

Manifesto

The Case for Paleo-Libertarianism

by Llewelyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

Thirty years ago, an attempt was made to promote a *fusion* of libertarianism and conservatism. The attempt failed; Llewelyn H. Rockwell, Jr. thinks it is time to try again.

"The conservative crack-up is near," writes Charles Krauthammer. "As Communism unravels, so does . . . the conservative alliance." Indeed, old-fashioned conservatives (paleoconservatives) *are* splitting with statist neoconservatives.

Patrick J. Buchanan argues that America should "come home": we are not "the world's policeman nor its political tutor." Ben Wattenberg, a neocon advocate of what Clare Boothe Luce called globaloney, denounces Buchanan as a "Neanderthal." Joseph Sobran then notes that democracy is not a good in itself, but only in so far as it restricts State power. Jeanne Kirkpatrick—a former Humphrey Democrat like most of the neocons—says none of these intellectual arguments mean anything because the neocons hold State power and don't intend to let go.

Despite Kirkpatrick, these intra-Right arguments are extremely significant, and more than foreign policy is involved. As the U.S.S.R. is revealed as a paper bear, good conservatives are returning to their Old Right roots in other areas as well.

Conservatives are questioning not only foreign intervention, but the entire New Deal-Great Society-Kinder Gentler apparatus. This worries the neocons even more, since—like their Svengali Irving Kristol—they give at most "two cheers for capitalism" but a full three cheers for the "conservative welfare state."

This conservative crack-up presents an historic opportunity for the libertarian movement. The Cold War ruptured the Right; now the healing can begin, for Lord Acton's axiom that "liberty is the highest political end of man" is at the heart not only of libertarianism but of the old conservatism as well. Many issues separate good conservatives from good libertarians, but their number is lessening and none of them is so broad as to prevent intelligent exchange and cooperation.

There have been more than ideological disputes, however; culture has also separated us, and there is no more powerful unifier or divider. So divisive has it been in this case that good libertarians and good conservatives have forgotten how to talk to each other.

For the sake of our common ideals we should restore the old concord. But can we? In my view, not until libertarianism is deloused.

The Conservatives Are Right: Freedom Isn't Enough

Conservatives have always argued that political freedom is a necessary but

not sufficient condition for the good society, and they're right. Neither is it sufficient for the free society. We also need social institutions and standards that encourage public virtue, and protect the individual from the State.

Unfortunately, many libertarians—especially those in the Libertarian Party—see freedom as necessary *and sufficient* for all purposes. Worse, they equate freedom from State oppression with freedom from cultural norms, religion, bourgeois morality, and social authority.

In its 17-year history, the LP may never have gotten 1% in a national election, but it has smeared the most glorious political idea in human history with libertine muck. For the sake of that glorious idea, it's time to get out the scrub brushes.

Most Americans agree that aggression against the innocent and their property is wrong. Although these millions are potential libertarians, they are put off by the Woodstockian flavor of the movement. *Hair* may have left Broadway long ago, but the Age of Aquarius survives in

the LP.

The cultural *anti*-norms that mark the libertarian image are abhorrent; they have nothing to do with libertarianism *per se*; and they are deadly baggage. Unless we dump that baggage, we will miss the greatest opportunity in decades.

Americans reject the national Democratic Party because they see it as disdainful bourgeois values. If they have ever heard of the LP, they rebuff it for similar reasons.

The Libertarian Party is probably irrefutable—and irrelevant even if it weren't. Libertarianism is neither. But unless we cleanse libertarianism of its cultural image, our movement will fail as miserably as the LP has. We will continue to be seen as a sect that "resists authority" and not just statism, that endorses the behaviors it would legalize, and that rejects the standards of Western civilization.

Arguments against the drug war, no matter how intellectually compelling, are undermined when they come from the party of the stoned. When the LP nominates a prostitute for lieutenant governor of California and she becomes a much-admired LP celebrity, how can regular Americans help but think that libertarianism is hostile to social norms, or that legalization of such acts as prostitution means moral approval? There could be no more politically suicidal or morally fallacious connection, but the LP has forged it.

With their counter-cultural beliefs, many libertarians have avoided issues of increasing importance to middle-class Americans, such as civil rights, crime, and environmentalism.

The only way to sever libertarianism's link with libertinism is with a cleansing debate. I want to start that debate, and on the proper grounds. As G.K. Chesterton said, "We agree about the evil; it is about the good that we should tear each others eyes out."

