

THE MORALITY OF CAPITALISM

In order to identify the ethical nature of Capitalism, it is first necessary to define just what it is. This is no easy task: for the most part Capitalism has been defined only by its enemies. This makes "Capitalism" a loaded word which often provokes profound revulsion and very little intellectual consideration.

Capitalism Defined

Capitalism is simply a politico-economic system based upon the moral idea that each person has a right to their own life and the products of their labor. The most basic ethical implication of this ideal is that it rules out coercion by one person against another and thus allows all persons to act freely.

In any consideration of ethics, it is obvious that actions are good or evil only to the extent that they are freely performed. Anyone *forced* to perform an act is neither good nor bad with respect to that act and the coercive agent (whether it is another person, a group of persons, or a government) is immoral since it has destroyed the possibility of choice and thus negated the basis of ethics. Coercion is, by its very nature, anti-ethical.

Freedom & Traditional Ethics

It is obvious that the "capitalism" which I have described does not much resemble the present system in this country nor in fact does it resemble any system which has ever existed. Contrary to popular opinion, Capitalism did not exist during the last century in this country nor did it really exist in any other time or place. The ideal of Capitalism is based upon a radical reconstruction of Western philosophy and in particular upon an essentially new view of ethics: an ethics for life; for man.

All traditional Western ethical systems—those of the various Judeo-Christian sects, utilitarianism and the secularized Christianity implicit in Marxism and all other forms of socialism—are based upon one common ethical presupposition. This is the idea that each individual must either be a slave or a slave master.

Early Christianity first envisioned this false dichotomy and sanctified the slave role as being moral in contrast to the slave master who victimized them. Socialism has merely secularized this same doctrine and erected a semblance of rationality around this basically mystical and supernatural ethic. However, there are some differences between the two.

Christianity merely justified the existing slave morality to a *single* master. Socialism has attempted to substitute the collective for a single slave master. The basic moral justification for all the forms of modern statism has been that the individual must serve the purposes of the nation, the state, the people, or some other social group. What this means, in fact, is that no man has the right to live or work for his own sake and that he owes a moral obligation to "others".

Capitalism & Freedom

The ethics of capitalism reject the implicit dichotomy of slave vs. master which lies at the base of traditional ethics. It states unequivocally that each man, by his nature as a man, has a right to live for his own sake. The individual is in fact the unit of life and mind, and since without life there is no possibility of choice or ethics, it is clear that each man must be the highest good at which all his actions aim.

This means that the great value of social interaction and the exchange of spiritual and material values in society can only be realized through voluntary association. Man must produce the means of his own survival. Production and creation can only be achieved in freedom simply because no man can be forced to think. Slavery kills the incentive for life and creativity; it destroys man's humanity.

The only true human society is necessarily one in which all persons are free to create and to live, which means that they must be kept free to keep that which they have created. In this sense, Capitalism requires a morality of life for man. Not life as mere subsistence by any means possible, but life for man as man; life for man as a rational animal . . . an animal which must produce to live and for whom reason is the primary means of survival.

The brute force of coercion, which is employed in all nations at the present time and which is justified by an appeal to the slave-virtues of sacrifice and self-negation, is in fact the antithesis of reason. It is an attempt to live on the level of a beast of prey, and by the same means. Coercion is not of itself creative; it can only steal or destroy that which has already been created by a freely thinking and working man. As such, it destroys itself with its victims, and never produces anything to sustain life.

Evils of "Capitalism"

There are, undoubtedly, evils in what currently passes as "capitalism", but these evils are actually the result of various forms of coercion. The good things of this world, both spiritual (that is, intellectual) and material, have been the creations of free men and free minds. Correspondingly, that which is evil has come about either directly or indirectly as a result of statism, collectivism and force; which is to say, as a result of slavery.

Just as the relatively capitalistic Northern states abolished the institution of total slavery in the South during the American Civil War, so can the remaining forms of human slavery be destroyed. But this is only possible if freedom is morally vindicated. Freedom, humanity and capitalism are only possible within a culture of rational ethics. Within the present decadent culture of religious and social mysticism, man is doomed to total destruction or, what could be worse, a new Dark Age in which all the achievements of the last several centuries will be swept away as man descends to the lowest levels of hell.

Freedom Or Slavery?

There is no reconciliation possible between freedom and slavery; between man and anti-man. If mankind is to survive and retain its humanity, the idea that the initiation of physical force can be justified for any purpose, no matter how supposedly exalted, must be abandoned. There is no justification for slavery and death.

The present world crisis is a perfect illustration of the results of such "justification". The only cure for it is a *moral* revolution, not a revolution which merely changes rulers or details of the justification for a particular brand of statism.

The true radical must aim much deeper than this. He must aim to change the way men think and the entire ethical-intellectual culture of human society. This can only be accomplished through reason and persuasion.

Capitalism is an *inherently* moral system. And true Capitalism and human freedom can only be achieved through means compatible with their nature.

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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 ideologues 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 governmentals, 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?

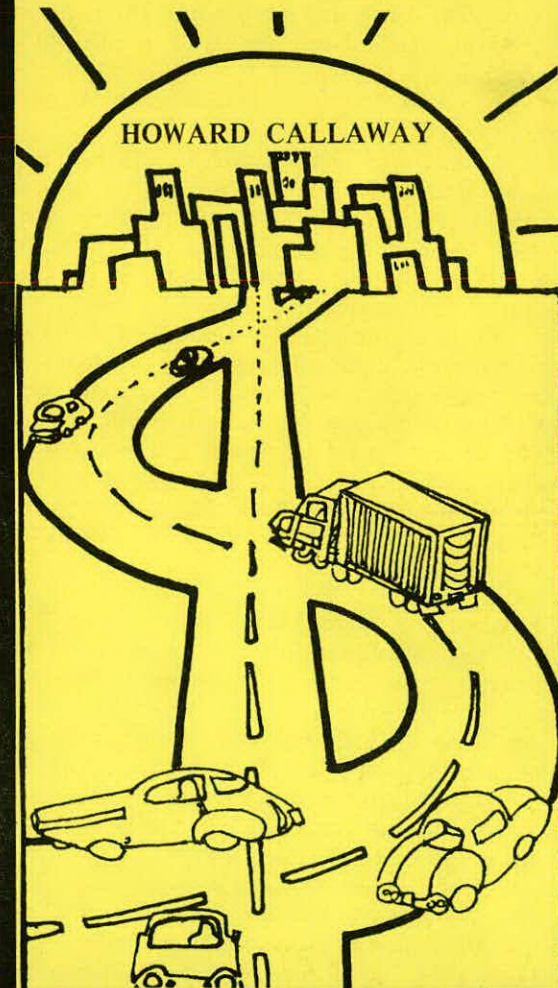
The arguments against libertarianism are almost entirely "practical ones": How could you build roads without eminent domain? Wouldn't the poor and elderly starve without public welfare? How could you defend the country without a tax-supported military? And so on. Detailed and specific answers to all 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.

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SOCIETY FOR INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY