities of wealth exacerbate other social inequalities. The richer are better able to influence and use their wealth to corrupt the political process. The elite tend to socialize, marry, and inter-breed among themselves, thus perpetuating their high social status. Unequally wealthy neighborhoods contribute to social stratification, as a given school district may spend a small amount of money per year per student for education while a neighboring district spends many times that amount.

As a result, even if the poorer members of society are raised above subsistence and absolute poverty, their *relative* poverty will cause social frictions.<sup>117</sup> The poorer will envy the richer and the richer will lord it over the poorer.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, even if liberalism does produce greater overall prosperity, that is not worth the trade-off damage that it does to equality. It is better that society be less rich and more equal.<sup>119</sup>

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society as long as it does not hinder the establishment of social justice. Efficient small and medium sized enterprises are to be strengthened to enable them to prevail in competition with large-scale enterprises”; see “Godesberg Program of the SPD” (November 1959), sec. 6, accessed online at: [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=3049](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3049).

<sup>117</sup> Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

Adam Smith may have been first to identify the phenomenon of relative poverty: “By necessities I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but what ever the customs of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even the lowest order, to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life. The Greeks and Romans lived, I suppose, very comfortably, though they had no linen. But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day-laborer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can well fall into, without extreme bad conduct. Custom, in the same manner, has rendered leather shoes a necessary of life in England”; see Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Hartford, UK: Peter Gleason & Co., 1811 [1776]), p. 287.

<sup>118</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argue: “The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones”; see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), accessed online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>.

<sup>119</sup> Rousseau explains why comparative advantage and free trade are threats: “It cannot be denied that it is advantageous to have each sort of land produce the things for which it is best suited; by this arrangement you get more out of a country, and with less effort, than in any other way. But this consideration, for all its importance, is only secondary. It is better for the land to produce a little less and for the inhabitants to lead better-regulated lives. With any movement of trade and commerce it is impossible to

We should, accordingly, make every effort now to redistribute goods, opportunities, and statuses equally. The rich themselves should feel an obligation to make society more equal, both for moral and prudential reasons.<sup>120</sup> The rich's voluntary efforts are unlikely to be sufficient, so active government redistribution is necessary.

Liberals sometimes point out that even if we make people again equal, inequalities will simply re-assert themselves. Differences in natural endowments, efforts, and luck will again lead to economic inequalities.<sup>121</sup> This means that ongoing government management is needed in order to maintain equality as much as possible. Also, with proper education and social conditioning,<sup>122</sup> we can perhaps alter those differences in human nature that cause social inequality.<sup>123</sup>

Achieving equality will likely be impossible in a global economy where nations and regions have different economic strengths. Liberals like to point out that the principle of comparative advantage combined with international free markets leads nations to specialize in production and then to

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prevent destructive vices from creeping into a nation"; see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Constitutional Project for Corsica" (1765), accessed online at: <http://www.constitution.org/jjr/corsica.htm>.

<sup>120</sup> Joseph Stiglitz says: "There are good reasons why plutocrats should care about inequality anyway—even if they're thinking only about themselves. The rich do not exist in a vacuum. They need a functioning society around them to sustain their position. Widely unequal societies do not function efficiently and their economies are neither stable nor sustainable. The evidence from history and from around the modern world is unequivocal: there comes a point when inequality spirals into economic dysfunction for the whole society, and when it does, even the rich pay a steep price"; see Joseph Stiglitz, "The 1 Percent's Problem," *Vanity Fair* (May 31, 2012), accessed online at: <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2012/05/joseph-stiglitz-the-price-on-inequality>.

<sup>121</sup> David Hume says: "Render possessions ever so equal, men's different degrees of art, care, and industry, will immediately break that equality. Or if you check these virtues, you reduce society to the most extreme indigence; and, instead of preventing want and beggary in a few, render it unavoidable to the whole community"; see David Hume, "Of Justice," in David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983 [1751]), p. 28.

<sup>122</sup> Perhaps various cultures' wise folk sayings are relevant here: "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down" and "In a field of wheat, only the stalk whose head is empty of grain stands above the rest."

<sup>123</sup> Rousseau claims: "Those who dare to undertake the institution of a people must feel themselves capable, as it were, of changing human nature, of transforming each individual . . . into a part of a much larger whole from which this individual receives, in a sense, his life and being; to alter man's constitution in order to strengthen it"; see Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, II.7, p. 39.

trade with each other to mutual advantage. It is impossible to imagine how such an arrangement will not lead to some nations becoming richer than others and the inhabitants of each nation desiring, often enviously, the superior advantages of other nations. That can only exacerbate international tensions and contribute to the threat of war.

In order to avoid all of these dangers, we face a choice between two broad options. One is to work toward a human society united under a single government charged with maintaining global equality. The other is to move toward a number of small-scale, simpler, localized societies that keep their separateness in order to maintain the internal equality of their membership.<sup>124</sup>

While economic matters are important, we should attend also to other dimensions of social equality. In more radical and general forms of egalitarian thinking, privileging oneself in *any* way is counter to the moral imperative of equality. To say “I prefer myself to others” or “I prefer some people to others” is to apply a standard that allows inequality. Countering inequality generally has implications for relations between the races, ethnicities, sexes, the family, and humanity in general.

