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C Span Producers

Thank you for covering  
the Vegetarian Convention  
on Labor Day weekend.

The Vegetarians seem  
to offer a real choice.

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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERTARIANISM

By Jarret B. Wollstein

Philosophers have long recognized that the greatest enemy man faces in his search for freedom and prosperity is himself. Having conquered most natural enemies in his environment, man faces extinction or enslavement from his own species. Nuclear war and ecological catastrophe are just two of the more obvious manifestations of the threat created by human irrationality and aggression. More subtle, but just as fundamentally sinister, are the violent and destructive passions of men which impel them to violent crime and authoritarian laws.

For centuries men of conscience have protested the injustices of their societies and sought a better world. All too often their ideals have remained unpursued dreams or been corrupted to create doctrines and institutions of human repression. But despite mistakes, progress has been made, and the search must go on if man is not to regress to the cave. It is the force of man's ideals which impel him forward and libertarianism is one of the most advanced and consistent of those ideals.

### Life, Liberty & Property

Libertarianism is a modern philosophy of individual liberty. Libertarianism holds that if man is to prosper and be free, it is the enslavement of his fellows from which he must first be liberated.

The libertarian ideology asserts that every individual has an inalienable right to *his own* life, which he should be able to live as he sees fit, so long as he respects the same right of others. By extension, libertarianism holds that every individual has an inalienable right to the products of his actions, i.e., his justly acquired property, which is morally his to use and dispose of as he sees fit.

Libertarianism holds that man's rights to life, liberty and property are principles of proper social organization which should not be violated by any other individual or group. Thus libertarianism holds that any attempt to take any portion of an individual's services or property from him without his consent is a violation of his rights and a moral abomination, inherently destructive of any free and prosperous society—regardless of whether the aggressor is an individual, a criminal gang or a government.

Libertarians also insist that the same moral principles which apply to individuals apply to social groups as well—that acts which are immoral for private individuals acting on their own authority are equally immoral for social institutions acting with the support of the majority of their society.

Libertarianism supports the rights of individuals to engage in any form of human relationship or association which is peaceful and voluntary, including the free market, trade, voluntary communes, private enterprise and syndicalism. Conversely, libertarianism is opposed to anything that is violent and coercive—a regulated market, state socialism, militarism, the corporate state, theft and war.

### Anti-Politics

Libertarianism is politically neither left nor right, liberal nor conservative. Like the political left, libertarians oppose the draft, censorship, war, the military/industrial complex, laws against recreational drugs and police repression. Like the political right, libertarians oppose taxation, anti-trust laws, wage/price controls, and so on. Libertarianism is explicitly *anti-political*.

Libertarian advocates of the free market point out that the present American political-economic system is far removed from their ideal of *laissez faire* capitalism. The free market means no government redistribution of wealth, no subsidies for industry, no minimum wage laws, no government maintained franchise monopolies, and no protection from foreign competition—evils all endemic in America today.

Similarly, libertarian syndicalists have little sympathy with Chinese and Soviet regimes with their tremendous centralization of power in the government. Libertarians seek a society in which individuals are free to run their own lives—not one in which men are ruled either by collusion between big corporations and the government or by edicts of ideologists acting in the name of "the people". It is clear that a libertarian society lies in the future.

### The Libertarian Society

There are two main libertarian views of the nature of the society which should replace the present coercive ones: One group, the limited governmentalists, hold with novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand that there should be a government whose sole function is the protection of individuals from aggressors. They argue that the best guarantee of justice would be through a state restricted to a police force, court system, and armed forces.

The second major group of libertarians, the anarcho-capitalists, reject government altogether. They argue that since every individual has the same right of action as any other individual, there can be no such thing as a social institution with the unique or final authority to deal with aggressors. They hold that a "limited government" cannot morally prevent other groups from offering the same defensive services. Thus, anarcho-capitalists maintain that social defense should be regarded as a service, and that in any given geographic area there may well exist competing agencies of defense.

With the exception of this difference, both limited-governmentalists and anarcho-capitalists are in complete agreement about the nature of a free society: In such a society, everything from education, to the minting of money, to road construction, to welfare would be voluntary enterprises. Libertarians consider taxation and any other form of involuntary financing immoral, inefficient, and unnecessary.

(Methods of organizing and financing "public services" without government are discussed in detail in a number of libertarian books, including *For A New Liberty*, *The Machinery of Freedom*, *Society Without Coercion*, and *Public Services Under Laissez Faire*.)

### Is Libertarianism Practical?

The arguments against libertarianism are almost entirely "practical ones": How could you build roads without eminent domain? Wouldn't the poor and elderly starve without public welfare? How could you defend the country without a tax-supported military? And so on. Detailed and specific answers to all of these questions and many more appear in the many libertarian books and magazines, but one general answer is simply this:

*Coercion gives men no special powers or abilities that they do not otherwise possess. All that which is truly worthwhile can be accomplished without aggression. Free men are not idiots or brutes—they do not need governments to force them to provide for their education, their sick, their poor, or for their old age. Historically the greatest advancements in human welfare have been made in precisely those periods with the least governmental regulation of human action.*

*The omnipotent state is the archaic remnant of tribal war lords and witch doctors; it is the super-parent who tells us that we are not fit to run our own lives. But there comes a time in the life of every man and society when they must leave the stifling safety of a programmed existence, discard the myths of childhood, and venture forth into the world of self-responsible adults. There are, to be sure, risks in abandoning the nursery, but no human development is possible without risk.*

*As libertarians we say to the world: Wake up and cut the cord. There is a world of infinite pleasure, variety and adventure open to the person with the courage to be free.*

# INTOLERANCE

## The Psychology Of Fear

STEVE LORD



# SOCIETY FOR INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

## INTOLERANCE

Why is it that some people want to control the way other people live, prescribe the manner in which they must behave, govern their moral standards, their tastes, their desires, their lives?

