



FREEDOM!



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INTRODUCTION

Right now is an amazing time to be alive. The human experience is as rich and delightful as ever and every day carries the promise of a better world. Not everyone sees it that way, but on the whole, "Team People" is doing very well. We have come a long way and that's something worth taking a step back to appreciate. But the current path is not sustainable. Governments are transferring more wealth than ever from the poor to the rich. We are rapidly approaching a point where we must adapt or perish. The short view of history tempts pessimism. We might see the recent steps backward as the triumph of evil over good, or at least a turn toward mutual annihilation. They are merely the steps backward in a long progression of one step backward and two steps forward.

A truly free society does not exist just because we have been convinced we are free. A truly free society cannot exist when we have been so thoroughly propagandized as to define "freedom" in terms of government-granted privilege rather than as a universal moral principle. However, a free society is inevitable because the global paradigm is shifting as we learn how to better assert our right of self-ownership.

We all know life is better with freedom – that our own individual experiences don't mean nearly as much without the ability to assert our will, rather than having our choices limited by force. Many of us today still experience lives dominated by the edicts of others. Many still live under the threat of death from war. While some are doing relatively well and enjoying a great deal of personal wealth and autonomy, many are not. Even those who are doing well are living in a less vibrant and robust environment due to violations of individual freedom around the world.

Any act of violence or threat of violence between individuals represents a violation of someone's freedom. The great illusion of the current paradigm of statism is that governments achieve a worthwhile reduction of violence. Governments are the greatest cause of violence in the world today. They are coercive monopolies with only an illusion of public support. Everything they do is based on a presumed right to point guns at people who are acting peacefully.

Many of us are dependent on government, and because it takes on a large role in society, one can claim that everyone benefits to some degree. This doesn't mean the benefits justify the cost, and the vast majority of us experience a net loss due to government. Even if we are convinced that most people have a net gain from government, we can always do better without using violence.

Freedom is the ability to exercise your will within your rights without the threat of force from anyone else. It's really that simple. You own yourself. No one can claim even partial ownership over you without violating your rights. By abolishing statism we will achieve a world free of miserable victims and miserable victimizers. We will create a world in which all relations are free of force and coercion. We will see each other as partners in the human experience, united in our desire to live free and realize our potential. We are destined to build a society based on respect and cooperation.

THE PHILOSOPHY

I. FREEDOM

Freedom is what you have when no one is forcing their will on you. Everyone inherently recognizes this as a good thing because we all value our power to make decisions. We all value making decisions without being threatened. Unfortunately, most of us have not taken the time to consider the precise nature of freedom and its foundation in universal undeniable principles. Applying those principles to big issues may be complicated, but the concept of freedom is not. When applied consistently, it shows the way to a more harmonious society.

If somebody is forcing their will on us, clearly, we are not free. So perhaps it is helpful to think of freedom not as a substance, but as an ideal state of social harmony in which no one is forcing their will on anyone else. A violation of freedom is an attack on a particular victim whose will is being forcibly hindered by taking their life, stealing their property, or threatening them with assault. Freedom is not just an ideal state of society, but a moral code for respecting the rights of others.

Self-ownership is an integral part of being human. You own yourself. You own your body. You own your labor. For anyone to assert otherwise is to attempt to restrict your freedom or make you a slave.

Because you own yourself, it is wrong for someone to initiate force against you or your property. Acceptance of this simple fact is the foundation of a free and peaceful society. This universal non-aggression principle applies to everyone, and it is therefore wrong to kill, injure, assault, steal from, or threaten another person. Anyone who directly violates others, supports the violation of others, or violates others on behalf of someone else is holding us back from achieving our potential through the harmonious and mutually beneficial transactions that take place in freedom.

II. GOVERNMENT

Very few people, even among government workers, have taken time to consider a precise definition of government. Governments get away with what they do because their true nature is obscured by propaganda. Most definitions describe “government” as the people in charge, but the foundation of control is always the threat of force. The authority claimed by governments is unique because it is considered license to use force or coercion against peaceful people. There is simply no way around it: government is control by force.

Government apologists claim it’s acceptable for a government to do something that an individual would never be allowed to do. This is why governments come up with special words to obscure what they’re really doing. War is mass murder. If an individual commits murder on their own, it is a crime and they should face consequences. But if an individual commits murder as part of a massive organized effort they might get a medal. Taxation is theft. If an individual kidnaps you for not giving them half your income, they go to jail. But if someone does that to you on behalf of government, they get a nice salary as a tax collector. No justification for these actions changes their fundamentally immoral nature. Nothing about the “divine right of kings,” the “will of the people,” or the “rule of law” has the power to justify an immoral act. Violent enforcers are essential to governments because without them, their threats would be meaningless.

To say that governments are premised on immorality is not to say everything they do is immoral. They often claim monopolies over very important functions in society, like helping the poor or protecting natural resources. The poor would be much better off and the environment would be much better protected if we did not entrust

those functions to the same people who make war. Even when a government gives money to someone in need it must first steal that money from someone else. No noble act can excuse theft, as much as governments would like us to believe.

Government is fundamentally immoral because it is based on violating the rights of individuals. As much as we have progressed, it has not been because of governments but despite them. As free, beautiful, independent human beings, we own ourselves and should never let anyone tell us otherwise. We deserve self-rule. We deserve to be in charge of our own lives. No one has the right to control others by force, even if they claim to have the majority behind them.

It may be that in the course of society's development, some control by force was inevitable. Out of weakness, we support some institutionalized violence only because we haven't figured out a better way. We may have been convinced that government is a "necessary evil," but because persuasion is always more powerful than coercion, it is inevitable that we will render it unnecessary.

Government is like a cancer. Less government is better than more government, just as less cancer is better than more cancer, but as long as it exists, it's a threat. As long as society accepts the idea that force is the way to solve problems, the only limit on violence is what enforcers cannot be convinced to do. Government today could be described as a global tumor. While it can be eradicated locally, we will only be safe when it has been completely abolished.

Government is control. Government is exploitation. Government is a protection racket. Government is disorder, violence, and conflict! Government is an idea "so good" that it has to be forced on us. Government is a group of people claiming a monopoly on the initiation of force in a specific territory. Government is the institutionalization of our worst desires to control, dominate, and take advantage of others by force. Governments reflect our tolerance for oppression, and all we need to do to defeat them is demand self-government.

III. STATISM

Systems of control that depend on victim participation reflect the way we think. If we believe a strong central authority with power over us is necessary, that is the kind of government we will get. Seeking and resisting control have always been part of life, but over time we have demanded more self-government. We have moved from acceptance of crude slavery and serfdom to demanding some role in "participatory" government. Statism is the ideology of turning to organized force to solve problems better solved through peaceful persuasion.

Considering how much force and violence have shaped our destiny, it is understandable why statism is so tempting. Do you care about the poor? Want to protect the environment? Care about national security? Value a society that makes education freely available? Governments would like you to think you have done your part on important social issues by voting and paying your taxes without thinking critically. The threat of violence makes government monopolies and other organized crime distinct from voluntary organizations. Even the good things they achieve are made possible by coercion.

Over the course of human history, as we have demanded more self-government, the government racket has adapted. At one point, it was accepted that whoever could pick up the biggest rock was in charge. Then we had to be convinced of the divine right of a king or queen. Then we needed a vote to be satisfied. The racket will be plenty lucrative until we see it for what it is. As we demand self-ownership, rather than participation in the oppression known as democracy, the racket will become impossible.

If it is wrong for one person to do something, why is it acceptable when 51% of a voting population agrees to hire someone to do it for them? Democracy is not freedom. When fully living up to its ideal, democracy is at best a majority coming up with an excuse to impose its will on a minority. More often, it is a completely bogus pretense for the powerful to exploit the rest of us as much as possible without creating more discontent than they can manage. Democracy also conveniently provides a false outlet for discontent with the promise of "change" from the next election.

As long as people demand a protection racket, they will get one. Regardless of what it is called, or what false ideology is used to justify it, government is based on forcing ideas on people. Statism is the dominant paradigm today because most of us are in denial or ignorant of its true nature. Dependence on government makes it scary

to consider something new. When enough of us realize the ideals of freedom, and turn to cooperative solutions instead of turning to force to solve problems, the paradigm of statism will have passed, and the government racket will be seen for what it really is, before it is quickly abolished.

IV. PROPERTY

It takes severely twisted logic and a low sense of self-worth to deny that you own yourself. The very act of asserting this falsehood proves it wrong because the act of self-expression is an exercise of self-ownership! Anything less than self-ownership is slavery. All concepts of rights come from self-ownership. Your self-ownership is the acknowledgement by others of your right to control yourself. If you do not assert control over something of value, someone else will. Without the assertion of self-ownership, there is no freedom.