Unfortunately, most people tend to identify themselves with their own racial and ethnic groups.<sup>125</sup> Left unchecked and in combination with liberalism, such identifications can lead to racist and ethnocentric groupthink. Such groupthink, combined with a belief in property rights, is complicit in race-based slavery.<sup>126</sup>

Furthermore, liberalism in combination with biological differences between males and females can lead to unequal outcomes for men and women. Gender equality therefore requires active intervention to achieve both more equal opportunities and outcomes.<sup>127</sup>

Family members tend to love and privilege their own—husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters. That in practice means that

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<sup>124</sup> Rousseau says: “Everyone should make a living, and no one should grow rich; that is the fundamental principle of the prosperity of the nation”; see Rousseau, “Constitutional Project for Corsica.”

<sup>125</sup> Richard Rorty argues that social theory must grapple with our “ethnocentric” predicament: “we must, in practice, privilege our own group.” Accordingly, he holds, “there are lots of views which we simply cannot take seriously”; see Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 29.

<sup>126</sup> See Sven Beckert’s survey review, “Slavery and Capitalism,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 12, 2014, accessed online at: <http://chronicle.com/article/SlaveryCapitalism/150787/>.

<sup>127</sup> Catharine MacKinnon applies this to speech in a call for government-management: “The law of equality and the law of freedom of speech are on a collision course in this country”; see Catharine MacKinnon, *Only Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 71.

they treat unequally their neighbors, fellow citizens, and the rest of humanity.<sup>128</sup>

Therefore, a full commitment to equality as our fundamental moral goal requires a rejection of liberalism's leaving people free to evaluate and interact with others by almost any standards they choose. The thrust of liberalism puts it in tension with equality in all areas of social life. Allowable freedoms must be nested within a broader social mandate of achieving full equality.<sup>129</sup>

***k. Scarcity means that freedom is dog-eat-dog***

We live in a world of scarce resources. Scarcity is the condition in which the demand for a good outstrips its supply by a significant amount. The world has only so many resources—mineral, land-based, and atmospheric. At any given time, quantities are finite, and in the future there is a necessary finite limit to possible growth.<sup>130</sup> At the same time, there is vastly more desire to consume those resources. The human population has increased dramatically, which means that collectively we are putting greater demands on the Earth. Not only that, as we have become more prosperous, we are no longer content with simplicity but require more resources to maintain our complicated lifestyles. We eat more and more varied foods, we live in larger homes, we travel further, and so on. In sum, resources are limited, while

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<sup>128</sup> In the *Republic*, Plato has Socrates suggest that to avoid the corruptions that family attachments can cause, the guardian class should institute a communism of women and children; see Plato, *Republic*, 423e-424a.

Religious versions of egalitarianism here cite Jesus's command to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). Later, someone came to Jesus when he was conversing with his disciples and said, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to you." But Jesus answered and said, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" Stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Behold my mother and my brothers!" (Matt. 12:47-49).

A character in Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* claims: "The beggarly question of parentage—what is it, after all? What does it matter, when you come to think of it, whether a child is yours by blood or not? All the little ones of our time are collectively the children of us adults of the time, and entitled to our general care. The excessive regard of parents for their own children, and their dislike of other people's is, like class-feeling, patriotism, save-your-own-soul-ism, and the other virtues, a mean exclusiveness at bottom"; see Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998 [1895]), pp. 340-41.

<sup>129</sup> Rousseau states: "[T]he private will tends by its nature toward preferences and the general will toward equality," so the state "ought to have a universal compulsory force to move and arrange each part in the manner best suited to the whole"; see Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, II.1 and II.4, pp. 29-30 and 32.

<sup>130</sup> See Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).

human wants are unlimited. Consequently, scarcity means that not everyone's wants can be met. How, then, should we decide whose wants will be satisfied and whose will not?

In nature, the balance between the supply of resources and any animal population's demand for them is maintained by conflict, disease, and starvation. Animals compete for food resources and for mates, in the case of those that reproduce sexually. While available food resources can go up and down in the short term, they remain relatively constant over time. Meanwhile, animal populations tend to increase geometrically.<sup>131</sup> Eventually, the population's demand outstrips the available food resources; especially when that point is reached, animals fight, often brutally.<sup>132</sup> Those that are weaker tend to lose the battles; they die immediately or go hungry and eventually succumb to the elements. Those that are stronger tend to win the battles; they eat and survive to have sex and reproduce themselves, thus passing their traits on to the next generation.<sup>133</sup> Such battles carry on unendingly across the generations.

If we believe that humans are a part of nature, then we are driven to apply the logic of the same brutal dynamics to human society.<sup>134</sup> So we ask

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<sup>131</sup> Thomas Malthus claims: "Population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every 25 years or increases in a geometrical ratio"; see Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), chap. 7, accessed online at: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Malthus/malPop.html>.

<sup>132</sup> "Nature, red in tooth and claw"; see Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.* (1850), canto 56, accessed online at: <http://www.online-literature.com/tennyson/718/>.

<sup>133</sup> Charles Darwin argues: "More individuals are born than can possibly survive. A grain in the balance will determine which individual shall live and which shall die,—which variety or species shall increase in number, and which shall decrease, or finally become extinct"; and: "With animals having separated sexes there will in most cases be a struggle between the males for possession of the females. The most vigorous individuals, or those which have most successfully struggled with their conditions of life, will generally leave most progeny"; see Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), chap. 14, accessed online at: <http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?itemID=F373&viewtype=side&pageseq=1>. Darwin warns against misunderstanding "strongest," saying: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change."

