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THEIR LIBERTARIANISM —AND OURS

LIBERTARIANISM: A PRIMER, by David Boaz. Free Press, 1997. 314 pp. \$23.00.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LIBERTARIAN: A PERSONAL INTERPRETATION, by Charles Murray. Broadway Books, 1997. 178 pp. \$20.00.

T

hose of us who call ourselves left libertarians feel pretty lonely these days. While the very word “libertarian” has become a synonym for “radical free marketeer,” the mainstream of the American left—defined broadly for the purposes of this essay as the party of economic and social equality—seems content to cede both the word and the concept to the right. At best the contemporary left, with few exceptions, defends particular liberties and challenges particular repressive laws and policies while ignoring the structures of unfreedom built into institutions like the state, the corporation, the family, and the church. At worst it attacks “excessive” liberty as a mere extension of capitalist individualism, an offense to communal values, and/or a rationale for maintaining the position of dominant social groups. Most leftists are uncritically statist, merely complaining that the government is controlled by the wrong people and doesn’t do enough of the right things. And though the left of course wants to redistribute corporate profits to workers, it shows little interest in attacking the authoritarian structure of the workplace or the puritanical assumptions of the work ethic.

Except for a few nanoseconds during the sixties, individual freedom has always been a hard sell on the left. But in the embattled, dike-plugging, circle-the-wagons present, dissident voices are ever fewer and fainter. Even as the state becomes steadily more impotent and sub-

servient to transnational capital, leftists are concentrating most of their meager energy on struggling to enlist state power in their behalf, whether to defend social welfare programs and affirmative action or to punish racist and sexist behavior. All too often, the soundtrack to this agenda consists of a whiny lecture about selfishness, meanness, and greed versus compassion, decency, and justice, as if America’s problem were moral deficiency, rather than a declining standard of living or an increasingly repressive culture, and the solution were getting government to pull up our collective socks.

It’s no wonder that the public prefers the right’s language of freedom. Conservatives’ distaste for government and for ideological curbs on free expression may be selectively applied; their celebration of free enterprise may be a rationale for ruthless class warfare; yet they speak to Americans’ deepening feelings of entrapment and suppression in a way the left refuses or doesn’t know how to do. Ironically, many leftists are all too eager to pander to the socially conservative values they imagine (erroneously) are the key to majority support, while dismissing libertarianism out of hand, despite its wide appeal. In reality, I’m convinced, the left has no hope of seriously influencing the public conversation unless it counters the right’s conception of liberty with its own compelling vision of a free society.

These books by David Boaz, executive vice president of the right-libertarian Cato Institute, and Charles Murray, who needs no introduction, are a good place to start. Together they do a fair job of articulating the dominant themes of right-wing anti-statism. Boaz’s “primer” attempts a broad overview of libertarian philosophy, which he defines as a strict construction of classical liberalism based on a few first principles: individuals have the inalienable right to live as they

choose so long as they respect the equal rights of others; property rights are the foundation of freedom and must not be abridged; “Free markets are the economic system of free individuals”; government’s role should be limited to prohibiting force and fraud, enforcing contracts, and providing for the national defense.

Murray is also a staunch advocate of minimal government, untrammelled property rights, and free market economics (if slightly more willing than Boaz to allow exceptions for a limited number of public goods). Adopting the style of a lecturer intent on making a few homely points to an audience slightly low on the bell curve, he devotes the meat of his book to statistics purporting to show that every social improvement government has supposedly made would have happened anyway, and to “thought experiments” detailing how his proposals for economic deregulation, abolition of antidiscrimination laws, and so on might actually work. But he only reluctantly adopts the libertarian label—he would rather call himself a liberal, had the word not been appropriated by proponents of “an expansive government and the welfare state”—and indeed it hardly jibes with his professed admiration for Edmund Burke and his communitarian belief in “the indispensable roles that tradition and the classical virtues play in civic life.”