Self-ownership means you have freedom of speech, because you own your voice and can say what you want. If someone beats, steals from, or imprisons you for your speech, they are not “violating your right to free speech,” as much as they are violating your self-ownership, because they didn’t like what you said. Self-ownership means you have the right to remain silent, because to force someone to speak is an attempt to control their property by threatening them. Self-ownership means your body is a manifestation of your own unique, conscious choices and no one can take that away from you.

Because you own yourself, you are responsible for your actions. If you break something that belongs to another, you owe them what is necessary to make them whole. This also means you are responsible for and own what you produce. If you create something of value by combining natural resources with your labor, you have a right to control it. You can destroy it, consume it, trade it, or give it away. This simple framework for property by itself has the potential to solve many important disputes.

It is not possible for everyone to enjoy perfectly equal access to natural resources, but in a society which respects the rights of individuals, it is wrong to limit anyone’s access to resources that are not being utilized. Thus, it is wrong to pollute in a way that spoils natural resources others could use or enjoy. It is wrong to claim land in order to prevent its use. It is wrong to limit access to natural resources for those who would put them to good use.

Just as you have a right to defend yourself and decide how to do it, you have a right to assign relative value to your property and decide how to defend it. Under the current paradigm of statism, many governments take away these choices. Whether you like it or not, part of your income will fund a system that is based on injustice and a corrupt sense of property. A thorough respect for the principles of property is essential to a free, cooperative, and peaceful society.

Most conflicts center around property disputes. Disputes are sometimes based on confusion or sincere disagreement, but more often they are based on false claims to property. Such false claims are central to governments, which often assert that they, or the collectives they represent, own your income or your body. Governments also serve to enforce all types of false property constructs to serve the interests of the super rich. By obscuring the simple concept of property rights, governments have been able to commit untold injustice by transferring property from the poor to the rich. Justice requires a solid foundation in property rights.

V. VOLUNTARYISM

From the foundation of self-ownership, we can build a system of justice based on property rights and the non-aggression principle. From this sense of justice, we can see that a free society would be one with only relationships free of force and coercion. This ideal would be a society free of violent control, and thus without anything like that which we call “government” today. This ideal society would be voluntary.

When all relations are voluntary, it means we enter into every exchange with another person by choice. We choose those exchanges based on what is in our best interest, rather than what someone else has chosen for us. When our rights are violated, some choice is taken from us. When governments say you can’t do something, it means if you do it, force will be used against you. While many of us still enjoy a great deal of independent decision-making, every aspect of our lives is affected by the threat of force.

Self-ownership means not only that you own yourself, but everyone owns themselves. The best way to ensure respect for our self-ownership is to respect the rights of others. Fortunately, most of us have no problem recognizing this principle and applying it in our daily lives. Even including government employees, relatively few people make their living directly by theft and murder. Unfortunately, society tends to carve out a special morals-free area for government agents. When you learned “don’t hit” and “don’t steal,” it wasn’t “unless you work for the government.” When you learned not to kill, it wasn’t “unless a politician says it’s ok.” Everything government does is made possible by violating someone’s rights.

Because people are prone to interpersonal violence, the absolute ideal of a purely voluntary society might be impossible. There could be a truly free and voluntary world, but the moment someone gets punched in the face, for the victim, the world is not very free! However, that does not mean we should not strive for a more free and peaceful society, or not work vigorously to eliminate violent aggression.

We are living in the most peaceful times in all of human history. Right now, we are less likely than ever before to be subject to violence from another person. That is a beautiful thing and it should be celebrated! Imagine how much more difficult life was for our ancestors living in a world where they had to live in relative fear of their fellow humans! Imagine how much more difficult trade and cooperation were with a lower level of trust. Sadly, governments today have more than replaced our distrust with other false fears and our lives are more thoroughly governed by force than ever before.

In a world without government (a world in which forced relations are the rare exception), trust is high, individual rights are respected, and the climate for cooperation is ideal. Only in this situation is every person capable of achieving their potential. Every time we fail to respect the self-ownership of others it diminishes our potential. Every threat of force limits choices. Every act of violence holds back humanity. The understanding that we should work toward a free society by ridding all relations of force is known as voluntarism.

BRIEF HISTORY OF POWER

I. EVOLUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT RACKET

Once humans could generate more than needed to sustain themselves, it became worthwhile to exploit them. To understand the origins of government and interpersonal violence, we need to go all the way back to the state of nature, or perhaps even earlier to our biological origin. We have always sought to meet our needs by controlling the world around us, including other people. Most human relations have been cooperative and nonviolent, but the desire to control others by force evolved from the first temptation to steal to the modern governments we know today.

If government is defined as rule by force, we might have never experienced a state of nature without government. In some primitive hunter-gatherer groups, people had to accept that whoever was strongest was in charge. Perhaps it was in the best interest of the individual to go along with such a system because to challenge it could mean you would be on your own, or worse, injured or killed.

Because we are pack animals, we developed complex languages that allowed us to communicate and coordinate. Suddenly, the guy who could pick up the biggest rock wasn't necessarily in charge! It was the best hunter – the guy who could effectively lead a coordinated effort that required communication and cooperation. Then great hunters started calling themselves chiefs, and the first ongoing protection rackets that might resemble modern governments started to emerge.

Technology has played a primary role in determining social order because it determines what productive capacity can be exploited. Before language or tools, people could only gather relatively little in excess of their needs. With the invention of the tools needed for hunting, there was often excess food that freed up creative energies for other production, but also for other manipulation. With the development of agriculture, people could create far more food than they could consume and could support a whole variety of specialized labor, including the unique profession of the “government leech.”

With the rise of industry, the productive output of the individual increased dramatically, and so did society's overall ability to support people who were completely unproductive, or even counterproductive. If governments took half the income of primitive peasants who could barely get enough food to feed themselves, they would all die or revolt against such massive theft. However, if governments take half the income of modern industrial workers whose salaries can feed ten families, then use some of it to convince them it's for their own good, they might even vote for higher taxes. Or at worst, they'll vote for the other politician who will steal just a little bit less from them on behalf of the same sponsors.

As we have become more productive per person, we have become better educated and more aware of governments. As a result, governments have used education and mass media to make us think that the racket is essential, or even beneficial, but the effects are in decline. We have come to demand more control over our own decisions, and to go about our lives without being robbed or assaulted.

The history of government has been defined by two arcs: the development of our capacity to tolerate theft, and our awareness that we deserve to live without being robbed. The first arc will continue to grow exponentially with technology, but the second arc will eventually outpace the first. This can be seen in the development of modern participatory democracies. Of all the various forms of government, this is the last one before achieving a truly free society.

The long view of history provides an inspiring story of the development of self-government. If we only look at the current period, we might see it as a struggle for democracy. Fighting for “equal participation” in the forced control of others prevents us from achieving the greater goal of a society that respects self-ownership. Democracy is a way to pretend that we are all equal slave-owners. The reality is always going to be far less than the champions of democracy promise, because it is based on a fundamentally immoral ideal. No one has the right to force a leader on anyone else and no mandate from the majority gives any leader the right to use force against anyone.

Democracy is the justification for most of what the super rich were going to do to everyone else anyway. If anything, it provides a very convenient cover for them to do whatever they want, because democracy allows them to say they are doing it according to the “will of the people.” This has given rise to the modern bureaucracies that make it seem like every aspect of our lives is affected by government, or more precisely, controlled by threats of violence. Yet the illusion of participation through voting keeps us coming back for more.

Because we are pragmatic creatures who cannot disagree with the existing social order if we cannot eat, we have more or less gone along with the progression of the racket. While productivity has increased and governments have grown, the demand for self-government is accelerating and the illusion of democracy won't satisfy it. Major historical revolutions have made the racket more difficult, even unworkable at times, but only after the global paradigm shift to freedom will we shed the racket once and for all.

As society evolved, we retained our primal instincts. We are a communal species, not dependent on each other, but dependent on cooperation to maintain our standard of living and to enhance our chances of survival and reproduction. Because cooperation is superior to coercion, we have continuously developed better ways of organizing society to foster cooperation. The era of modern governments represents an important step in the process, but it is by no means the final one. The adoption of a new paradigm based on freedom will soon render all forms of organized exploitation laughably obsolete.

II. PATRIOTISM

People have always derived a sense of identity from affiliation with groups. We compare ourselves to lesser groups to boost our sense of self-esteem. This inherent feature of the human psyche has been widely exploited to manipulate societies into tolerating oppression. Even if we accept the creation of strong group identities as a service, governments have used monopoly privileges to charge far more than their services are worth. In the case of modern governments, the price of strong national identities has been widespread war, theft, and manipulation.