A Culturally Effective Libertarianism for America

If we are to have any chance of victory, we must discard the defective cultural framework of libertarianism. I call my suggested replacement, with its ethically-based cultural principles, "paleolibertarianism": the old libertarianism.

I use the term as conservatives use paleoconservatism: not as a new creed, but as a harking back to their roots which

also distinguishes them from the necons. We have no parallel to the necons, but it is just as urgent for us to distinguish libertarianism from libertinism.

Briefly, paleolibertarianism, with its roots deep in the Old Right, sees:

I. The leviathan State as the institutional source of evil throughout history.

II. The unhampered free market as a moral and practical imperative.

III. Private property as an economic and moral necessity for a free society.

IV. The garrison State as a preeminent threat to liberty and social well being.

V. The welfare State as organized theft that victimizes producers and eventually even its "clients."

VI. Civil liberties based on property rights as essential to a just society.

VII. The egalitarian ethic as morally reprehensible and destructive of private property and social authority.

VIII. Social authority—as embodied in the family, church, community, and other intermediating institutions—as helping protect the individual from the State and as necessary for a free and virtuous society.

IX. Western culture as eminently worthy of preservation and defense.

X. Objective standards of morality, especially as found in the Judeo-Christian tradition, as essential to the free and civilized social order.

Is Paleolibertarianism Libertarian?

The libertarian must agree with the first six points, but most activists would be outraged by the last four. Yet there is nothing unlibertarian in them.

A critic might point out that libertarianism is a political doctrine with nothing to say about these matters. In one sense, the critic would be right. The libertarian catechist need know only one answer to one question: What is the the highest political end of man? The answer: freedom.

But no political philosophy exists in a cultural vacuum, and for most people political identity is only an abstraction from a broader cultural view. The two are separate only at the theoretical level; in practice, they are inextricably linked.

It is thus understandable and desirable that libertarianism have a cultural tone, but not that it be anti-religious, modernist, morally relativist, and egalitarian. This tone rightly repels the

vast majority of Americans and has helped keep libertarianism such a small movement.

The Conservative Attack on Libertarianism

None of the conservative criticisms of the political philosophy of libertarianism is persuasive. The same is not true, unfortunately, of the cultural critiques.

Russell Kirk is the conservative critic libertarians find most offensive. He

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claims that the libertarian, "like Satan, can bear no authority, temporal or spiritual. He desires to be different, in morals as in politics" as a matter of principle. As a result, there "is no great gulf fixed between libertarianism and libertinism."

A conservative critic libertarians find more congenial is Robert Nisbet. But he too worries that "a state of mind is developing among libertarians in which the coercions of family, church, local community, and school will seem almost as inimical to freedom as those of the political government. If so, this will most certainly widen the gulf between libertarians and conservatives."

Kirk and Nisbet are right about all too many individual libertarians, but not about the formal doctrine, as Rothbard, Tibor Machan, and others have shown. Yet this distinction between the doctrine and its practitioners is difficult to make for non-intellectuals.

Anti-Christianism vs Freedom

94% of Americans believe in God, yet a poll by Green and Guth showed that only 27% of LP activist-contributors do. These political scientists comment: "Although some Libertarian thinkers [such

as Murray N. Rothbard] insist that orthodox Christian belief is compatible with [their political ideas], the Party has certainly not done well in attracting such supporters." In fact, "many Libertarians are not only a-religious, but militantly anti-religious, as indicated by extensive write-in comments."

A later *Liberty* poll shows 74% of the respondents denying the existence of God; this is no surprise to the editors, who mention the "common perception that libertarians are almost all atheistic."

I do not, of course, argue that religious faith is necessary to libertarianism. Some of our greatest men have been non-believers. But the vast majority of Americans are religious and too many libertarians are aggressive atheists who seek to portray religion and libertarianism as enemies. That alone, if unchecked, is enough to ensure our continued marginalization.

The family, the free market, the dignity of the individual, private property rights, the very concept of freedom—all are products of our religious culture.

Christianity gave birth to individual-

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ism by stressing the significance of the single soul. The church teaches that God would have sent His Son to die on the cross if only one human being had needed this intercession.

With its emphasis on reason, objective moral law, and private property, Christianity made possible the development of capitalism. It taught that all men are equally children of God (although not equal in any other sense), and thus should be equal before the law. It was the transnational church that battled nationalism, militarism, high taxes, and political oppression, and whose theologians proclaimed the right of tyrannicide.

Acton said that "Liberty has not sub-

sisted outside Christianity" and he urged that we "keep liberty as close as possible to morality," since "no country can be free without religion."

While agreeing that it is not "anti-religious," Machan says libertarianism allows no "reliance on faith for purposes of understanding ethics and politics." Paleolibertarians prefer the view of two other non-believers: Rothbard, who says that "everything good in Western civilization, from individual liberty to the arts, is due to Christianity," and F.A. Hayek, who adds that it is to religion that "we owe our morals, and the tradition that has provided not only our civilization but our very lives."

Authority vs Coercion

"Question Authority!" says a leftist bumper sticker popular in libertarian circles. But libertarians are wrong to blur the distinction between State authority and social authority, for a free society is buttressed by social authority. Every business requires a hierarchy of command and every employer has the right to expect obedience within his proper sphere of authority. It is no different within the family, the church, the classroom, or even the Rotary or the Boy Scouts.

Giving trade unions license to commit violent crimes subverts the authority of the employer. Drug laws, Medicare, Social Security, and the public schools sap the authority of the family. Banishing religion from public debate undermines the authority of the church.

In a recent article, Jerome Tuccille claims he's fighting for freedom by battling "the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church." But there is nothing libertarian in fighting orthodoxy, Catholic or otherwise, and by deliberately confusing his prejudices with libertarianism, he helps perpetuate the myth that libertarianism is libertine.

Authority will always be necessary in society. Natural authority arises from voluntary social structures; unnatural authority is imposed by the State.

Paleolibertarians agree with Nisbet that "the existence of authority in the social order staves off encroachments of power from the political sphere." Only "the restraining and guiding effects" of "social authority" make possible "so liberal a political government as that which the Founding Fathers designed. Remove the social bonds," says Nisbet and you have "not a free but a chaotic

people, not creative but impotent individuals."

The Role of the Family

Libertarians tend to ignore the essential task of the family in forming the responsible individual. The traditional family—which grows out of natural law—is the basic unit of a civilized and

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free society. The family promotes values necessary for the preservation of a free society such as parental love, self-discipline, patience, cooperation, respect for elders, and self-sacrifice. Families encourage moral behavior and provide for proper child rearing and thus the continuation of the race.

Chesterton said the family "might loosely be called anarchist" because the origins of its authority are purely voluntary; the State did not invent it and neither can it abolish it.

Yet the State attacks the family through perverse economic incentives. As Charles Murray has pointed out, federal welfare policy has been largely responsible for the 450% increase in illegitimate births in the past 30 years.

"The most vital function" the family performs, Chesterton thought, "is that of education." But beginning with the establishment of the public schools in the 19th century, which sought in Horace Mann's phrase to turn "local citizens into national citizens," the State has attacked the educational function of the family.

Since the role of the State schools is—as one official put it—to "mold these little plastic lumps on the social kneading board"—then a key part of the State agenda must be subverting the family. Libertarians, on the other hand, should cherish and support it. We are not, as so many commentators have claimed, promoters of "atomistic individualism." We should show that by lauding the indispensable roles of the family and

social authority.

Hatred of Western Culture

"Culture," said Matthew Arnold, "is to know the best that has been said and thought in the world." For our civilization, that means concentrating on the West. But the Left, from Stanford to New York, denounces Western culture as racist, sexist, and elitist—worthy more of extinction than defense.

Those who defend Western culture are called ethnocentric by leftists who equate Dizzy Gillespie with Bach, Alice Walker with Dostoevski, and Georgia O'Keefe with Carravaggio, and who teach our children such bosh. They seek to construct a cultural canon that is sexually and racially "balanced," meaning unbalanced in every other sense. Yet on these cultural matters, too many libertarians agree with the Left.

Libertarians have to catch up with the American people, who are fed up with modernism in arts, literature, and manners that is really an attack on the West. Consider the outcry against the government-subsidized pornography and sacrilege of Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. The people knew instinctively that America's tax-funded art establishment is devoted to offending bourgeois sensibilities. Yet the typical libertarian newsletter was far more upset with Jesse Helms's correct position on this outrage than with taxpayer funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, let alone with blasphemy or obscenity.

"Art, like morality, consists in drawing the line somewhere," said Chesterton. Paleolibertarians agree, and make no apology for preferring Western civilization.

Pornographic photography, "free"-thinking, chaotic painting, atonal music, deconstructionist literature, Bauhaus architecture, and modernist films have nothing in common with the libertarian political agenda—no matter how much individual libertarians may revel in them. In addition to their aesthetic and moral disabilities, these "art forms" are political liabilities outside Berkeley and Greenwich Village.

We obey, and ought to obey, traditions of manners and taste. As Rothbard explains: "There are numerous areas of life" where the "pursuit of custom eases the tensions of social life and makes for a more comfortable and harmonious society."

Albert Jay Nock said that in a free so-

ciety, "the court of taste and manners" should be the strongest institution. He called it the only court of "undebatably competent jurisdiction." In this court, many libertarians stand condemned.

Egalitarianism and Civil Rights

Most Americans despise civil rights and rightly so. At one time, civil rights "meant the rights of the citizen against the State," says Sobran. Now "it means favored treatment for blacks (or some other minority) at the expense of every-one else."

Yet because so many libertarians are themselves egalitarians, they are either blind to this issue or purposely ignore it. Paleolibertarians suffer from no such liability. They reject not only affirmative action, set-asides, and quotas, but the 1964 Civil Rights Act and all subsequent laws that force property owners to act against their will.

State-enforced segregation, which also violated property rights, was wrong, but so is State-enforced integration. State-enforced segregation was not wrong because separateness is wrong, however.

Wishing to associate with members of one's own race, nationality, religion, class, sex, or even political party is a natural and normal human impulse. A voluntary society will therefore have male organizations, Polish neighborhoods, black churches, Jewish country clubs, and white fraternities.

When the State abolishes the right of free association, it creates not social peace but discord. As Frank S. Meyer wrote, "The multifarious adjustments of the relations of human beings—sensitive and delicate, and above all individual in their essence—can never be regulated by governmental power without disaster to a free society."

But the existence of such institutions is a scandal to egalitarians. Congressman Ron Paul, the 1988 LP presidential candidate, was attacked by libertarians for opposing the tax-financed Martin Luther King holiday. King was a socialist who attacked private property and advocated forced integration. How could he be a libertarian hero? Yet he is—for egalitarian reasons.

Too many libertarians also join liberals in using the charge of racism to bash non-conformists. It may be scientifically false to believe, for example, that Asians are more intelligent than whites, but can it really be immoral? From a libertarian perspective, the only immorality would

be to seek State recognition of this belief, whether correct or incorrect.

From a Christian viewpoint, it is certainly wrong to treat someone unjustly or uncharitably as a result of racial beliefs. It is also wrong to treat someone unjustly or uncharitably because he's bald, hairy, skinny, or fat. But can it be immoral to prefer the company of one to the other?

The family, the free market, the dignity of the individual, private property rights, the very concept of freedom—all are products of our religious culture. With its emphasis on reason, objective moral law, and private property, Christianity made possible the development of capitalism.

Black liberal William Raspberry recently wrote about the newest slogan in Washington, D.C.: "It's a Black Thing. You Wouldn't Understand."

This is "race-conscious in a healthy sort of way," says Raspberry. "But show me a white with 'It's a White Thing . . .' and my attitude changes," says Raspberry. "A Congressional Black Caucus is legitimate" but a "Congressional White Caucus would be unthinkable." "Black Is Beautiful" is permissible but "White Is Beautiful is the slogan of bigots." Oh?

There is nothing wrong with blacks preferring the "black thing." But paleolibertarians would say the same about whites preferring the "white thing" or Asians the "Asian thing." Paleolibertarians hold no utopian vision of social relations; we seek only to stop the State from interfering in voluntary actions.

Crime and Coercion

Libertarianism is widely seen as anti-force. But force will always be necessary to defend against wrong-doers and to administer justice. Libertarianism opposes aggression against the innocent, not coercion in general.

The State has always been the primary aggressor, but there is also private crime. As the breakdown of social authority invites statism, so does the absence of coercion against real crime. If crime goes underpunished or unpun-

ished, as is typically the case today, immoral behavior is rewarded and encouraged, and therefore increases.

Liberals and some libertarians tell us to be soft on crime because much of it is

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caused by white racism. But if that were the case, given concentration camps, property seizures, and widespread bigotry, we would be threatened by Japanese "wilding."

In fact, crime is a result of moral evil, a conscious decision to attack innocent lives and property for immoral motives. For that reason, even more than for deterrence, crime must be punished swiftly and harshly, although a libertarian criminal justice system would make use of restitution as well.