<sup>134</sup> Malthus argues: "The power of population is so superior to the power of the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race. The vices of mankind are active and able ministers of depopulation. They are the precursors in the great army of destruction, and often finish the dreadful work themselves. But should they fail in this war of extermination, sickly seasons, epidemics, pestilence, and plague advance in terrific array, and sweep off their thousands and tens of thousands. Should success be still incomplete, gigantic inevitable famine stalks in the rear, and with one mighty blow levels the population with the food of the world"; see Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, chap. 7.

again: How should we decide whose wants will be satisfied and whose will not?

Liberalism says that we should do so by means of competition and property rights, but in capitalistic competition for scarce resources there will necessarily be winners and losers. The stronger—that is, the quicker, the more physically powerful, the more cunning—will prevail against the weaker—that is, the slower, the less muscular, and the less ruthless. As we come to recognize that we are all locked in a zero-sum struggle,<sup>135</sup> the competition will intensify and bring out the worst in us.<sup>136</sup>

Since liberalism simply leaves us free and urges us to act as we wish, it is encouraging us to act as predators—or allowing us to be victimized by predators.<sup>137</sup> This survival-of-the-fittest mentality<sup>138</sup> means that liberal capitalism is a species of Social Darwinism.<sup>139</sup>

The scarcity-driven economic conflict naturally spills over into political conflict. When government's leaders face or fear a scarcity of

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<sup>135</sup> Nietzsche claims: “‘One furthers one’s ego always at the expense of others’; ‘Life always lives at the expense of other life’—he who does not grasp this has not taken even the first step toward honesty with himself”; see Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, sec. 369.

<sup>136</sup> The zero-sum conflict also holds for psychological values: “We acquire glory only to the detriment of others, of those who seek it too, and there is no reputation that is not won at the cost of countless abuses. The man who has emerged from anonymity, or who merely strives to do so, proves that he has eliminated every scruple from his life, that he has triumphed over his conscience, if by some chance he ever had such a thing”; see E. M. Cioran, *History and Utopia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 65-66.

<sup>137</sup> Marx and Engels believe that capitalism “has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of numberless infeasible chartered freedoms, it has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—free trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation”; see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: International Publishers, 1948 [1848]), p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> Herbert Spencer holds: “This *survival of the fittest*, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called ‘natural selection’, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life”; see Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864), p. 444.

<sup>139</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860–1915* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944).

resources that are essential to their nation's interests, international political tensions will increase and war will become more likely.<sup>140</sup>

As a species, we *must* keep our human demand for resources in balance with supply. To do so we have only two options: (1) either the law-of-the-jungle method of free-market capitalism, which will only further diminish the supply and increase the demand, or (2) the calmer and more humane method of government management. With some significant degree of intervention or perhaps full socialism, we can replace competition for resources with cooperation in managing them.<sup>141</sup> Instead of letting people breed willy-nilly, we can formulate a rational population policy that keeps supply and demand in balance.<sup>142</sup>

### ***1. Liberalism is unsustainable***

Many parts of the world are environmental hells. They are dirty and depleted, making them unhealthy and economically unsustainable. Human greed is the culprit: self-interest manifested in the profit motive and institutionalized by capitalism. Self-interest means that people want more at the least cost to themselves. Profit means using up resources sooner rather than later and getting rid of the waste by the easiest way possible. Capitalism's rule-minimalism only serves to encourage wanton behavior.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Dale C. Copeland reports: “[L]eaders are likely to fear a loss of access to raw materials and markets, giving them more incentive to initiate crises to protect their commercial interests”; see Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 16.

<sup>141</sup> Michael Harrington on the socialist vision: “It is the idea of an utterly new society in which some of the fundamental limitations of human existence have been transcended. Its most basic premise is that man’s battle with nature has been completely won and there is therefore more than enough of material goods for everyone. As a result of this unprecedented change in the environment, a psychic mutation takes place: invidious competition is no longer programmed into life by the necessity of a struggle for scarce resources; cooperation, fraternity and equality become natural”; see Michael Harrington, *Socialism* (New York: Saturday Review of Books, 1970), p. 344.

<sup>142</sup> Keynes claims: “The time has already come when each country needs a considered national policy about what size of population, whether larger or smaller than at present or the same, is most expedient. And having settled this policy, we must take steps to carry it into operation. The time may arrive a little later when the community as a whole must pay attention to the innate quality as well as to the mere numbers of its future members”; see Keynes, *The End of Laissez-Faire*, sec. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Devon G. Peña argues: “Since capitalism is inherently expansionist it eventually and inevitably must degrade the environment. This is the second contradiction: Because of its expansionist quality, capitalism inevitably destroys the natural conditions of production (land, water, other resources, and labor)”; see Devon G. Peña, “Why Capitalism, Not Population Is Our Greatest Environmental Threat,” *Alternet*,

Liberalism's unsustainability occurs on both the production and the consumption sides of the economic equation. Its imperative of greater production causes resources to be depleted at an unsustainable rate, and its emphasis upon greater consumption causes unsustainable amounts of waste.

On the production side of the equation, a classic example is that of herdsmen using a common pasture.<sup>144</sup> Each herdsman is a self-interested farmer who wants to put as many cows as he can into the pasture because each additional cow increases his profits. Each additional cow, however, means that less pasture is available for the other herdsmen's cows. The other profit-seeking herdsmen are of course doing the same thing; as more cows are added, the pasture's grasses become depleted more quickly. The herdsmen become locked into a zero-sum competition that leads to the destruction of the pasture. We can generalize from the pasture to all resources. Resources are limited, but the dynamic of profit and competition necessarily leads to a violation of those limits.<sup>145</sup>

The solution is clear. If short-sighted self-interest, anti-social profit-seeking, and the capitalist free market's anything-goes laissez-faire are part of the problem, then the fix will require an institution able to override selfish profit-seeking and impose rules about resource use that take into account the long-term needs of society as a whole. That is to say, the government should manage society's resources.