The original grouping we all seek affiliation with is family. There is a natural, healthy instinct to see those who gave us life as superior to anyone who didn't. Unfortunately, this is easily perverted into a fear of outsiders, or people who are different from those we identify with as family. When a family or a tribe is threatened, this instinct can be very helpful, even essential to survival. When there is no threat, fear of outsiders can block cooperation.

Many governments directly exploit this tendency by trying to get people to think of their country as a family and the political leaders as parents. This not only allows a government to take on a more controlling role in general, but especially when it comes to relationships between countries. Patriotism perverts natural group identities into national identities. This term is often defined as “love of one's country,” but when that country is defined by lines drawn on a map by politicians, wars, and circumstances of history, that love is for a false sense of group identity created and supported explicitly to strengthen the psychological grip of governments over their victims.

Patriotism is an artificial, bordered “love” designed to create a distinct lack of love for those on the other side of the borders. There is nothing wrong with loving yourself, or those similar to you – those who share your values or intrinsic traits you value in yourself – but to assign love based on the borders of a violent racket is an inherently dangerous idea. The most insecure and vulnerable people are most likely to be the most enthusiastic patriots, and thus governments always have an interest in keeping us afraid of outsiders, disconnected from the rest of the world, and stunted in emotional maturity.

Insecurity and a tendency to seek identity as part of a group can lead people to do dangerous and irrational things. Patriotism has been used to justify the most horrific crimes in history because people more strongly identified as members of a group than as morally strong individuals. Patriotism inherently means lowering ourselves to be members of a group like primitive pack animals. This leads to the diversion of responsibility

essential to government, and to the unthinking obedience that deludes people into believing that saying “I was just following orders” will excuse immoral behavior.

Governments rely on a sense of patriotism in their victims to get them to go along with policies not in their best interest. They need us to believe we are sacrificing for the common good when we are really aiding our victimizers. They need us to go along as part of the herd. They need us to accept the proclaimed selflessness of politicians acting only out of “love” for the artificial collective. They need to ensure that not too many of us victims are emotionally healthy thinkers who demand self-government and are secure in our identities as free, beautiful, independent people. Patriotism is proof that a patriot isn’t free.

III. PROPAGANDA

The great government lie is that it exists for the good of its victims. To obscure the truth, governments go to great lengths with propaganda intended to change the way we think and thus how we act. Propaganda spreads misinformation that can affect our decisions, deflect blame from governments, encourage infighting, promote dislike of outsiders, and create a sense of patriotism, or identification with the country or even the government itself. The greatest measure of what governments are capable of with propaganda is how much they have convinced us to identify with them so that anyone who challenges their power is seen as an enemy of the people. Fortunately, the same technology that makes propaganda possible today has finally caught up in terms of empowering us to question government, and we may have already passed the high point of the effectiveness of propaganda.

In the early days of government, propaganda was simple and crude. Perhaps the first example was a big caveman with a spear grunting angrily at a neighboring tribe, goading his people into attacking. “Bad guys! Over there! Be a patriot! Go get ‘em!” As communications technology has advanced, so has the complexity of society, so has the complexity of the racket, and so has the power of propaganda. At first, if only to coordinate subdivisions, communication technology was essential to government growth. With mass public communication, the effects of propaganda became much stronger. It also made it worthwhile for governments to invest very heavily in the development of propaganda techniques. Governments use propaganda to create support for a wide array of policies that any free-thinking society would never tolerate.

The development of mass communications technology enabled governments to assemble massive armies of poor men, not only to fight and die in rich men’s wars, but to do it enthusiastically. Not only could they convince people to support massive welfare programs, but they could make them enthusiastic taxpayers who expect and tolerate enormous waste, fraud, and abuse. Not only could they take over broad segments of the economy by seizing private property, they could get people to believe that without governments, society couldn’t function! The propaganda techniques are so sophisticated, governments have convinced people to attack anyone who points out the uncomfortable truth.

Governments and their representatives lie to us directly, but the lies are so much more effective when someone else is delivering them. Governments have always materially supported propagandists who tilt the general conversation in their favor. Religion has long played a supporting role in oppression, as governments will promote religions that advocate obedience to government. Through sponsorship (and in some places takeover) of education, governments can strongly favor those who reinforce their narrative. Governments and their sponsors give credibility to their propaganda by supporting think tanks. They control mass media by corporate licensing, censorship, monopoly management of infrastructure, and limited access.

Staged conversations between preselected talking heads are a common tactic of propagandists because the best propaganda is the kind the targets don’t recognize. Experts who supposedly represent all sides of a debate have a lopsided conversation which draws people in with sensationalism and the credibility of personalities. The audience gets to decide who they agree with “independently.” A third option is not considered or is presumed irrelevant. Dissent is not acknowledged. And while the people think they are free because they are vigorously debating one socially-divisive issue or another, they are not considering the validity of the presumptions of the propaganda: government is good, government is here to protect us, we couldn’t possibly survive without government.

While propaganda has had a great multiplier effect on the effectiveness of the racket, (explaining its widespread use) its effectiveness is on the decline. While publication technologies once empowered governments

disproportionately, we now have such an abundance of information at our fingertips that it is much more difficult to lie to us. As long as there are governments, there will be propaganda. As long as propaganda is effective, governments will always be possible. But because we are capable of questioning propaganda like never before, it will eventually be irrelevant.

IV. GOVERNMENT VS TECHNOLOGY

In many ways, the arc of government has followed the arc of technology, but their relationship is much more complicated. Governments are often empowered by technology in ways the public is not, sometimes secretly. Technology has allowed governments to be far more destructive than they would be without it. In many ways, technology is now empowering us to challenge government power. As long as we are susceptible to the racket, available technology will determine the nature of the oppression, but eventually technology will empower the general population to demand self-government and render the psychological roots of statism irrelevant.

The prevailing state of technology is the primary determinant of the productive capacity of the average member of society. Excess productivity makes government possible. The development of agriculture suggested a racket centered around various forms of tenant farming. The development of industry created a much more regimented and coordinated economy that suggested taxing income. Developments in printing and enforcement of currency regulations made possible the underpinning of nearly all modern governments: monopoly creation of money. Technology has also driven the arc of our ability to destroy ourselves to the point where complete annihilation seems feasible. If we can get past statism now, we will have averted the possibility of the destructive arc of government overtaking the peaceful and empowering arc of technological development.

Technological development leads to wealth development. By increasing the capacity of the average laborer, technology raises the standard of living (despite government always taking larger portions of our output). When people barely had the ability to feed their families and pay off their landlords, they didn't have time to organize protests. With the development of a wealthier society overall, the level of individual empowerment has increased along with access to information. This has been the primary driver of the increased demand for self-government.

Despite the rapidly-developing internet, some politicians think they can still get away with the old deceptions. Sometimes, politicians will say one thing, then say the opposite thing in another town the next day, only to find video of the two statements edited together online the day after. When so many of us have nearly the entire wealth of human knowledge at our fingertips, it's very difficult to lie effectively.

When a victim of bullying stays silent, the bully is emboldened. Like any bully, governments want their victims to stay quiet. They try to keep victims isolated and prevent them from banding together. The internet has created a conversation in which we can share our stories of victimization and see that we are not alone. The worst government atrocities are now viral videos. The new conversation does not favor governments.

Understanding government as institutionalized violence allows us to see its psychological roots. People turn to violence and are tempted into conflict by insecurity and fear. Technology is empowering us to be much more aware of mental health. One might argue that mental health is historically low because of current governments, but even if that is true, lower rates of interpersonal violence would suggest a much more empowered society. In the long run, technology will empower connectedness, harmony, and cooperation much more than governments.

Because governments depend on an enforcement class to do violence against people who are acting peacefully, the ability to limit and control information that gets to the enforcement class is very important. The general abundance of communication technology makes that much more difficult. It is easy to convince a soldier to kill someone if he can be convinced his victim is somehow less than human. It is much more difficult if they can video chat online. Technology is making it more difficult for governments to isolate people.

Before the internet, governments could control cutting edge communication technology effectively. Many desperate governments limit access to the internet or apply targeted censorship, but this marks the beginning of the end of the racket. As the internet continues to become more widely available, it will become much more difficult to deceive people. Able to connect like never before, we are already developing the relationships that will render government obsolete.

WAR

I. THE GREATEST CRIME AGAINST FREEDOM

If the worst crime that can be committed against an individual is murder, then the worst possible crime is organized, deliberate, self-righteous, mass murder. “War” is just a word that governments use to make mass murder and theft seem acceptable. Only the sickest and most deranged individuals support murder as a matter of policy and only the sickest and most deranged governments engage in war. To get away with it, they have to convince a critical mass of the population to materially support it. It’s not too difficult when they are already convinced that murder is acceptable if enough people do it.