The present State monopoly over the production of domestic security is a failure. The streets of our big cities have become the realm of barbarians (if that is not a libel against the Visigoths). In New York City, reports of home burglaries are filed and forgotten. In Washington, D.C., violent muggings elicit police and prosecutorial yawns.

Like all bureaucrats, police, prosecutors, and judges have no incentive to respond to consumer demand, in this case would-be consumers of protection against crime or justice against criminals. There is no consumer sovereignty when the State has a monopoly of fighting crime, and when the only crimes it treats seriously are those against itself: counterfeiting, tax evasion, etc.

I know a woman who lived in an Italian working-class enclave surrounded by Cleveland's slums. Crime was unrestrained around this refuge, but within it, streets and homes were safe.

Anyone who crossed into the Italian area and committed a crime was—thanks to private surveillance—almost always

caught. But the perpetrator was seldom turned over to the police, since he would be released in a few hours and free to rampage again. The criminal was punished on the spot, and as a result, there was almost no crime in this neighborhood.

Although hardly an ideal system, it was rough justice and eminently libertarian. Yet many libertarians would oppose such a system—even though it was a response to State failure—because the criminals were black. Paleolibertarians have no such reservation. There should be equal-opportunity punishment.

The Return of Paganism

Paleolibertarianism is unabashedly pro-Man. It argues—and how can this be controversial?—that only man has rights, and that public policies based on mythical animal or plant rights must have perverse results.

Environmentalists, on the other hand, claim that birds, plants, and even seawater have the right to be protected from energy production and other human activities. From the snail darter to the furbish lousewort to wilderness as a whole—all deserve State protection from the production of goods and services for mankind.

Environmentalists claim that nature was in perfect balance before the modern era, and man's "damaging" economic development must be repaired by returning us to a more primitive level. Leaders of England's Green Party idealize the level of economic development between the fall of the Roman Empire and the coronation of Charlemagne—in other words, the Dark Ages. Friends of the Earth characterize the Industrial Revolution, and its enormous increase in standards of living, as a "vicious worldwide stripmining." Earthfirst! says, "Back to the Pleistocene!"

The de-christianization of public policy has resulted in an environmental movement that is not only anti-capitalist but pro-pagan. Paganism holds that man is only a part of nature—no more important than whales or wolves (and, in practice, much less important). Christianity and Judaism, on the other hand, teach that God created man in His image and gave him dominion over the earth, which was created for man's use and not as a morally valuable entity in its own right. The natural order exists for man and not the reverse, and no other understanding is compatible with a free market and private property, and therefore with libertarianism.

Environmentalists worship at the altar of Mother Nature, sometimes, as in the Gaia Movement, literally. Too many libertarians join them, proving Chesterton's gibe that "people who believe in nothing will believe in anything."

Paleolibertarians are unapologetic about preferring civilization to wilderness. They are likely to agree with Nock that "I can see nature only as an enemy: a highly respected enemy, but an enemy." Politically we need not be shy about being pro-Man. Few Americans are willing to sacrifice their property and prosperity to satisfy pagan delusions.

The Challenge

If the American people continue to connect libertarianism with repellent cultural norms, we will fail. But if paleolibertarianism can break that connection, then anything is possible.

Even non-paleo libertarians ought to be unhappy that our movement has a single cultural image. They ought to welcome, in conservative middle-class America, libertarians who are cultural and moral traditionalists. But my guess is that they will not, and that we will have a nasty fight on our hands. I, for one, welcome that fight.

Do we want to remain a small and irrelevant social club like the LP? Or do we want to fulfill the promise of liberty and make our movement a mass one again as it was in the 19th-century?

Culturally meaningful libertarianism has arrived during the greatest turmoil on the Right since the 1940s. Libertarians can and must talk again with the resurgent paleoconservatives, now in the process of breaking away from the neocons. We can even form an alliance with them. Together, paleolibertarians and paleoconservatives can rebuild the great anti-welfare state, anti-interventionist coalition that thrived before World War II and survived through the Korean War.

Together, we have a chance to attain victory. But first we must junk the libertarian image as repugnant, self-defeating, and unworthy of liberty.

Instead, we must adopt a new orientation. How nice that it is also the old one. In the new movement, libertarians who personify the present corruption will sink to their natural level, as will the Libertarian Party, which has been their diabolic pulpit.

Some will find this painful; I'm looking forward to it. Let the cleansing process begin—it is long past due. □