Unlike Boaz, who genuinely seems to believe in civil liberties for dissidents and minorities, Murray basically defines freedom as the right of the conformist (“an ordinary human being making an honest living and minding his own business”) to be left alone. He is especially concerned that landlords, employers, families, and other private parties not be deprived of “freedom of association” (that is, freedom to discriminate) and its corollary, freedom to enforce social and moral norms without state interference. For Murray, the absolute right of property owners to exclude from their premises anyone they find objectionable is the community’s best defense against drugs, pornography, and other “obnoxious” practices. His main quarrel with government is its propensity to overrule traditional structures of authority in favor of individual rights and, worse, undermine those structures with welfare programs that allow unwed mothers and other such delinquents to survive. Like

Boaz, he endorses “freedom of personal behavior” in the absence of force or fraud. But while this freedom comes first on Boaz’s list, Murray mentions it last, on the grounds that it’s of little practical consequence, since few people actually aspire to take advantage of it by testing social limits. (And if they did, in Murray’s utopia, their parents, neighbors, landlords, and bosses, unimpeded by state-mandated tolerance or state subsidies for “irresponsible” behavior, would soon set them straight.)

In the end, though, these differences are more rhetorical than real. Both authors subscribe to the fundamental fallacy of right libertarianism, that the state is the only source of coercive power. Neither recognizes (surprise!) that the corporations that control most economic resources, and therefore most people’s access to the necessities of life, have far more power than government to dictate our behavior and the day-to-day terms of our existence. (Murray’s claim that “If your personal life were as closely monitored and regulated as the vocational life of millions of Americans, you would rightly consider it oppression” is unassailable, except that he means government health and safety rules, not employers’ decrees about when you can go to the bathroom.) Evidently they haven’t noticed that a handful of global conglomerates exercises a controlling influence on investment priorities, wages, interest rates, and conditions for workers and smaller businesses around the world; or that these same corporate dogs routinely wag the state tail, financing politicians who do their bidding on economic and foreign policy while threatening to withhold credit and move jobs from any community (or country) deemed insufficiently compliant.

Nor do Boaz and Murray acknowledge the ways corporate control of mass media and cultural production limits the circulation of dissenting ideas and encourages patterns of de facto censorship like chain stores’ refusal to stock unedited CDs. (On the contrary, Boaz has the nerve to complain about “court intellectuals” of the left whose big-government ideology is suborned by their patrons, such powerful dispensers of Leviathan’s largesse as . . . state universi-

ties and the National Endowment for the Humanities! Now, who did you say funds the Cato Institute? Santa Claus, right?) In fact, in three hundred pages Boaz never mentions corporate power even to debunk the idea, while Murray declares bluntly that economic coercion does not exist, except, perhaps, in rare cases of “natural monopoly.” The world as depicted in these books is the projection of an imagination stuck somewhere in the eighteenth century, its inhabitants myriad individual producers, entrepreneurs, and workers all playing by the same rules, freely competing and contracting in the marketplace. As Boaz puts it, “If I trade my labor for a paycheck from Microsoft, it’s because I value the money more than the time, and the shareholders of Microsoft value my labor more than the money they give up.” And if we can’t agree on how much of the shareholders’ money my time and labor are worth? Well, gee, surely I have as much choice of more obliging employers as Microsoft has of less demanding workers.

The authors’ discussion of property is equally simplistic. In both books, the freedom to use land and other resources for productive purposes, and the need for nonviolent means of deciding who gets to use what, are conflated with ownership, defined by Boaz as the right to “use, control, or dispose of an object or entity.” But use is one thing, control and disposition another, and the elision of this distinction has no basis other than dogma. Not only have some societies managed quite well without individual ownership of land—various Native American tribes come to mind—but given that the earth and its resources were here before any of us, making the notion of literal ownership absurd, there is no defensible reason why those who first acquired property (usually through one or another form of conquest, not, as Boaz seems to think, by homesteading) should control its use by future generations.

Nor is having the personal use of resources the same as controlling and disposing of them for a profit. Boaz worries about someone coming along and confiscating “the wealth we’ve created”; but the more wealth property owners create, the less likely they are to have done it by themselves. Should they retain absolute control over resources that others—the propertyless with

only their labor to sell—have helped produce? What happens to the latter’s freedom under such a regime? Ignoring such obvious questions, the authors in effect reduce the issue of property to whether someone can (Murray’s example) “come in off the street and walk off with your television.”

Like Murray, Boaz upholds the right of property owners to discriminate against anyone whose values, appearance, or behavior they don’t like; the impact on the freedom of those forced to conform to get a job or apartment—let alone those with the wrong skin color or other immutable traits—is not considered. Just as all economic dealings in *Laissez-faire* world are purely voluntary transactions among equals, the moral and cultural judgments that inform those dealings are assumed to reflect millions of individual tastes and prejudices rather than ubiquitous social patterns like racism, homophobia, antidrug hysteria, and the like. Your employer says, Take a drug test or be fired? Find one who likes potheads. Turned down by a landlord who won’t rent to blacks? No problem—the one down the block won’t rent to white people.