None of the propaganda around war can disguise its true nature. It is massive organized violence for the purpose of expanding government power. It is the height of statism and it is the greatest affront to freedom. Governments will go to great lengths to convince people that war is glorious and those who oppose it are cowards. None of this changes the physical reality of war: mass destruction of human life, shooting people because of the racket they are fighting for, bombing people for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and poor men dying for the benefit of government sponsors. Wars make governments more powerful and more powerful governments are better at ripping people off.

The destruction of combat is an affront to freedom and denies us the prosperity of peace. Governments use war as an excuse to increase taxation. When they can frighten people with a foreign threat, this is much easier. Once convinced, not only will they pay their taxes enthusiastically, they will attack anyone who suggests taxes should be lower. When fear fails to trick enough young people into joining the military, governments enslave people with “conscription.” War diverts an incredible amount of productive capacity from serving demand in the market to destruction. Immeasurable future labor is lost from the dead and wounded.

To make a society support the crazy ideas behind war, governments need to instill an intense sense of collective identity, which is in itself an affront to freedom. The great tragedy of war is the deception behind it. Yes, it’s quite tragic when someone is murdered, but it is far more tragic when mass murder is so clearly preventable. War is the height of statism and the greatest crime against freedom. It is only possible because individuals are willing to commit horrific acts when doing a government’s bidding.

II. SOLDIERING

Once a government has developed a strong sense of national identity and patriotism among its citizens, it is not particularly difficult to convince a large number of them to sign up to defend the collective. This is still true for governments with consistent records of sending people to kill and die in ways that clearly have nothing to do with defense. But being called a soldier does not separate you from responsibility for your actions.

The human tendency to cooperate is much stronger than the tendency to fight, so it takes a significant amount of conditioning to make war possible. It starts with the general propaganda of collectivism and demonization of outsiders. The sacrifice of individuality and dehumanization of the self necessary to be a soldier makes it easier to condition a soldier to dehumanize the enemy. Once the enemy is seen as less than human, killing is much easier. When soldiers are so detached from reality, they are easy to manipulate with rewards of honor and praise represented by bits of cloth and metal pinned to their chests.

In every military system, a certain kind of leadership is praised and promoted. Some of the values promoted by militaries are universally positive traits, but they emphasize leadership because it takes a unique ability to so severely misdirect our good intentions. It takes a certain kind of leader to get people to follow orders without question. It takes a certain kind of propaganda to make it so easy to kill. It takes a certain kind of person to entrust their moral decision-making power to an institution so inherently misguided.

To be a soldier is to take a stand against your own freedom. It is to endorse the protection racket in the most significant way. It is to give up any moral authority you might claim. It is to sacrifice your autonomy to the collective. It is to serve government sponsors. It is to make yourself subservient to your oppressors. It is to give up responsibility for your own life. It is to be merely a paid killer, or at least an enabler of paid killers. It is to be used as a dumb animal, a pawn for politicians. Joining the military means removing yourself from the productive sector of society to join the parasite.

Soldiering is sold as fighting for freedom, and governments want us to be grateful for their wars, but just by putting on that uniform, every soldier makes the citizens less free. Being a soldier is a choice. No one can force you to do something immoral. When we see through the propaganda of collectivism, there will be no more militaries. When we hold each other accountable for individual acts of violence, there will be no more war. When we demand our freedom, there will be no more soldiers.

III. THE MOTIVATION FOR WAR

Understanding governments as competing protection rackets makes it possible to understand the reasons for war. Governments give all kinds of noble reasons for starting wars, but they are only as legitimate as any other propaganda. Today, most of them claim they only use military force for defensive purposes, but if all governments only fought defensive wars, militaries wouldn't be necessary! Governments start wars to expand or strengthen their protection rackets.

Nothing encourages patriotism like war. Governments like war because patriotism leads people to sacrifice for the imagined collective and tolerate more oppression. Patriotism reinforces the essential myth that governments act on behalf of the people, and the language of war often confuses the government itself with the people. When two countries are at war, we often say that one country attacked another, but that is a misrepresentation of one government attacking another government's territory. Or more precisely, a group of people wearing uniforms of one color from one place, killing people wearing uniforms of a different color from a different place. Countries don't attack other countries. Governments use violence to expand their power.

Governments also like war because it is extremely profitable for a few special interests. Just the constant threat of war is enough to make the arms industry very profitable. Other than politicians, no one is more eager to buy bombs than a frightened population willing to give up everything to be safe. When a population is frightened enough to support a war, it will support increased taxation and buy war bonds. It will support a massive increase in the money supply, supposedly to pay for soldiers' salaries and equipment, even though it will only enrich the bankers by devaluing everyone's savings. Although war spending is clearly a way of diverting productive resources to destructive purposes, governments always count this spending in positive economic measurements to perpetuate the most dangerous myth that war is good for the economy.

War gives governments the excuses necessary to do the things they always want to, but usually can't in peacetime. During war, governments claim to need new powers, supposedly necessary to protect from a new threat. Those who stand to profit from such wartime policies will attack opponents as unpatriotic. They always say these powers are temporary, but they're often permanent. War has been used as an excuse to raise taxes, destroy privacy, enslave through conscription, and demand greater loyalty to the collective.

We might think a protection racket would not want to kill too many of its subjects, if only because of the loss of productivity, but governments don't always behave rationally. They are always seeking more efficient means of exploiting us, but if they have to kill large numbers of people to maintain their oppression of the rest, they will. Sometimes they get carried away and kill so many that some of the oppressors are affected. Sometimes, governments and their beneficiaries truly lose out in the struggles between competing protection rackets, but war is still a very effective tool. Even with the loss of productivity, wars make governments more powerful.

IV. THE ISOLATION OF INTERVENTION

Violence is the greatest obstacle to commerce and cooperation. When governments do not intervene, commerce between countries brings us together. When they make war, it drives us apart. When governments intervene in the affairs of other countries, just as when they intervene in the lives of individuals, productive relationships are displaced by coercive relationships. While the immediate costs of war are often extremely high (in numbers counted as profits by some), the indirect costs are many times that.

Free trade is dependent upon mutual respect for the self-ownership and property rights of others. War is the ultimate act of disregard for human rights. To the extent that a war is supported by the people, it says, “We would rather kill you than trade with you.” To the extent that it is opposed by the people, but happens anyway, it says, “We respect you and want to trade with you, but not badly enough to stop our government from trying to kill you.” Allowing relations between countries to be managed by governments isolates us and keeps us from enjoying productive relationships.

While not considered war by some, embargoes and blockades represent widespread threats of force, and can be just as destructive as war. A complete blockade says, “If you do business with anyone in this country, we will attack you.” This is easier when the victim is seen as having committed some significant collective crime, but governments frequently impose lesser international trade restrictions that cause problems (and unfair trade advantages) on a massive scale. With countries so interdependent, the consequences of cutting one off from the rest can lead to widespread shortages of essential goods like food, fuel, and medical supplies.

Because war drives resources from productive uses to destructive ones, it also limits the people of a country at war in their ability to engage in trade with people of other countries. However, the international trade cut off by war, embargoes, or some form of managed trade is far more significant. When an embargo is declared, it says anyone engaging in certain trade will be shot or bombed. As a result of that single threat, thousands of regular daily exchanges essential to the standard of living of millions may be cut off, and countless more potential exchanges might never happen. While the measurable costs of war in lives and resources might be so immense as to be unfathomable, the total costs of war are incalculable.

V. FOREIGN AID

One of the many ways modern governments pervert the good will of their people is with foreign aid. For citizens who want to vote away their problems and never have to think about them again, electing a politician who “cares about poor people throughout the world” is a nice option, but it doesn’t change reality. Foreign aid takes money from the poor in one country through taxation, and gives it to the rich in another country through handouts.

Like many problems that governments pretend to be solving, the problem of foreign suffering is one we want to solve. Despite governments taking such a large role with stolen funds, we still give generously to foreign charities. While some foreign charities are frauds, all government foreign aid programs are frauds because if we don’t like how our money is being spent, we only have two choices: pay our taxes or go to jail.

Governments love foreign aid because it allows them to buy off smaller governments and expand their influence without wars. Only people who believe governments are efficient would want them to handle foreign aid donations. Governments tend to give the money not to the people of other countries, but to the governments. Even if the majority of this money is used for its stated purpose, it will serve to entrench the existing power structure and the diversion of only a small part of it is enough to make plenty of corrupt politicians more than rich enough to buy the next few elections. Thus, foreign aid can serve to prop up governments that might otherwise fail due to excess corruption or unpopularity. When foreign aid is disbursed based on where there is terrorism, starvation, or disease, it ends up subsidizing terrorism, starvation, and disease.