In the case of the herdsmen, the government should decide how many cows each may put out to pasture and for how long. It should mandate that each herdsman does his fair share of maintenance and improvements in the pasture, such as weeding, fence-building, well-digging, and waste collection. It will hire police to ensure that none of the herdsmen cheats or shirks. It will impose taxes in order to fund the rule-making and monitoring. That is to say, good environmental policy will require some combination of rationing, conscription, policing, and taxation.

Let us turn to the consumption side of the economic equation. At the end of the consumer process is a waste product: packaging to be thrown away and items that break or otherwise reach the end of their useful life. The production process itself generates significant amounts of waste: solid

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September 24, 2012, accessed online at: <http://www.alternet.org/environment/why-capitalism-not-population-our-greatest-environmental-threat>.

<sup>144</sup> Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (December 1968), pp. 1243-48, accessed online at: <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/162/3859/1243.full>.

<sup>145</sup> John Muir laments: "These temple-destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar"; see John Muir, *The Yosemite* (1912), chap. 15, accessed online at: [http://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/the\\_yosemite/](http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/the_yosemite/).



garbage, liquids, and gases that end up in our landfills, waterways, and atmosphere. Liberal capitalism's celebration of consumerism means that increasingly more waste will be generated; its self-interested motivation means that the waste will be disposed of in the lowest-cost manner possible and in ways that shift the costs and risks to others.

Consequently, government regulation is also essential to reduce the quantity of waste produced, by some combination of controls on packaging, mandating recycling, or reducing the human population.<sup>146</sup> A sustainable resource policy requires some measure of authoritarianism. At a minimum, it implies increasing the powers of existing government agencies to regulate resource use and waste disposal. At a maximum, it implies a revolution against capitalism<sup>147</sup> and the need for a world government.<sup>148</sup>

***m. Liberalism is socially inefficient***

A liberal system leads to lack of coordination at the social level. Liberalism decentralizes decision-making and action to the individual level, which leads to inefficiency, counter-productive conflict, and social weakness.

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<sup>146</sup> Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich claim: "We must cut out the cancer of population growth. Coercion? Perhaps, but coercion in a good cause"; see Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Publishers, 1968), p. 11.

Paul Taylor believes: "Given the total, absolute, and final disappearance of Homo Sapiens, not only would the Earth's community of life continue to exist, but in all probability, its well-being would be enhanced. Our presence, in short, is not needed. And if we were to take the standpoint of that Life Community and give voice to its true interests, the ending of the human epoch on Earth would most likely be greeted with a hearty 'Good riddance!'" see Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 115.

<sup>147</sup> Razmig Keucheyan says: "A world of environmental desolation and conflict will work for capitalism, as long as the conditions for investment and profit are guaranteed. And, for this, good old finance and the military are ready to serve. Building a revolutionary movement that will put a stop to this insane logic is therefore not optional. Because, if the system can survive, it doesn't mean that lives worth living will"; see Razmig Keucheyan, "Not Even Climate Change Will Kill Off Capitalism," *The Guardian*, March 6, 2014, accessed online at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/06/not-even-climate-change-will-kill-off-capitalism>.

<sup>148</sup> E.g., a document prepared for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development holds: "Basic resources and companies should be in the hands of the public sector and society." Furthermore, "sustainable development can only be achieved from a global perspective and cannot be achieved only in the national level"; see "End Poverty, Overcome Inequality, Save the Earth: Inextricably Linked Objectives in 2012" (January 2012), accessed online at: <http://climateandcapitalism.com/2012/01/01/bolivias-proposal-to-rio20-for-the-rights-of-nature/>.

Within their own spheres, individuals may very well be able to judge what needs to be done. However, coordination at the social level does not happen automatically or by free-market magic. Society-wide efficiency requires a broader cognitive perspective and the power to coordinate scattered social resources.<sup>149</sup>

Just as any boat with many oars needs a coxswain, every team needs a coach, and every army needs a general, every society needs leadership that establishes goals, determines strategy, and motivates and directs the subordinate units. Consider a factory in which each worker is capable of doing his or her own job competently. Nonetheless, a foreman is needed to coordinate the efforts of the workers in his team. The foreman's broader perspective enables him to see what adjustments are necessary so as to direct the individual workers appropriately. As we scale up to the level of the factory as a whole, the general manager's perspective enables her to see what the various foremen in different parts of the factory cannot see—the connections between activities in receiving, manufacturing, inventory, sales, finance, and more—so as to direct the foremen to make adjustments as necessary. The same principles hold as we consider the industry sector that the particular factory is operating in, as well as when we consider each industry sector as part of an economy as a whole. At each level, coordinating management is needed.<sup>150</sup>

Otherwise, the tendency is to create activity that is at best disconnected and at worst counter-productive. Only proper leadership can integrate information that is available only at the macro level and formulate long-term plans.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Keynes suggests: “Let us clear from the ground the metaphysical or general principles upon which, from time to time, laissez-faire has been founded. It is not true that individuals possess a prescriptive ‘natural liberty’ in their economic activities. There is no ‘compact’ conferring perpetual rights on those who Have or on those who Acquire. The world is not so governed from above that private and social interest always coincide. It is not so managed here below that in practice they coincide. It is not a correct deduction from the principles of economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest. Nor is it true that self-interest generally is enlightened; more often individuals acting separately to promote their own ends are too ignorant or too weak to attain even these. Experience does not show that individuals, when they make up a social unit, are always less clear-sighted than when they act separately”; see Keynes, *The End of Laissez-Faire*, sec. 4, accessed online at: <http://www.panarchy.org/keynes/laissezfaire.1926.html>.