There would seem to be a contradiction between this picture of happy pluralism and Murray’s promotion of discrimination as a weapon against vice. But then, it seems that in every respect the freewheeling economic and cultural marketplace turns out to be a repository of stern, small-town bourgeois virtues. Indeed, both authors regard as a major selling point the claim that liberating our society from the heavy hand of the state would restore it to moral health: the undeserving poor would no longer have a claim on the earnings of the productive and diligent; the demise of Social Security and Medicare would revive thrift, prudence, and filial obligation to aging parents; without the cushion of welfare, unmarried childbearing would once again be socially stigmatized and economically punishing.

For Murray, of course, restoring what he forthrightly refers to as “social control” is the whole point of the antistatist agenda. Boaz, on the other hand, does note that some might consider this objective at odds with the libertarian

aim of emancipating the individual. But he quickly disposes of this cavil. Libertarianism, he explains, aims to free the individual “from artificial, coercive restraints on his actions,” not “from the reality of the world.” Taxes, in other words, are artificial and coercive, but the constraints of Victorian morality are natural limits, like death.

From this perspective it’s irrelevant that, say, collectivizing support of the “unproductive” old, while coercive in one respect, is liberating in others—allowing old people to live independently rather than with bossy or resentful children; enabling young people to take up acting or travel down the Amazon rather than thriftily, prudently going straight from school to planning for their retirement. The issue as Boaz presents it is not one set of social arrangements versus another, each with its own tradeoff of freedom and restriction, but arrangements that uphold versus those that violate the natural order. It follows that except for physical violence, all nongovernmental restrictions on freedom—not only control of behavior through material reward and punishment but such age-old methods of social discipline as ostracism, humiliation, and psychological intimidation—are simply “reality” and off-limits to discussion.

Nonetheless, contradictions keep intruding on Boaz’s polemic like the return of the repressed, especially when he tries to square liberty with family values. He supports equal legal rights for women and gays, opposes state policing of sexuality, and not only thinks the government has no business prohibiting gay marriage but argues—this is the high point of the book, as far as I’m concerned—that government should get out of the marriage business altogether, allowing marriage to become a voluntary contract like any other. Yet he naively sees the family as a “natural” association rather than a social institution—one that serves valuable purposes, to be sure, but is also chiefly responsible for enforcing male supremacy and sexual conformity (and for enlisting the state in these endeavors).

Boaz complains of unmarried welfare mothers’ “long-term dependency” on government, as if it were unquestionably preferable that mothers be forced into long-term dependency on hus-

bands. He seems unaware (perhaps he’s too young to remember) that the stigma against unwed childbearing reinforced women’s economic dependence, perpetuated a sexual double standard, and trapped countless people in miserable marriages; or that feminism, not welfare, is mainly responsible for its decline. He agrees that “Women should have the right to work,” yet laments that government benefits have “usurped responsibility for infants, children, and the elderly” formerly assumed by “the family—for which read “housewives.” (In any case it will be news to most parents that government-provided day care is taking over child rearing.)

But never mind. If these purported libertarians are a waste of time for anyone trying to understand economic or social domination, surely they offer some insight into their chief target, the state? Strike three! Again, their basic axiom, that the state is a foreign body intruding on a free and independent marketplace, is firmly rooted in fantasy. In reality, the modern state came into being to serve the needs of the market: it backs that most elementary requirement for the free flow of capital, a reliable currency; builds the roads essential to moving goods; maintains the military and diplomatic umbrella that protects overseas investment and trade; and if necessary goes to war in behalf of these interests. And since the risk and instability built into capitalism—its “creative destruction”—is ultimately intolerable to the capitalists themselves, it is chiefly big business that has pressed the state to regulate markets, limit competition, and subsidize its costs with public funds. Even in this heady age of devolution, I have yet to hear the *Wall Street Journal* propose abolishing the Federal Reserve Board, with its dubious power to curb “inflation” (that is, higher wages).

Until recently, the “big government” the free marketeers want to dismantle had the active support of the American corporate elite. In the post-World War II era, business, government, and the labor movement forged a historic compromise for the avowed purpose of saving a capitalist system shaken by the crisis of the Great Depression, the power of the Soviet Union, and

the threat of domestic and foreign radicalism. The deal was that economic regulation and cooperation between business and labor would ensure high wages and employee benefits, securing the loyalty—and the buying power—of a prosperous middle class; government social welfare programs would provide a safety net for the old and poor; and the state, aggressively pursuing the cold war, would pour billions of federal military dollars into the private economy. In addition, business would profit by adapting to civilian use technologies originally developed for the military, like jet planes, plastics, and computers. Ignoring all this, Murray argues, as evidence that government programs make no difference, that “the trendline shows a regular drop in poverty from World War II through the 1960s . . . the steepest drop in poverty occurred during the 1950s”—not during Johnson’s War on Poverty. Whatever the accuracy of this controversial statistic, the fact is that the entire postwar period, the most prosperous in our history, was also the high point of state “interference” in the market.

But now business wants out of the deal, or anyway those parts of it that maintained Americans’ standard of living. High wages and high taxes are obstacles to competition in the world market, while the demise of the Soviet regime and the paralysis of the left have removed any need to show that “capitalism delivers the goods.” Yet already there’s an incipient global infrastructure of regulation, in the form of institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, treaties like GATT and NAFTA, and the European Economic Community. And the pressure for more controls is likely to grow in the face of instability—indeed, near anarchy—in the former Soviet Union, as well as the spread of militant nationalism, fundamentalism, and other varieties of resistance to the new economic order.

At present, however, the power of transnational corporations has merely made it impossible for supposedly democratic governments to do anything. No matter who gets elected, politicians face the same demand: deregulate, reduce taxes, and enforce austerity on

pain of disinvestment and a bad credit rating. The result is a flattening out of debate and a trivialization of politics that have fed the widespread, disgusted perception that all government does is throw our money down the drain. Meanwhile, for at least two decades moral conservatives of both the right and the left have carried on a relentless campaign against every form of “freedom of personal behavior,” from abortion and divorce to marijuana smoking to the production and consumption of sexually dissident art and “unwholesome” popular culture to teenage sex and flirting in the office. In this cramped, guilt-ridden social atmosphere right libertarianism has flourished, tapping people’s frustration with politics and encouraging them to direct their thwarted impulses toward freedom into the narrow channels of freedom from taxes, freedom from “political correctness,” freedom to resent the poor, freedom to discriminate, freedom to dream of sharing in the bounty of capitalist expansion.

There’s a scary contrast between the emotional appeal of the libertarian right and the poverty of its thought. In part, the thinness of Boaz’s and Murray’s arguments can be attributed to what might be called vulgar anti-Marxism. The shared premise of their books—explicit in Boaz’s dismissal of Marx as a proponent of “crabbed, reactionary statism” and his assurance that state meddling in the “natural harmony” of the free market is the sole cause of group conflict; implicit in both books’ failure to note, let alone debate, the most basic socialist objections to liberal ideology—is that the collapse of communism means Marx’s monumental critique of capitalism can be safely ignored. Although this is no doubt a sound political judgment, it’s an intellectual disaster. Among other things, making class antagonism the great unmentionable precludes any insight into why, if classical liberalism is so terrific, it was supplanted in the first place. Boaz does make a brief stab at this question, concluding that the main culprit was historical amnesia: people took for granted the “unprecedented improvement in living standards” the Industrial Revolution had wrought and didn’t realize how much better off they were than past generations. “Charles Dickens,” he complains in one of his sillier moments, “be-

moaned the already waning practice of child labor that kept alive many children who in earlier eras would have died.”

Equally disabling is the authors’ resolutely pre-Freudian mentality. Boaz is an Aristotelian rationalist, while Murray leavens his faith in reason with loyalty to “tradition and the nonrational aspects of the human spirit.” But both see human motivation as entirely conscious, deliberate, and self-interested, or as Murray puts it, “absent physical coercion, everyone’s mind is under his own control.” Here too they are in sync with contemporary political fashion, which is as contemptuous of psychoanalysis as of Marxism. Yet with no recognition of unconscious conflict between desire and fear, the origins of that conflict in the unequal struggle of the pleasure-seeking infant with parental authority, and conscience as its uneasy resolution, it’s impossible to see morality for what it is—a structure of internalized coercion. This is not to say that all moral imperatives are oppressive, any more than all laws are; only that morals are no less socially imposed than laws, and should be no less subject to examination and criticism. Because Boaz and Murray do not understand this, they have no use for—indeed no conception of—questions I consider essential to the project of human freedom: Do “family values” produce socially submissive, sexually frustrated people whose unconscious rage, mixed with guilt, surfaces as aggressive moralism? Do we glorify constant work and look with suspicion on idleness because we need to, even in a world where technology is increasingly severing the link between productivity and human labor? Or are we punishing ourselves for guilty desires—and are we therefore less likely to question the conditions of our work, and whose purposes it serves?