There are tragedies going on all over the world and many caring people genuinely want to help. When we pool resources, amazing things can happen. Sometimes, even governments accomplish great feats of relief. Unfortunately, foreign aid funded by theft and carried out by people who are unaccountable for the results predictably leads to diversion of funds for personal gain.

VI. WAR ON TERROR

Governments come up with many excuses for war, but the “war on terror” is especially dangerous because it can be used to keep a country in an endless state of war. Because government programs are very difficult to end, an armed conflict against an unspecified enemy is every government’s dream come true: perpetual war. The policies of the war on terror, as with most government programs, cause more of the problem. Governments of developed countries that occupy and intrude on developing nations cause terrorism. People resent having their societies taken over by foreign militaries, and after seeing their families killed and their way of life destroyed, resentment can become so great as to drive people to horrific violence. Foreign occupations cause such despair that victims often find their lives worth so little as to be easily sacrificed in resistance.

Governments have always used war as an excuse to restrict individual freedoms at home in the name of security. The war on terror is especially dangerous because it is based on an ever-present hypothetical threat that can affect every aspect of our lives – giving governments an excuse to regulate every aspect of our lives. Restrictions of speech and privacy are especially useful because they make people less likely to figure out how badly they are being robbed and how to resist. Normally, wartime regulations expire with the threat, but with the war on terror, the “threat” continues forever.

Trusting governments to “fight terror” invites massive corruption. If we ask someone to fight imaginary demons for us and decide how much it will cost, we will soon find ourselves in a world full of demons that are very expensive to fight. Governments claim to stop acts of terrorism all the time, but many of these are entrapment, some are completely fabricated, and most are greatly exaggerated. When a government fails to prevent an act of terror, it will say it needs more money to fight a more sophisticated enemy – no matter how simple the attack. When a government “prevents an act of terror,” whether or not it actually did anything, it will say it needs more money to keep doing its job.

Any time a country is at war, the people tend to be fearful and that makes them want to rally around a strong leader or authority. This makes them less likely to question or challenge government. When the people are afraid, they are much more likely to tolerate an increase in taxation. A fearful people will be easier to control when their fear of each other makes everyone a snitch. If the people accept the excuses for war, they will feel much more dependent on government, especially for protection.

The war on terror is a particularly nasty racket, but it reveals how challenging it is now for governments to make large-scale war. In this age of global connectedness, starting a traditional military conflict seems increasingly unfeasible. By applying the same scrutiny to all excuses for violence, we will end all forms of war. Justifying violence in the name of promoting safety makes everyone less safe, but it still happens because someone is profiting.

VII. REAL SECURITY

Given what we know about governments and the motivation for war, it seems absurd that anyone would turn to one for security. Governments are not protection, they are protection rackets. National security is an excuse to defend exclusive taxation authority in their territory. Governments protect us like a rancher defends cattle. At home as abroad, governments use violence to expand their power. The best defense of a country is a well-armed population that refuses to submit to any organized system of exploitation.

When a territory is taken over by a foreign government, the first priority is to seize control of the tax base. The invading government wants to expand its protection racket. If it tries to take over an area that costs more to control than it produces in taxes, it will soon abandon the effort. The best defense against invasion is to have no government. An invader would need to build tax collection mechanisms from scratch and they would be extremely difficult and costly to maintain.

Having no government informs potential invaders that if they try to take over this territory, they will lose. The message is, “You might never be defeated in battle, but by the power of decentralized resistance, both violent and nonviolent, you will lose because we are committed to freedom and will defeat any oppressor, foreign or domestic.” Widespread oppression is only possible when we believe we need to be ruled.

Supporting a “professional” military makes countries less secure. A more free society will be more prosperous. A more prosperous society will be a more lucrative trading partner, and thus less prone to attack. A country that is not militarized will make no enemies. A society without a central authority will not erect any obstacles for free people seeking to defend themselves appropriately. The illusion of protection from militaries hides the fact that they make us less safe.

It is very important to understand that governments are lying when they tell us they are doing something for our safety. Merely fabricating a threat gives them an excuse to spend money on false solutions to enrich their sponsors. We are at the point when large scale invasions are relatively rare, and while that may lessen the significance of being an armed individual, we must all be armed with the truth in order to not fall for the protection racket. The best national defense is a population that refuses to be governed.

PERSONAL SECURITY

I. LIFE IS FRAGILE

The most horrific act of violence a person can commit against another can be very easy. To take someone's life is not especially difficult. In a world dominated by professional killers and violent fantasies, it makes sense that most people have an exaggerated sense of how difficult it is to kill someone and how invulnerable they are. Rarely do we actually consider how easy it would be to kill someone because the thought of ending another person's life is so repulsive.

Our lives are in each other's hands every moment of every day simply by the nature of the human experience. We are not just interdependent in many practical ways, we also live at the pleasure of nearly everyone else. The fact that murder is so rare among humans suggests that we want to be surrounded by happy, healthy people.

Despite the overwhelmingly cooperative nature of society, rare acts of violence do happen and we can be overly frightened by them. We can be convinced to be untrusting and afraid of a random person. Not everyone should be trusted and we all determine our own policies, but despite the evidence, our general tendency to distrust is higher than necessary, and we waste a great deal of energy on it. This makes us vulnerable to people who take advantage of our fears to serve the sponsors of government.

For governments to get us to accept their counterproductive monopolies in public safety and justice, they must convince us that only they can protect us from certain threats. Even for the critical matter of abortion, making it illegal often makes it more frequent and less safe. Using governments to reduce abortions makes it more difficult to develop peaceful means of doing so. This is just as true as with the problems of murder, theft, and rape. The threat of random interpersonal crime is a real one, but the answer to it is not to turn to an organization that promises to steal from us.

Turning to government for protection from thieves says, "My neighbor might steal from me, so I'll trust a government to steal from everyone so if my neighbor steals from me, he might be locked in a cage for a while." Turning to government for protection from murderers says, "My neighbor might kill me, so I'll let the government steal from me so they can hire someone in a costume to come write a report about it afterwards."

Life is risky. Risk leads to fear. Fear makes us vulnerable. Acceptance of the riskiness of life makes it possible to be brave enough to question those who would promote fear. When we try to deny the riskiness of life, either in our minds or through government policy, we only make it worse. Rather than living in fear or in resistance, simply by embracing the cooperative nature of life, we can protect ourselves from the very real threat of a society devoid of trust.

II. JUSTICE

We all want to be treated fairly, and we all have a sense of what is right. When justice is used as a mere rallying cry, it can be severely distorted. When justice is founded on a concrete set of moral principles, it is a guiding light for resolving conflicts. Governments claim a monopoly on the essential services around justice (dispute resolution, incarceration, public safety) yet in these most important social functions, they always abuse that power. They provide some legitimate functions in these areas, but only as necessary to maintain the illusion of providing an actual service. Even a brief examination of government justice services reveals that governments have no moral principles.

People have long used punishment as an excuse to violate others in order to control them. When someone seeks punishment, they are not seeking justice. Punishment is merely violence with a bad excuse. The threat of punishment is governments' primary motivator. Governments cannot threaten us with justice. The purpose of punishment is to induce suffering so the threat of suffering can be used to control us. To give enforcers credible excuses to threaten us, governments come up with laws against things that make the racket less effective like not paying taxes, doing drugs, or challenging authority.

Every time a government enforces a law without a victim, the person getting arrested is the victim. If there is no victim, there is no crime. If there is a victim, the prescription for justice is simple: make the victim whole. If the person was stolen from, the stolen property (or its equivalent, plus compensation for the trouble) must be returned to them. If they were injured, appropriate compensation must be paid. If their property was damaged, they must be compensated. When governments punish someone for a victimless crime, they also punish society by forcing it to pay for the service. If we support victimless crime laws, we are just as responsible as if we had hired someone to rob or kidnap on our behalf.

Truly dangerous criminals should be forcibly isolated from society. Providing for the isolation of those who represent a legitimate threat is a very important service. Because governments have taken a monopoly on this most important function (despite their ineffectiveness), they are generally allowed to take on similar functions made possible by that monopoly. Because they are monopolies, they have little accountability and are inherently prone to corruption. All they have to do is convince their enforcers to enforce a law and they will say they are just following orders. When government is trusted with the power to determine justice, we end up with corrupt judges working with corrupt prosecutors working with corrupt cops, while corrupt politicians give them an excuse to point guns at peaceful people every time they pass a victimless crime law.

Judging an individual's behavior to be wrong does not give you the right to punish them. Even if you are absolutely certain, even if you saw them do it, even if you think it would serve justice, it is never right to punish another person. You have the right to harm someone if necessary in self-defense. You might reclaim stolen property. You might do something to someone that leads to suffering, but you are never justified in doing something to another person for the express purpose of causing them to suffer. The one thing you always have a right to do is turn away from someone. If someone is a known thief, do not do business with them until they have made their victims whole. This is justice founded in natural rights and it is far more robust and fair than the government racket.