<sup>150</sup> Keynes claims: “The most important Agenda of the State relate not to those activities which private individuals are already fulfilling, but to those functions which fall outside the sphere of the individual, to those decisions which are made by no one if the State does not make them. The important thing for government is not to do things which individuals are doing already, and to do them a little better or a little worse; but to do those things which at present are not done at all”; see *ibid*.

<sup>151</sup> See Newt Gingrich's right-conservative version, which he calls “opportunity

What holds for the domestic economy also holds for foreign policy and national security. The problem is not only that individuals have narrow value-interests that lead them to discount society-as-a-whole's military needs, such as the shopkeeper who wants only to stay home and conduct business, the mother who does not want to expose her son to risk, everyone's petty rivalries that lead them to fight each other rather than pulling together against a common enemy. The problem is cognitive; most citizens have a narrow cognitive focus and are not aware of the demands of the international context.

Liberal societies, history has shown, are therefore vulnerable to centralized cultures. Athenian democratic dithering and the narrowness of its citizens' private commercial interests explain much of why it lost to Sparta, why it was later controlled by Macedon, and why the whole of Greece was taken over by Rome.<sup>152</sup> Consequently, in all major social sectors—economic, educational, military, and the rest—top-down power is regularly needed to supplement or override bottom-up initiatives. Some form of society-as-a-whole leadership must in principle take precedence over liberalism's decentralization.

***n. Liberalism is merely another subjective narrative***

Liberals claim that their political philosophy is based upon compelling empirical and theoretical argument. They also claim that liberalism should be applied to all human beings. That is, they present their case as if objectivity and universality were possible to achieve.

Liberalism requires much confidence in the power of reason. It leaves common citizens free to make their own major life choices about friendships, marriage, and religion. It leaves them alone to make their own transactions in a free market, and it urges them to participate politically in a democratic republic. The assumption is that in all of those areas of life

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society conservatism": "The opportunity society calls not for a *laissez-faire* society in which the economic world is a neutral jungle of purely random individual behavior, but for forceful government intervention on behalf of growth and opportunity"; see Newt Gingrich, *Window of Opportunity: Blueprint for the Future* (New York: Tor Books, 1984), quoted in David Brooks, "The Gingrich Tragedy," *The New York Times*, (December 8, 2011), accessed online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/09/opinion/brooks-the-gingrich-tragedy.html>.

See Nobel-Prize-winning Joseph Stiglitz's left-egalitarian version, which argues: "Markets on their own will not do a good job in creating a learning society. Laissez-faire market economies will not succeed. They will not be the most efficient. There need to be systematic interventions by government"; see Joseph Stiglitz, "Mind the Gap," RSA Angus Millar Lecture, *Herald Scotland*, August 31, 2014, accessed online at: <http://www.heraldscotland.com/business/company-news/mind-the-gap.25180183>.

<sup>152</sup> See Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, pp. 141-44.

individuals are capable of assessing their circumstances objectively and so, on balance, of making good decisions.

Liberalism also requires much confidence in the more sophisticated reason of its theorists. It presupposes that they can assess the historical and contemporary evidence accurately, that it can use the tools of mathematics and the scientific method more generally, and that it can logically integrate all of that into an objective theory that is universally true and good.

The “truth,” though, is that objectivity and universality are myths. All claims to evidence, logic, and rational argument are shot through with subjectivity and relativity. For centuries, many of our strongest religious thinkers have argued that reason is incompetent. Reason, they conclude, fails to prove the existence of God and even purports to show that religion is inconsistent or worse. Reliance upon reason thus leads people away from God.<sup>153</sup> If people turn away from God, the weakness of their own reason will lead them to nihilism. Liberalism depends upon reason, but reason leads to subjectivism, which leads to relativism, which leads to nihilism. So, they conclude, in order to avoid nihilism, we must commit to a strong faith in higher authority. Human beings need the submission and obedience of faith, not hubristic independence and confidence in the power of reason. That defense of faith in God first requires an attack on reason.<sup>154</sup>

Yet such faith involves a subjective leap, and many intellectuals are unable to make themselves commit to it. Even so, many will continue to advocate religion publicly for political reasons. While they personally do not need to believe, they judge that most people cannot get through life without some sort of religion. Religion is the common man or woman’s philosophy, giving them personal structure and a reason to follow society’s rules. On prudential grounds, therefore, a society’s intellectual leaders should encourage

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<sup>153</sup> St. Augustine says this of the sin of intellectual pride by those who learn natural philosophy: “[T]hey that know it, exult, and are puffed up; and by an ungodly pride departing from Thee, and failing of Thy light, they foresee a failure of the sun’s light, which shall be, so long before, but see not their own, which is”; see Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding (New York: Vintage, 1997), Book 5, 3.4, p. 78.

John Calvin claims: “Our reason is overwhelmed by so many forms of deceptions, is subject to so many errors, dashes against so many obstacles, is caught in so many difficulties, that it is far from directing us aright”; see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), 2:2:25, accessed online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes/>.

<sup>154</sup> Kant claims this value of showing reason to be incapable of knowing reality: “But, above all, there is the inestimable benefit, that all objections to morality and religion will be forever silenced, and this in Socratic fashion, namely, by the clearest proof of the ignorance of the objectors”; see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, sec. B, p. xxxi.

Soren Kierkegaard concludes that faith requires “a crucifixion of the understanding”; see Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992 [1846]), p. 564.

widespread belief in the gods or a God. Even if a religion is not true, it is better for society that most people believe that it is true.<sup>155</sup>

Of course, apologists for faith and “noble lie” theorists are merely expressing their subjective preferences for a certain kind of society. Even so, a wide variety of considerations support belief in deep subjectivity.

One is the distinction between fact and value, is and ought, descriptive and normative—a commonplace in modern philosophy. From any set of factual statements, no value statements follow. Purportedly objective truths about how the world is do not imply any conclusions about how the world ought to be.<sup>156</sup> Values are only subjective preferences.<sup>157</sup> Even propositions of logic and mathematics are empty and merely reflect subjective choices.<sup>158</sup> As a result, no amount of objective data, hard mathematics, and

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<sup>155</sup> Plato suggests that a society’s guardians are justified in noble lies: “The rulers then of the city may, if anybody, fitly lie on account of enemies or citizens for the benefit of the state”; see Plato, *Republic*, 389b.

Alexis de Tocqueville argues that citizens of a democracy need dogmatism in religion even if the religion is not true: “I have laid it down in a preceding chapter that men cannot do without dogmatical belief; and even that it is very much to be desired that such belief should exist amongst them. I now add, that of all the kinds of dogmatical belief the most desirable appears to me to be dogmatical belief in matters of religion”; see Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835), 2.1.5, accessed online at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/de-tocqueville/democracy-america/ch21.htm>.

Sigmund Freud is an atheist who is contemptuous of religion: “the whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality—but he argues that the common man needs religion as he is not sophisticated to seek a meaningful life through the more demanding pursuits of art and science”; see Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961), p. 22.

<sup>156</sup> Hume notes wryly about those who make this mistake: “In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprized to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not”; see David Hume, “Moral Distinctions Not Derived from Reason,” in David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888 [1738]), 3.1.1, p. 469.

<sup>157</sup> C. L. Stevenson claims: “‘This is good’ means *I approve of this; do so as well*”; see C. L. Stevenson, “The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms,” in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer (New York: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 264-81.

<sup>158</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein says: “Theories which make a proposition of logic appear substantial are always false”; see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Daniel Kolak (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1998 [1922]), 6.111, p. 40.

logical argument about liberalism can support the view that liberalism is good or desirable.

Furthermore, human beings' perceptual capacities are subject to occasional illusions and regular relativities; what is sweet to you is bland to me, and what is appealing to eat when one is healthy is repulsive when one is sick.<sup>159</sup> There is never any guarantee that our basic observational data are objective or even mutually consistent.

Further still, all interpretations of the data are shaped by prior theoretical commitments. Anyone's theory about the world or a part of it has built into it assumptions about what is real and what is not, what is possible and what is not, what to look for and what to ignore. Necessarily, therefore, our ideological preconceptions infect our interpretations with bias. Even our basic perceptions of the world are laden with theory and are thus subjective.<sup>160</sup>

Further yet still, human beings are emotional as well as rational. We often see and hear only what we want to see and hear, and the deepest sources of our wants are often unknown to us. Consequently, our beliefs and our value decisions are largely passion-driven rather than the result of reason.<sup>161</sup>

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A. J. Ayer claims: "The principles of logic and mathematics are true universally simply because we never allow them to be anything else"; see A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952 [1936]), p. 77.

<sup>159</sup> Heraclitus says: "The sea is the purest and the impurest water. Fish can drink it, and it is good for them; to men it is undrinkable and destructive"; see Heraclitus, frag. B61.

<sup>160</sup> Norwood Russell Hanson claims that "theories and interpretations are 'there' in the seeing from the outset"; see N. R. Hanson, "Observation," in Norwood Russell Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 10.

Karl Popper argues that "there is no sense organ in which anticipatory theories are not genetically incorporated," and sense organs "incorporate, more especially, theory-like expectations. Sense organs, such as the eye, are prepared to react to certain selected environmental events—to those events which they 'expect', and *only* to those events. Like theories (and prejudices) they will in general be blind to others: to those which they do not understand, which they cannot interpret (because they do not correspond to any specific problem which the organism is trying to solve)"; see Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 72 and 145.

<sup>161</sup> Blaise Pascal says: "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know"; see Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W. F. Trotter (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958 [1670]), sec. 277, accessed online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm>.

Hume argues: "Reason is, and ought to be the slave of the passions"; see Hume, *Treatise*, 2.3.3.4.

Nietzsche claims: "It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm"; see Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, sec. 481.

In addition, human beings are social beings; they acquire beliefs and values and the very language they think in from their society. What is “rational” is socially conditioned. Since societies vary widely, what is rational is also socially relative.<sup>162</sup>

The point is that *any* theory that bills itself as objective and true is a non-starter<sup>163</sup> and any political theory that requires general rationality of its members is naïve. Instead, we face a variety of arbitrary subjective options.<sup>164</sup>

Liberals will sometimes grant that everything is subjective and relative, but argue that in order to make social living possible we should all agree to disagree when necessary. That is to say, we should accept toleration as our governing principle. We cannot expect or demand that everyone agree on substantive values, but we can push for a universal procedural principle: Live, and let live. That is admittedly to make an exception by insisting that we treat one principle as generally and objectively true, but in the interest of social peace, the principle of tolerance is the minimally necessary and achievable social objective.