The authors are of course equally unreflective about the psychosocial implications of their own worldview. They both argue, for instance, that the basis of our natural right to freedom is “self-ownership.” This is a curiously alienated idea: I don’t “own” my self, as if it were an object somehow separable from my subjectivity; I *am* myself. But it makes sense as a reaction to the experience of having your body and psyche con-

trolled by others. If you can’t overcome the split between your deepest desires and the socialized self your upbringing has forced you to adopt, you can at least assert your control over “it”—at the same time denying your earliest and most profound loss of autonomy by fixating on the state as your only antagonist. (Is it entirely fortuitous that right libertarians are so fond of parental metaphors for government? Boaz: “Conservatives want to be your daddy, telling you what to do and what not to do. Liberals want to be your mommy, feeding you, tucking you in, and wiping your nose.”) The right to property, in turn, becomes a means of extending control to your surroundings; but since control is only a substitute for genuine satisfaction, you can never have enough.

Boaz unwittingly touches on this truth when he argues that we need property because scarcity is inherent in the human condition: our unlimited wants will always outstrip our finite resources. It doesn’t occur to him that forbidden, unspeakable wishes for real emotional and erotic freedom may stubbornly press for expression in the socially acceptable guise of “insatiable” material desires. This dynamic suggests why Boaz and Murray can see no serious distinction between limiting corporate control of land or capital and borrowing someone’s toothbrush without permission. In the right-libertarian unconscious, the very definition of freedom becomes control, expansion, and domination—in other words, the will to power.

The story of the right’s success has everything to do with the resonance of this definition for large numbers of Americans, up and down the class ladder. But idealists like Boaz (I’m not sure I can say the same for Murray) are unlikely to be pleased with the results. Under conditions of worsening economic inequality, the yearning for freedom-as-power is easily appropriated by right-wing populists and ultimately by fascists. Libertarian conservatives may abhor the Pat Buchanans and the paramilitary thugs; all the same, the right-libertarian mindset has helped create them.

On the other hand, leftists have been unable to combat the right’s conception of freedom, or offer an alternative, because for the most part they, too, unconsciously identify freedom with

power. Unlike the right libertarians, however, they fear the destructive potential of the will to power and so conclude that individual freedom is inherently dangerous. Instead of rejecting the state “parent,” they aspire to take over the role and suppress “selfishness” in the interest of “social justice.” Where right libertarians see their moral agenda as natural and therefore compatible with freedom, leftists openly use guilt as a political weapon. Freedom becomes a positive value only when redefined to mean collective empowerment for subordinate classes and social groups.

Ironically, in seeking to curb the individual will to power in favor of equality, leftists invest their own subterranean desires for freedom-as-power in the activist state. In my view, the revival of the left depends on relinquishing this investment. We need to recognize that despite appearances the state is not our friend, that in the long run its erosion is an opportunity and a challenge, not a disaster. I don’t want to be misunderstood: I’m not suggesting that we stop supporting Social Security or national health insurance or public schools or antidiscrimination laws. If my immediate choices are the barbarism of unleashed capital or a state-funded public sector, the tyranny of uninhibited private bigotry or state-enforced civil rights, I choose the state. Or rather, I choose the social goods and civil liberties that are available under state auspices.

The distinction is important, because the idea that the state *gives* us these benefits is a mystification. Basically, Murray is right: government does not cause social improvement. In actual historical fact, every economic and social right that we’ve achieved since the nineteenth century has been hard-won by organized, militant, and often radical social movements: the labor movement; the socialist, communist, and anarchist movements; the New Left student movement; the black and feminist and gay liberation movements; the ecology movement. (Such movements are yet another social force that Boaz and Murray see no need to include in their analysis of the individual versus the state—in part, I imagine, because the left itself so often forgets their importance.) The role of the

state from the New Deal and the postwar compact till the start of its present no-more-Mr.-Nice-Guy phase was to manage potentially destabilizing social conflict by offering carefully limited concessions to the troublemakers.