Justice is the application of ethics. A society's practice of justice is a measure of its commitment to moral principles. Society's punishment of nonviolent behavior is a measure of its abandonment of freedom. When we turn to governments for justice, we are turning to institutions based on violating rights in order to protect them. A protection racket cannot claim to have a moral foundation. Justice is far too important to be trusted to government. In many ways, we have become dependent on government, so in the transition to a free society, many peaceful systems of justice will first resemble current government models and meet current expectations. However, with the innovation made possible in the absence of coercion, those expectations will soon be exceeded with far more righteous and efficient systems of justice.

III. THE POLICE STATE

Modern governments have entered a self-destruct cycle. Policies are enacted on behalf of special interests. Governments convince enough of us that the policies are well-intended. We figure out that a particular policy is intended to take advantage of us. We get upset and resist. Rather than give in to the pressure, politicians (and their sponsors) find it more profitable to minimize the impact of the resistance while they create a new policy to distract us. This creates a seemingly endless cycle of creation and suppression of discontent. Old discontent piles up as politicians, special interests, and other criminals respond to very short-term incentives because they are removed from accountability for long-term consequences. As tension grows, governments must increase direct control over their citizens. Effective governments have carefully cultivated enforcement classes full of police who will not question orders. A government of runaway enforcement, or a police state, is a predictable result of corruption.

Police officers provide many legitimate services. They provide public safety by patrolling and occasionally intervening in real crimes in progress. They help stranded motorists. Sometimes, they even solve crimes and apprehend people who should be held accountable. However, as far as government is concerned, providing services is only a justification for the real purpose of police: enforcing the will of politicians on behalf of special interests.

The primary function of police is much easier when they are intimidating. Because war is the most destructive application of government force, when governments need to increase the intimidation effect of their police, they become militarized – adopting the fashion, tactics, advanced weaponry, excessive force, and criminally irresponsible spending of the military. As the relevance of providing legitimate services decreases, the need to control populations through intimidation increases. The mechanics of police militarization are the same as general military spending: an imagined need is fulfilled by a contractor who has bribed a politician. Police forces are somewhat accountable to their communities, so the pressure for militarization isn't local, but rather from central authorities with large grants that people can be tricked into thinking they aren't paying for.

We inherently fear police because of the power they wield over regular citizens. Most police departments exhibit all the critical elements of violent street gangs: they are territorial, violently enforce their monopolies, and have distinct identifying features. Police are feared in a way that normal people are not because they have arbitrary power, low accountability, and often behave violently without concern for others. When ordinary citizens commit violent crimes, they are often jailed without any legal proceedings. When police commit violent crimes, they are often given a paid vacation while their employers “investigate” and pretend to be concerned to the extent necessary to maintain their credibility.

One element of a police state is an excess of laws making noncriminal behavior illegal. Most governments have passed so many laws that if they want to go after someone who challenges their power, refuses to be exploited, or represents a political inconvenience, it's not difficult to come up with a legal excuse to detain, charge, try, and sentence them. This also makes police especially intimidating because they have an incredible amount of discretion about who they arrest and why. This power enables horrific expressions of racism and other personal biases. Once a police state reaches the point at which most people feel incapable of precisely following the law, respect for the government plummets.

The more a government seeks control over its citizens, the more it needs to spy on them. All government surveillance is wrong, but it is especially wrong when the property rights and privacy of citizens are violated. In a free society, a balance will be struck between security needs and privacy rights, and no one's property ever needs to be violated. When you are being recorded in public by a fellow citizen, they are collecting sound waves or light particles coming from you and there is no violation. But if that person taps your phone line, or puts a bug in your home, or in any other way physically inserts anything where it is not welcome, they are violating your property and your privacy. The reason governments need to violate your property in observing you is if you had true privacy, you would have a space in your home that they couldn't control. The current extent of surveillance clearly shows there is another motive besides catching bad guys. Government surveillance is not about keeping us safe. It's about keeping us under control.

The most important way to hold police accountable is by recording them. A police state will not be defeated by individual local actions, but recording police can educate others, hold individuals accountable, and eliminate the most reckless officers. Recording technology available in most smart phones allows almost anyone to record police. Those same phones can be used to upload data, and the internet provides distribution that is difficult for governments to cut off. These technologies are game-changers and should be used to hold everyone accountable, not just police. As technology continues to improve, it will become much more difficult to be violent in secret.

In some places, it's illegal to record police, but in some places where it's technically legal, it's not always practical. It is important to look out for each other and sometimes even protect an officer by recording the interactions of others when we can. We should always know our rights and assert them as much as we can, but it also helps to know specific local laws and our rights “under the law” to deal with enforcers more effectively.

While the term “police state” may apply to varying degrees, and some government apologists will always declare the amount of control to be insignificant, any organized violent control is just as wrong as a “total police state.” Subjecting people to systematic violence traumatizes them and helps keep them submissive. Do not give

in! There are many important ways to fight the police state to improve our communities, but until we defeat statism, it will always be there, and even the slightest degree of a police state is too much.

IV. COURTS

Dispute resolution is too important to be entrusted to governments. When we accept arbitrary authority from a violent monopoly protection racket, the authority is soon used to make us submit. Then that authority is for sale to the highest bidder and courts are used to get us to go along with all kinds of disastrous policies.

Government courts seek to stay in power and maintain their influence. They depend on other parts of government for their budgets and have no incentive to go against the general agenda. Once this relationship is established, it is easy for politicians to pass laws that go completely against any rational sense of justice and have the courts behind them. Courts become part of the machine, convicting us of victimless crimes to keep police busy, keeping the politicians and their sponsors happy, and providing a flow of bodies to the prisons.

Courts justify their existence to the politicians by doing their bidding, but they need the help of police to do it. Police officers are routinely called to testify against defendants, and courts try to make people think they are protected from false testimony, but police are routinely allowed to lie. When police are accused of misconduct, they are often punished with a slap on the wrist, if at all. This is partly because police protect their own, like members of any gang, but also because most prosecutors and courts will only seek accountability when the misconduct is so bad that it threatens the credibility of the racket.

Government courts often refer to themselves as part of a “justice system,” but more importantly, they are punishment systems. It’s absurd to think any part of an institution based on theft and violence could provide justice, but many people still seem to believe this. Justice requires respect for self-ownership, and courts are more concerned with upholding the law than providing justice. Because courts have a monopoly, they have to provide some approximation of justice, (holding violent criminals in isolation, occasionally ordering restitution for damages) but taken as a whole, courts provide a justification for government agents to punish people for behavior the government doesn’t like. The greatest tragedy of government courts is that when someone is wronged, if the perpetrator is caught and punished, the victim is punished again as a taxpayer, rather than compensated.

Courts are a critical part of the protection racket because they give governments cover for using force against peaceful individuals. When courts appear to go against the rest of the government program, they still serve an important purpose. They want us to think the court is there to keep the government in check. A very brief look at almost any country’s history will show that is not the case. The court can also serve to tap on the brakes of runaway statism while maintaining the credibility of the racket.

In a free society, courts would depend on the recipients of their services to fund them, rather than governments. They would be accountable to the people, rather than politicians. They might be bundled with other legitimate protection services. We could pay someone to protect our rights, rather than having a monopoly forced on us based on violating our rights. Increased freedom always results in greater efficiency, but this will be especially dramatic in the area of dispute resolution. No longer will a monopoly service provider abuse its customers with inconveniences that would be intolerable in any other industry. No longer will people with no responsibility for their decisions make important rulings. No longer will people be unaccountable for the great injustice of all the productivity stolen and wasted by false imprisonment. Dispute resolution services, unsurprisingly, will be much better when organized without a violent premise.

V. INCARCERATION

Locking someone in a cage is never justice. It is only punishment or justified isolation of someone who is a danger to others. Locking someone in a cage for hurting a person does not make the victim whole. Locking someone in a cage for doing something you just don’t like makes you the criminal. Sometimes individual acts of incarceration are justified, but modern prison systems contain mostly people whose incarceration itself is a crime. Even for its stated objectives, a punitive prison system is a dangerous and ineffective tool.

All real crimes stem from a failure to thrive within voluntary, cooperative relationships. Many governments try to portray their prisons as rehabilitation centers, and while some people come out of prison much stronger and healthier because of the educational experience, that is clearly not their purpose. Some governments have the audacity to call their prisons “correctional,” as if they have the power to correct someone’s behavior. In many cases, governments will sentence violent criminals on the presumption that they are too dangerous to be in civil society at the time of sentencing, but after a few years in a madhouse surrounded by similar offenders, they will be safe to release.