If we are instead of a pragmatic disposition, we will reject robust liberalism as being too absolutist about its principles. The best we can do is make case-by-case judgments about what works rather than expecting universal principles to apply in all cases. Even toleration may work in some circumstances but not in others. We need flexibility rather than mechanical rules, and we need to understand that individuals, societies, and the world at large evolve over time. What works therefore itself evolves, and we should not be bound by allegedly timeless principles. Admittedly, “what works” is a subjective and relative criterion, but that is our human condition.

If we are a conservative of a religious temperament, we will agree that the failures of reason make critical our need for faith in a set of absolute, timeless principles. Some beliefs and actions cannot be tolerated socially.

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<sup>162</sup> Cass Sunstein claims: “For the individual agent, rationality is a function of social norms. A norm-free conception of rationality would have to depend on a conception of what peoples’ rational ‘interests’ are in a social vacuum. Since people never act in a social vacuum, such a conception would not be intelligible”; see Cass Sunstein, *Free Markets and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 54.

Foucault says: “I claim that reason is a long narrative, which ends today and makes room for another, and makes no sense”; see Foucault, *Foucault Live*, p. 251.

<sup>163</sup> Thomas Kuhn concludes: “We may, to be more precise, have to relinquish the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth”; see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 170.

<sup>164</sup> Brian Medlin claims: “[I]t is now pretty generally accepted by professional philosophers that ultimate ethical principles must be arbitrary”; see Brian Medlin, “Ultimate Principles and Ethical Egoism,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 35, no. 2 (1957), pp. 111-18.

Giving ourselves and our political leaders license to do whatever we think “works” is to abandon society to a free-for-all of depravity and decay. Faith does admittedly require a subjective leap, but perhaps it is our only escape from nihilism.

Alternatively, we can note, as postmoderns do, that the above choices and others are conditioned by our racial, gender, class, and ethnic origins. Advocates of liberal capitalism in particular are very often white, male, prosperous, and of European background. Thus their liberalism is merely an expression of their socially subjective conditioning. If we are of some other culture or subculture, then we are under no universalist imperative to suppress or give up the values that shape our social identities and replace them with liberal ones. Such social subjectivism does admittedly lead to harsher and unending conflicts of cultures, but at least we are not pretending that objective universality is possible.

At most, therefore, liberalism is merely one more subjective option to be considered in the mix of possible systems. Anyone’s choice among the possibilities is itself a subjective preference.

***o. Freedom does not exist***

The core assumption of liberalism is that human beings are by nature free. That is, they have the capacity to make genuine choices in their thoughts and actions. That is the basis of treating humans as moral agents who are responsible for their behaviors, both positive and negative. That in turn is the basis for liberalism’s political claim that we should respect every human’s freedom. However, the fact is that there is *no* freedom, either politically or metaphysically.

In religious form, the argument is that the omnipotence of God makes impossible human free will. Free will is supposed to be a species of power; if humans have some power, then God cannot have it all. Asserting human free will therefore contradicts the infinity of God. The omnipotence of God therefore implies a rigorous predestination: all of reality has been pre-ordained, and God’s omniscience implies that he knows all—past, present, and future.<sup>165</sup>

In naturalistic form, the argument is that all of reality is governed by a cause-and-effect matrix that leaves no room for volition. The iron laws of physics, chemistry, biology, and the other sciences describe the natural world in deterministic terms. Human beings are physical-chemical-biological complexes embedded within broader systems of physical-chemical-biological

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<sup>165</sup> Calvin claims: “By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death”; see Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Faith*, 3.21.5.



complexes. All of us are subject to gravity and to chemical and biological processes, and in the mathematics that describes it all, two plus two always equals four. Cause and effect does not somehow stop with humans. Everything we do is an effect of a set of prior causal factors, which are themselves effects of prior causes, and so on forever into the past. Everything we do in turn becomes part of the set of causal factors that determine subsequent effects, and so on forever into the future.<sup>166</sup>

We can of course continue to debate whether the determining causes are primarily theological,<sup>167</sup> biological,<sup>168</sup> environmental,<sup>169</sup> or some weighted

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<sup>166</sup> Nietzsche claims that we are before “a brazen wall of fate; we *are* in prison, we can only *dream* ourselves free, not make ourselves free”; see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, vol. 2, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1878]), sec. 33, p. 223. He also claims that “the voluntary is absolutely lacking . . . everything has been directed along certain lines from the beginning”; see Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, sec. 458.

<sup>167</sup> St. Augustine argues: “What merit, then, has man before grace which could make it possible for him to receive grace, when nothing but grace produces good merit in us; and what else but His gifts does God crown when He crowns our merits? For, just as in the beginning we obtained the mercy of faith, not because we were faithful but that we might become so, in like manner He will crown us at the end with eternal life, as it says, ‘with mercy and compassion.’ Not in vain, therefore, do we sing to God: ‘His mercy shall prevent me,’ and ‘His mercy shall follow me.’ Consequently, eternal life itself, which will certainly be possessed at the end without end, is in a sense awarded to antecedent merits, yet, because the same merits for which it is awarded are not effected by us through our sufficiency, but are effected in us by grace, even this very grace is so called for no other reason than that it is given freely; not, indeed, that it is not given for merit, but because the merits themselves are given for which it is given. And when we find eternal life itself called grace, we have in the same Apostle Paul a magnificent defender of grace: ‘The wages of sin,’ he says, ‘is death. But the grace of God life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord’”; see Augustine, “Letter to Sixtus,” in *St. Augustine, Letters*, vol. 4, trans. Sr. Wilfred Parsons (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1955).

<sup>168</sup> E. O. Wilson argues: “[T]he question of interest is no longer whether human social behavior is genetically determined; it is to what extent. The accumulated evidence for a large hereditary component is more detailed and compelling than most persons, even geneticists, realize. I will go further; it is already decisive”; see E. O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 19.

<sup>169</sup> Marx claims: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their lives, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness”; see Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977 [1858]), accessed online at: [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_Contribution\\_to\\_the\\_Critique\\_of\\_Political\\_Economy.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Contribution_to_the_Critique_of_Political_Economy.pdf).

David Riesman says: “Social science has helped us become more aware of the extent to which individuals, great and little, are the creatures of their cultural conditioning; and so we neither blame the little nor exalt the great”; see David

combination of them. The point is, though, that the feeling of volition is an *illusion*—an epiphenomenal byproduct of underlying causal forces.<sup>170</sup> There is no free will, and consequently no choice, and consequently no responsibility, and consequently no morality, and consequently no point to liberalism.

We should thus get rid of all normative language—or recognize that our use of normative language is merely one more causally determined outcome. Some people are determined to say “Liberalism is good!” and others are determined to say “Liberalism is bad!” Some people are made to act “liberally” and others are made to act “illiberally.” In any case, no ultimate evaluative significance can be attached to anyone’s expressions or actions, and it is pointless to argue about liberalism.<sup>171</sup>

### 3. Conclusion: What Next?

Liberalism should be rejected because it undermines, fails to achieve, or contradicts fifteen major truths or values. Liberalism:

- Over-estimates average intelligence
- Underestimates human depravity
- Is based on amoral self-interest
- Is atomistic
- Is materialistic
- Is boring
- Denies the priority of power
- Does not guarantee basic needs
- Is unfair
- Undermines equality
- Is dog-eat-dog
- Is unsustainable

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Riesman, *Individualism Reconsidered* (New York: Free Press, 1954), p. 38.

B. F. Skinner claims: “The illusion that freedom and dignity are respected when control seems incomplete arises in part from the probabilistic nature of operant behavior. Seldom does any environmental condition ‘elicit’ behavior in the all-or-nothing fashion of a reflex; it simply makes a bit of behavior more likely to occur”; see B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), pp. 231-32.

<sup>170</sup> Marx argues: “The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premisses. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence”; see Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (1845), A.1.4, accessed online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/>.

<sup>171</sup> A Stoic is about to beat his slave for an infraction, but the slave is learned about Stoic philosophy and exclaims, “Master, do not punish me for what I did, for I was determined to do it and could not help it!” “Well,” replies the master, “then it was determined that I punish you. Stop complaining.”

- Is inefficient
- Is merely a subjective narrative
- Is epiphenomenal

The significance of these anti-liberal arguments, individually and collectively, is the strength of their challenge to the arguments made by liberals. Each argument can and should be assessed by its own merits. Yet that task can be aided by comparing each argument with related arguments on the other side of the debate. Placing opposed arguments into direct collision with each other often highlights the core disagreements, reveals that the two (or more) sides have been speaking past each other, and points to an underlying issue that must be made explicit and attended to before cognitive progress can be made.

Most of our longstanding and ongoing debates in politics do in fact depend upon underlying philosophical issues in metaphysics, epistemology, human nature, and values. Thus, the third stage of this project will be to pair the liberal and anti-liberal arguments in such a way that highlights those philosophical issues.

For example, an initial listing and re-ordering of the pro- and anti-liberal arguments from the two parts of this project yields several interesting pairings:

<b>Liberals claim that liberalism:</b>	<b>Anti-liberals claim that liberalism:</b>
Increases freedom	Denies the priority of power
Motivates hard work	Is based on amoral self-interest
Motivates smart work	Overestimates average intelligence Is inefficient
Incentivizes creative work	Is unsustainable
Improves the average standard of living	Is materialistic
Improves the lot of the poor	Does not guarantee basic needs
Increases philanthropy	Is atomistic
Improves the prospects of the outstanding	Is unfair

Increases interestingness and diversity; Increases happiness	Is boring
Motivates religious tolerance; Leads to the decline of sexism and racism	Undermines equality
Incentivizes peace	Is dog-eat-dog
Lessens government corruption	Underestimates human depravity
Is more just	Is merely a subjective narrative
	Is epiphenomenal

A selective focus on just some of the pairings shows:

- One side of the argument argues that the self-interested profit motive is good, while the other holds that self-interested motives are amoral or outright immoral. That points to a deeper ethical debate about the status of self-interest.
- One side of the argument claims that a great accomplishment of liberalism is its improvement of our material condition, while another side attacks liberalism precisely for being materialistic. That points to a deeper metaphysical debate about the significance of the material world.
- One side argues that humans are capable of objective and creative thinking and that liberal societies enable effective coordination of our knowledge to mutual benefit, while contrary arguments hold that humans are basically irrational or that “knowledge” is a subjective narrative complicit in zero-sum oppression. That points to a deeper epistemological debate about our cognitive powers.

Metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics are the fundamental branches of philosophical inquiry. The debates over liberalism thus depend upon issues specific to politics, economics, and history, but a full defense or rejection of liberalism is also a consequence of philosophy.