Why is it that people will not simply live and let live, allowing others to do as they wish so long as they don't violate the rights of anyone else? It seems perfectly rational, natural, and just to live in that manner, yet in no society that has ever existed have people ever done so. Why is it that in every social grouping institutionalized intolerance has developed in one form or another?

The answer is very simple and very ugly. It lies in the psychology and philosophy of the people in the society and in one specific motive guiding them when they seek to impose behavioral restrictions on other people. That motive is fear . . . but not the ordinary fear a person feels when confronted with some physical threat. The threat they feel is psychological, and it stems from their own uncertainty of the rectitude of their own values, which in turn stems from their own lack of critical thinking.

### The Acquisition of Values

The unhappy fact is that most people acquire most of their values in some non-rational manner, such as by a kind of cultural osmosis, or by acceptance on faith of some "moral authority", or by subconscious abstraction from literature, plays, movies, television, etc. The person who acquires his values in this manner, regardless of their validity or non-validity, does not understand them and cannot defend them rationally . . . he cannot be certain, yet he emotionally feels that certain things are right and good, whatever these particular things may be.

At the same time, his self-esteem depends upon his living up to the very values that he doesn't really understand, that he has accepted by virtue of his failure to think and question. He cannot afford to admit to himself that he is uncertain, that the cause of his uncertainty is his own failure to think, and that his goals, his style of life, and his self-esteem rest on a series of untested assumptions. And because deep inside he knows he cannot justify his values, yet is emotionally committed to them, he cannot bear to have them challenged or questioned. Any serious challenge is all too likely to reveal his hidden uncertainty and the lack of thought behind it. This is the source of his intolerance and his fear.

As long as the people around him act and think the same way he does, or at least give lip-service to the same standards, he feels no need to ask uncomfortable questions about himself and his purposes and ideals. But if people begin to reject his values, and live or act in contradiction to them, he no longer feels quite so sure of himself. The dislike and distaste he naturally feels for their "immoral" actions is tempered by a hint of doubt, which he feels as a threat to his own established standards. And the doubt itself threatens to undercut his self-esteem, because his self-esteem can be no more firmly rooted than are the standards by which he judges himself.

### Values & the Development of Character

For the parents of young children, this feeling of being threatened psychologically is greatly multiplied. It is their job to teach their children what they believe to be the proper values for a person to live by. But having accepted their own values secondhand, they are unable to explain or justify them rationally to their children. They only know that they *feel* that certain things are right or wrong, and want their children to feel the same way.

Yet most children are curious, and will begin to wonder if they see the neighbors doing what mommy and daddy tell them is bad . . . and not get punished for it. And mommy and daddy have no reasonable explanations to offer. They can only hope to be taken on faith, which becomes less and less likely as the children grow up and develop a sense of criticism.

So to insulate their children from "bad" influences (and from independent thought) they try to see that restrictive laws are enacted to make others behave according to their personal prejudices, whereupon they can feel proudly self-righteous because they have succeeded in substituting their own emotional bias for reason, force for persuasion, and covered their own uncertainty and fear under the mantle of law-abiding respectability. And should they succeed in bamboozling their children into accepting their values on faith and authority, they will have created another generation of intolerant, fearful, unthinking bigots who will simply continue the cycle.

Strong religious beliefs or moral beliefs based on religion are especially likely to lead to repressive social controls on people, depending somewhat on the exact nature of the beliefs. The reason is that religious beliefs, while highly personal and important to the self-esteem of the person involved, are generally

held on a basis of faith, and are thus especially susceptible to questioning, challenge, and doubt.

Indeed, willingness to force others to live by one's own ideals is often a manifestation of an attempt to *convince oneself* of the rightness and certainty of one's beliefs . . . as if *acting* as if one is so certainly, absolutely right that one would (supposedly) be justified in forcing others, could actually *make* one that absolutely certain. Nor, after using force, could one afford to think otherwise . . . it would be too damaging to self-esteem.

The repressive, irrational sex laws found in almost every part of the United States are an excellent example of organized intolerance stemming from a religious belief. Their origin lies in anti-sex moral codes which are deeply ingrained in most of the religions popular in this country. Freedom in sexual relations poses no conceivable threat to anyone, yet there are literally hundreds of laws restricting such freedom. The reasons should be fairly obvious.

### Independent Thought

The man who has thought through his values independently and can justify them rationally, who is truly sure of his values because he knows *why* they are right, is not disturbed when others think or act differently than himself.

If someone else does something he disapproves of, he can always explain to his own satisfaction why their action was wrong or less good than it might have been. And when he encounters a question or challenge he can't answer immediately, he at least knows how to go about finding a solution, because he has made a practice of thinking in the past. Neither his standards nor his self-esteem are threatened, since both are based upon the fullest use of his mind. And because he does not fear the opinions of others, he neither needs nor desires to suppress or restrict their freedom.

The source of social intolerance is fear and uncertainty, which stems from the absence of independent thought and judgment. It represents the attempt of non-thinking people to prevent any challenge to their beliefs and ideals which might expose their lack of substance, and to evade the effort and risk inherent in the exercise of independent judgment.

Copies of this brochure are available for 25 for \$2. from: Society for Individual Liberty, PO Box 338 Warminster, PA.



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