

THE INVISIBLE FIST

by

ROGER HANE

In a recent Detroit News interview with the Libertarian Party presidential candidate Andre Marrou, Mr. Marrou mentioned how he thought that "people are basically good, therefore we need very little government." This reminded me of some conversations I had with Tim O'Brien some time ago. Tim and I debated about some small points of libertarian theory and practice. I finally realized that the cause of our disagreement was a differing belief about the state of human nature. Tim seems to believe, as Mr. Marrou does, that humans are fundamentally good, and that left to their own devices, they will ultimately "do the right thing" by each other. I, on the other hand, have long believed that humans are fundamentally "evil", that they will cheat and harm each other whenever it is to their advantage to do so.

When libertarians explain their philosophy to others, trying through a rather sterile appeal to logic to persuade them of the benefits of adopting it, their line of reasoning completely skirts the messy down side of libertarianism. This has moved me to present my own defense of libertarianism. A defense which some of you may find strange, but others may find perfectly reasonable. Mine is a Nature-based defense which definitely incorporates the down side. I believe that a good test of any philosophy is to see how well it coincides with Nature.

I would start my defense with the usual

A WOMAN IN PAIN

by

EILEEN POUPARD

A woman I know is terminally ill. Until very recently she was also in a great deal of pain, thanks to a spleen enlarged to fifteen times the normal size. The spleen was removed and now she is more comfortably enjoying her remaining days. Unfortunately our FDA has, in the public's "best interest", removed the slim hope she had of survival. She was in an experimental treatment program for her illness, but one of the goals of the program was to see what effect the treatment would have on the spleen. No spleen, no experimental treatment program. This is as stupid as the FDA denying AIDS victims new treatments because they might be unhealthy. Our FDA has gone beyond dictatorial and become downright abusive.

There has been another example of FDA oppression in the news that I'm sure we all heard about. The courageous woman who tried to bring the French abortion pill into the United States for her personal use. U.S. customs confiscated the pills, then the courts bounced them around with the end result being that she was not able to keep them. Those for and against abortion should demand the approval of this drug. Even people like myself who are uncomfortable with abortion and fear that the baby may suffer great pain, should see the great merits of a pill that would allow a woman to terminate a possible pregnancy very early and avoid the denial and procrastination that often leads to second trimester abortions.

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Objectivist foundations, but I wouldn't put the smiley-faced "benevolent universe" spin on it. Instead, I would acknowledge the inevitability of poverty, hardship and suffering. I would point out that a strength of libertarianism is not that it eradicate these problems but that it is the only philosophical and political system which openly acknowledges that these problems cannot be solved, adding that any system that says it can solve these problems is just lying for its own benefit.

In order to give a full explanation of life and social behavior, the concepts of Objectivism must be combined with the findings of science. In recent months I have been casually studying the Second Law of Thermodynamics and its application to human behavior. I'll spare you the technical details, but I'll share with some of the grim conclusions I have found and how they relate to libertarianism.

One conclusion which I'll briefly state (but which you may find cryptic) is: Our universe is an expanding universe, and an expanding universe is a malevolent universe.

Another conclusion is the survival-of-the-fittest social Darwinism is the predominant force for society and for individuals. Libertarianism is good when it acknowledges the inevitability and legitimacy of this force. But unlike libertarianism, Nature does not distinguish between honest and dishonest greed. In that respect, libertarianism attempts to defy nature.

Nature rewards vicious deceitfulness just as much as it rewards honest ability. But above all, Nature rewards shallowness and aggressiveness. Nature is a ruthless, ungrateful master.

Nature does not contain any inherent, unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Any "rights" a person has were gotten by a savage Darwinian power struggle. Any "rights"

we now have in our present democracy were put there by the mobs that were in power at the time, whether they were Federalist mobs, Whig mobs, Republican mobs or Democrat mobs. If we are to turn this into a libertarian government, we will have to become a Libertarian mob, pressing our case by our sheer force of numbers, not by an intellectual appeal to inherent rights.

Humans' attempts to curb violence and deceitfulness can only be done giving this mandate to organizations (i.e., governments) which, being composed of humans, will inevitably become violent and deceitful themselves. In trying to find what form of government would minimize both civilian violence and deceit and governmental violence deceit, I find that the appropriate government would be "libertarian." Unfortunately, that minimum for the civilian sector isn't all that low. The sad thing is that for individuals operating under the influence of the Second Law of Thermodynamics (and that means everyone), achieving these minimums is of no concern to them. Achieving social status is what really matters. That's bad news for libertarians.

Let's look at some of the specific societal results that are guaranteed when you combine true human nature with a libertarian form of government.

In the area of jobs, libertarianism would be devastating. In a country without unions, minimum wage laws or workplace regulations, workers would be left with two alternatives: Either accept Third World wages and working conditions or become unemployed. Just as water seeks its own level, wages and working conditions brought about by the market forces of competition for employment would also seek their own level. When the field of competition becomes a global field with its tremendous surplus of labor, that level becomes very low indeed! Don't think that this wouldn't happen. Companies would jump at the chance to pay their employees slave wages and subject them to sweatshop working conditions. But this is all per-

fectly natural. In fact for companies under a libertarian government, it would be open season on workers, customers, the general public and the environment. Only a network of organizations like Underwriters Laboratories or Consumers Union could keep the public informed about the tidal wave of scams that companies would unleash on them. However, I'm fairly certain that the rate at which these private organizations would form and disseminate their information could never keep up the the number of scams that companies would keep attempting. The Second Law of Thermodynamics is on the side of the corporate executive.

Even when informed, people could not act against companies. Using the few laws remaining to act upon, individuals, with their meager financial resources, could never take on the corporations with their highly paid, high-powered lawyers.

Employers would be free to discriminate on the basis of anything, both in hiring and in whom they sell their products to. Don't think that wouldn't. If there's one motivation stronger than greed, it's prejudice. Employers will willingly hire on the basis of things other than ability. Merchants will willingly forego sales in order to avoid selling to people and groups they don't like. Once again, perfectly natural.

Lastly, on the subject of personal freedoms, I have come to some more sad conclusions. Under a libertarian government we would have our many personal freedoms (which I won't bother to catalog here). But then I wonder, where would we be able to exercise these freedoms? Every owner of private property would have the right to set limits on the actions of the people he allows onto his property. True, we would be free on public property, but under a libertarian government, there would be almost none of that around. We would spend all day going from private property to private property, each property with its own set of restrictions. The only place we would be absolutely free would be on our own private property. And if

you rent, you're really S.O.L., since you would be subject to the whims of your landlord. Yes, it's natural for humans to try to force other humans to obey them.

This, then, is my picture of life under a libertarian government. A grim picture indeed.

Nature, through the Second Law of Thermodynamics, has taught me that no political system can provide humans with freedom and prosperity. The only reason I would advocate a libertarian form of government over all others is that it is the form which is in closest harmony with Nature. Ironically, it is the very honesty and naturalness of libertarianism which prevents it from being adopted by the public as the political principle for their government. Since humans, in obedience to Nature, put a great premium on deceit and hypocrisy, they will naturally choose a hypocritical form of government. As natural as libertarianism is, deceit and hypocrisy are at least as natural. It may even be that, in the end, we'll find that the Second Law of Thermodynamics favors deceit and hypocrisy over libertarianism. Therefore, it would seem that libertarianism unfortunately doesn't have a chance.

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