If someone who hurt someone goes to jail, or even gets the death penalty, how does the victim benefit? They might feel safer without their attacker on the loose, but now they are being victimized as a taxpayer to pay for the cost of housing, food, and health care for another inmate whose productive capacity is reduced to nearly zero. Real justice would be reparations for damages and compensation for victims.

Revenge never serves justice, however tempting it may be. The more we question the assumptions of modern prison systems, the more aware we are of their disastrous effects. This is inspiring a reexamination of our sense of justice and making it clear how governments take advantage of our innate desire for revenge. Dealing with violent, irrational, and criminally insane people is an important function in any society and it will be very exciting to see how cooperative efforts will address these issues, and how much more productive and happy society will be without so much effort invested in keeping people behind bars.

VI. SELF-DEFENSE

What makes governments critically unique is the way they use guns. Everything governments demand we do or not do is backed up with, “Or else police with guns will come and lock you in a cage.” If we all had guns, and governments didn’t have any, this racket wouldn’t work. Governments have an interest in keeping us dependent on their protection rackets, but a police officer will never provide better protection than effective self-defense. Because gun control is enforced by violence and often leads to greater overall violence where enforced, it is clearly not about reducing violence. It’s about controlling the population.

The use of force to defend oneself is an inherent right based in self-ownership. If someone is making a threat to you or your property, you are justified in using defensive force. The decision to use force against someone else is a very serious one. If you are threatened or under attack, use of force may be the only way to save your own life. Even in situations where your life is clearly threatened, your self-defense would be most valid with the minimal use of force necessary to neutralize the threat. What if you are mistaken in your assessment? What if the threat is from temporary confusion and not ill-intent? The responsibility taken on when applying deadly force is immense, and it should be used only as a last resort. To deny someone’s right of self-defense is to subject them to the tyranny of anyone who abuses them. To deny the universal right of self-defense is to deny the universal right of self-ownership.

Gun ownership by nonviolent people carries an inherent threat to violent people, which violent people are willing to use violence to remove. Governments don’t like their people being armed because they might revolt. The idea of taking up small arms against an organized military may seem absurd, but in violent revolts, sometimes it is enough to cut off just the head of the monster. Governments have used gun control whenever they want to make people more dependent, but especially when they need to tighten control over society. Some of the most vicious government atrocities ever committed were preceded by strict gun control.

One of the great ironies of gun control is how counterproductive it is to its stated goals of reducing violence and “keeping guns off the streets.” Gun control is nearly impossible to carry out effectively. Without absolute control over citizens to begin with, no government has completely succeeded in wiping out gun ownership. In many places with strict gun control, guns are actually more readily available than in a regulated market because they can be bought easily on the “black market,” where sellers are not capable of taking responsibility for who they sell to.

Criminals prey on communities with strict gun control, because to them, gun control is a convenient policy of victim disarmament. An armed, or even unarmed but violent criminal, can attack anyone on the street in an area with strict gun control with reasonable confidence that their victims won’t be armed. This is one way

governments create more crime. More crime makes people more eager for government protection. It also creates dependency, because when citizens are disarmed, cooperative solutions to address crime are much less effective. Taking away the right of self-defense has disastrous consequences!

Gun control is part of a common attitude not limited to the specific technology of guns. Governments want to control the use of force. In many places, they ban common non-lethal self-defense weapons like pepper spray or tasers. If governments really wanted us to be safe, (and some local police officers genuinely do) they would encourage the use of such devices as well as guns by people capable of using deadly force responsibly. Non-lethal technologies will become at least as effective as guns and eventually replace guns for self-defense purposes. No one who simply wants to defend themselves would also want the liability of deadly force if unnecessary.

The reason gun control is so dangerous is because it promotes violence. There are a number of ways it does this, but more importantly, it is fundamentally violent because it requires enforcers to violate the rights of peaceful people. Calling victim disarmament laws “gun control” is a weak cover for what politicians are really advocating: only government agents can have guns. Self-defense is a universal human right.

VII. SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault is assault. It is as much a violation of an individual’s rights as any other crime. It is a violation of that most valuable property, one’s own body, and constitutes a misappropriation through theft, that often leads to serious injuries. The psychological ramifications, as with any trauma, can be as devastating as any physical assault. In a society where individual rights are respected and violators are not tolerated, we will better address the problem of sexual assault, until it is entirely eradicated, as it will and should be.

Sexual assault is usually a male-on-female crime because of the obvious physical advantages men have on average over women. In a society where the individual right of self-defense is respected, being armed, even with something non-lethal, can be a force-equalizer in a physical confrontation. Technology has already rendered the use of our physical strength less relevant to productivity, and will eventually make it nearly irrelevant. A free society relies less on application of force to settle disputes, and so the culture of assault will also be greatly diminished.

In a society that truly does not tolerate assaults, anyone who is caught in the act would face immediate repercussions from the community. Someone guilty of rape might face total ostracism. By turning to governments for justice, we get a system of dangerous delays that only offers the ineffective punishment of incarceration. However, some governments have used the now undeniably available technology to create public lists of sex offenders or require some other form of public acknowledgement. While these measures may represent steps forward in eliminating sexual assault, they are a pale shadow of what we could achieve in a more cooperative society.

The causes of sexual assault are many and complex. While some will say it is rooted in our biology, many of the contributing factors, like poverty and desperation, are aggravated by government. Where government is used as a tool to repress sexual activity or impose standards of sexual behavior, this can also be a contributing factor. The greatest contributor to “rape culture” is statism. A society that justifies government agents violating people will foster more people who believe their own justifications for violating others. Some governments make their resources fully available to the problem of sexual assault, while others deliberately make reporting and accountability more difficult. In either case, the problem will never be solved by an institution that assaults peaceful people.

TAXATION

I. TAXATION IS THEFT

Theft is when someone takes something that doesn't belong to them. Either governments own "their people" as slaves, or taxation is theft. You own yourself. Therefore, taxation is theft. Because you own your body, your labor, and what you acquire by trade, taxation is theft. Governments are institutions used by the super rich to concentrate wealth and power. Since they are not earning money by offering goods or services for us to choose from freely, theft is their primary mechanism. Taxation is just a word that makes us more likely to go along with massive, widespread, organized theft.

It is not right for one person to steal. It is not right for two people to steal. It is still not right for 51% of a voting population to vote for a representative who will hire a tax collector to steal for them. One of the great government lies is that theft can be moral when performed by enough people and called taxation. Theft is theft. Even if some of the money stolen is used for legitimate purposes, that doesn't change the simple fact that taxation is theft.

Some politicians will try to make the case that taxation is voluntary, and in a warped sense, for some people, it is. If you believe that governments exist to serve the people, all your tax dollars are put to good use, and you pay your taxes enthusiastically, then you might be more susceptible to the lie that taxation isn't theft. But even if you happen to be so lucky, and you feel that taxes are "the price you pay for a civilized society," you are living in a civilized prison. The moment you decide that you don't like what your tax dollars are spent on, either you are submitting to the coercion behind every tax law, or you are going to jail.

We can only meet our potential when all relations are voluntary and cooperative. Every relationship between a government and a citizen is involuntary. The amount of coercion actually applied is irrelevant to assessing the effect of the threat. When a tax is imposed on a population, it means a large chunk of the wealth is no longer allowed to serve the needs of the people who earned it, but rather the needs of government. Only when all the diversions of resources by taxation are taken into account can we begin to grasp the massive potential lost.

Governments use taxes not only to steal from us, but also to control our behavior. Generally, taxes are imposed to the greatest degree possible, taking as much as they can from whomever they can. But sometimes, governments can take more money from us overall if they take in a specific way intended to modify behavior. For example, if a government imposes a tax on an unpopular behavior, it can get people to see government as an effective way of stopping that behavior, while really using it as an excuse to steal from an unpopular group of people and boost its credibility.

One of the great lies of taxation is that it's a way for the poor to band together to take back from the rich. This could be dressed up to avoid the language of theft as in, "Successful people show their gratitude to the society that helped them by paying more in taxes." Some people even believe taxation is a way to take the power back from the super rich, corporations, and banks. The people who have the money to pull the strings of politicians have rigged the system so the net effect of taxation is always a tax on the poor. Some tax systems are actually set up to steal more from relatively rich people, and some unpopular or unconnected rich people end up at a disadvantage, but from their results, it is obvious that governments exist to transfer wealth from the poor to the rich.

Because people respond to incentives, targeted taxation has precise effects. When any product, service, or activity is taxed, it becomes more expensive and the market responds as it would to any price increase. This

is true with the income tax, which allows some governments to take their victims' money before they get control of it. But "hiding" a tax does not diminish its disastrous effects. It only makes collection more efficient. The incentive problem is not avoided, and when governments make any activity (like earning an income) less profitable, people will do it less.