Since the liberal state’s priority is stability, not equality (let alone emancipation), those concessions generally took shape as hierarchical, bureaucratic agencies designed more to control their clients than to serve them. Nonetheless, their existence succeeded in defusing the social movements, not only because they represented real if partial victories, but because the government was able to take the credit and convince the public—including most movement activists—that nothing more was possible. From labor laws that restrict the right to strike and define who can and can’t be organized to Nixon’s strategy of affirmative action, which ignored systemic racial inequality to focus on upward mobility for the black middle class, state social policy has never wavered in its primary allegiance to the corporate elite. The government’s current rush to abandon any pretense of social responsibility ought to make this painfully clear: what the state supposedly giveth it promptly taketh away as soon as the balance of social power shifts. In this case, of course, social power is shifting away from the national state itself; liberals and social democrats are still trying to board a train that’s already left the station.

In parallel fashion, the statism of the cultural left does not further equality so much as it reinforces law and order. Originally, the relation of the black, feminist, and gay movements to the state was adversarial: they demanded an end to state-sponsored discrimination, from Jim Crow and the body of family law codifying women’s inferior status to the refusal of the criminal justice system to take lynching, rape, and wife-beating seriously to the criminalization of abortion and homosexual sex. Although such battles are still going on—for gays, especially, they are a major arena—the emphasis has long since shifted to demanding that the state use its power to prohibit racist and sexist practices in the “private” realm. Insofar as the demand is to outlaw overt, provable discriminatory acts by employers, landlords, store-owners and so on, it simply aims for public recognition that (pace

Boaz and Murray) discrimination is a coercive act as unacceptable as violence or theft. But the problem, from the social movements' point of view, is that overt, deliberate discrimination is only the crudest expression of a deeply rooted culture of inequality. For many opponents of that culture, it has seemed a logical next step to invoke state power against patterns of behavior that reinforce white male dominance and exclude, marginalize, or intimidate vulnerable groups.

Actually, it's a plunge into dangerous illusion. The ingrained behavior and attitudes that support the dominant culture are by definition widespread, reflexive, and experienced as normal and reasonable by the people who uphold them. They are also often unconscious or ambiguous. A serious effort to crush racism and sexism with the blunt instrument of law would be a project of totalitarian dimensions—and still it would fail. Transforming a culture and its consciousness requires a different kind of politics, a movement of people who consistently and publicly confront oppressive social patterns, explain what's wrong with them, and refuse to live by them—to stay in the closet, make dinner, smile, ignore the patronizing remark or the nervous surveillance. In fact, the turn toward the state is a symptom of the social movements' current weakness. It's the disappearance from public conversation of any ongoing critique of "normal," everyday sexism that makes women think the only way to fight male pressure to have sex they don't want is to prosecute it as rape. It's the general repressiveness of the social climate that encourages moves to ban offensive speech or define any form of sexual expression in the workplace as sexual harassment. The main effect of these maneuvers is to foment confu-

sion, cynicism, and sexual witch hunts, trivialize sexual violence, and legitimize conservative demands for censorship—while at the same time ceding the moral high ground of free expression to the right.

It's time to become a movement again. That means, first of all, depending on no one's power but our own. It means formulating a vision of what kind of society we want and agitating for that vision, in every inventive way we can, wherever we find ourselves. It means challenging, at every opportunity and in every venue of our daily lives, the institutions, policies, practices, conventions, attitudes that oppose and repress our vision. It means creating alternative institutions and experimenting with new ways of living to figure out how our vision might work.

My own vision of what I want—of why I want a movement—has at its center the conviction that freedom and equality are symbiotic, not opposed. Although it's unlikely that social coercion—governmental or otherwise—will ever be entirely surpassed, my measure of a good society is the extent to which it functions by voluntary cooperation among people with equal social and political power. For all their wrongheadedness, the right libertarians have grasped a couple of basic truths. One is that there is no such thing as a free society without free individuals. The other is that the interaction of free individuals produces what they call "spontaneous order" and what I would call self-government or simply democracy. What they don't understand is how much has to change to let free individuals and spontaneous order flourish. That's where we come in. □

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