Sales taxes are just as much theft as any other taxes, even though everyone chooses to pay them as they make consumer choices. A sales tax is simply conditional theft, just like import taxes or any other taxes on trade. While a consumer might have the choice of not buying something, a vendor has no choice but to build the cost of taxes into the price if they want to do business openly. Unfortunately for governments, taxation does nothing to diminish the black market. It encourages it.

The taxation racket has developed, evolved, and adapted to new circumstances and technologies. Widespread application and profitability ensure taxation techniques are always at the cutting edge. They have come a long way from the chief of a small tribe demanding tribute to the massive surveillance, investigation, seizure, and imprisonment operations of today. If the racket is not stopped soon, it will only get more invasive and destructive.

Taxation is an inescapable part of the government racket. If governments never stole, they would cease to be governments. If we could withdraw our financial support from them at any time, they would be voluntary cooperatives, or service providers. Because taxation is backed up with the threat of force, it is theft, plain and simple.

II. MONEY & BANKING AS THEFT

If governments could only steal through direct taxation, they would still be huge burdens on society. Unfortunately, this only represents a small part of the taxation racket. Government sponsors have devised far greater ways of stealing from us through the banking system.

Most currencies used in the world today are just pieces of paper or digital numbers created by central banks. When they print more money, supply and demand still applies, so the money loses value. Authorized banks employ fractional reserve banking, which allows them to create money out of thin air with a loan to someone while only holding a fraction of the cash behind it. Because the printing or digital creation of more money inflates the supply, this is referred to as the "inflation tax." This delicate combination of force and fraud is designed for theft on a massive scale.

If people could avoid the inflation tax by using money that doesn't consistently lose value, they would. To impose a currency, governments must outlaw competing currencies. This means if you use a different device of accounting for trade than the official money, you will be locked in a cage or face other "legal" sanctions. Eventually, a government's money becomes so widely used that no one even questions it. Propaganda about how essential this racket is to the economy keeps it going.

Government money that isn't backed by anything allows all who benefit, either as early recipients of the new money or bankers authorized to create it, to siphon off massive amounts of wealth from the entire economy. It doesn't matter if banks have monopoly power from governments, or governments themselves run the banks, they exist to serve the super rich. As with all taxes, the purpose is to transfer wealth from the poor to the rich. In the case of the inflation tax, it is also a great way to convince the poor they aren't being taxed at all. The inflation tax hurts the poor and working class the most, and no one who uses government money is safe from it.

III. WHY SO COMPLICATED?

Taxation is a massive and complex undertaking for any government. Stealing from almost everyone in a country is no easy task, but governments have a way of making it look even more difficult and complicated than it really is. This is not due to the challenge of the task, or by accident, or the result of ineptitude. Governments intentionally create complex tax systems to favor special interests and make it difficult to challenge tax collectors.

A complicated tax code (along with a complicated legal system) allows for arbitrary enforcement. If a government agent wants to go after an individual, it is easy to show how they have not been in perfect compliance

with the tax code, because perfect compliance is nearly impossible. As long as society accepts that taxation is not theft, you could be jailed at any time.

If you have the money or means to challenge the tax collectors in a government court, it can be very expensive, and you might end up with more money if you just give in. However, if you choose to fight some particular theft against yourself, you might lose and have to pay legal fees as well as whatever taxes (plus interest) the government wants to impose. Resisting government theft by turning to governments might seem silly, but the only alternative is to conduct our business so they can't see it.

IV. LAND THEFT & PROPERTY TAXES

Governments create many illusions to keep their citizens compliant and convinced they are being served, rather than ripped off. One of the most important illusions is a false sense of property. As long as you accept your government's conditions of ownership, it wants you to believe that you own yourself, your possessions, your home, and your land. In reality, it acts as if it owns you and everything within its territory.

Governments used to steal vast expanses of land with little excuse. When it was more commonly understood that they were violent monopolies, they didn't need to come up with elaborate excuses to make it seem like theft was not theft. Because the standard of the property illusion is pretty high these days, most governments have to come up with better reasons to steal land. Governments will say they are taking land in the interest of public safety, for public works, or for "development." Theft justified by any of these excuses is still theft. It is particularly offensive when they don't even fabricate some noble cause, but simply kick people off their land and hand it directly to special interests.

Sometimes governments will claim that stealing someone's land isn't theft, if they are adequately compensated. This is like a carjacker telling you that it's fine to steal your car if you get to keep the air freshener. Being involuntarily removed from one's land makes it theft. The only "adequate compensation" that makes it not theft is whatever it takes to persuade a person give up their property and leave it voluntarily.

Property taxes are based on the idea that we must pay for the privilege of living in a particular area and a tax on ownership is a reasonable price to pay for government services. You are really paying a ransom to keep your property, assuming you actually own it. If you do not pay your property taxes, government will eventually kick you off your land. If you believe governments own all the land, then the price of your property is for a usage license and your property taxes are rental fees.

To governments, property is merely a matter of temporary control. They can steal whatever they want, as long as they have a good enough excuse for the enforcers to carry out the theft and keep people from revolting. If your government says you can own property and maintain control of it, but only if you pay property taxes, you are a renter, not an owner. Governments get away with these rackets because enough people still believe they somehow represent "the will of the people," as opposed to their sponsors.

V. INTERGENERATIONAL CHILD ABUSE

When governments take on debt, it has very serious implications, especially for future generations. Because their primary source of revenue is theft, government debt is a promise to steal from someone in the future. In some countries, children today are born with a debt that would take them a lifetime to repay, even with extreme tax rates. When those who haven't even had a chance to vote are forced to pay for the mistakes of past generations, that is intergenerational child abuse.

People under governments with runaway debt generally oppose increasing it. Many want to eliminate it altogether. We generally vote for politicians who vote for increased spending because that money goes to special interests that give some of it back to politicians, who spend it to trick us into thinking they're going to change something for the better. Enough people vote for them, because we can be tricked into thinking we can vote our problems away and avoid critical thinking without adverse consequences.

Examination of this problem is very revealing about governments, because that which is wrong about creating an expectation of theft against the next generation, is also wrong about what is happening now. It's not just about people not old enough to vote or influence the system, it's about everyone who doesn't get a real say in how that money is spent. That includes the vast majority of us. It should be no surprise that the greatest rackets the world has ever known have found a way to extend the ranks of their victims into the unborn.

What message does government debt send to young people born into debt slavery? This practice is not sustainable, and discontented youth will be the undoing of governments. Eventually a generation will come along and say, "It's not my debt!" and simply disown it. Do we want to pass on to our children a free world of opportunity, or one in which they are born into debt slavery to pay for our mistakes?

ECONOMICS

I. THE FREE TRADE IDEAL

When you choose to engage with another person, it is because you are pursuing your self-interest by virtue of it being your choice. This is not to say that making choices is always for personal material gain. We often seek the emotional gratification of helping others. When we bring violence, force, or the threat of force into relationships, our potential for harmony is reduced. Cooperation is replaced with conflict, resources are diverted from optimal usage, and squandering of resources is encouraged. In every transaction determined by force, there is a measurable amount of effort wasted. Every relationship tainted by coercion keeps us from realizing our potential in the free trade ideal.

If you buy something from your neighbor, it means you are choosing to give up money because you think your life is better with the thing than with the money. Your neighbor is giving up something for the money, because they think their life is better with the money than with the thing. This fundamental exchange concept of economics is at the very heart of why trade produces wealth. It allows for mutually-beneficial cooperative exchanges. This principle extends to all relations, not just the ones we think of as economic. When two friends share a conversation, they are freely exchanging time, energy, and attention because they each think it benefits them. If either one of them thinks they will be happier alone or speaking to someone else, they are free to end the conversation by peacefully disengaging.

The alternative to the example of a peaceful exchange between neighbors is not as simple as direct theft. What if the government says you can buy that thing from your neighbor, but only if you pay a percentage of the price as tribute? Maybe you were going to buy ten things, but now you can only buy seven. People all over the world accept various sneaky forms of government theft, but no system hides the fact that if you don't pay the tax or tribute, your transaction is illegal and the government could lock you in a cage or "fine" you (steal from you) for "black market activity."

In simple examples, it is easy to see the devastating effects of coercion on free trade. Even with these examples, we cannot possibly envision all the implications and ripple effects. Did the trade that didn't happen mean buying one less bag of groceries? Creation of one less job? One less person who could afford vital medical care?

If governments only stole from us and left us alone, the impact would not be nearly as bad. Governments can steal more when they use our money against us through enforcement and suppression of economic activity. The amount of human effort diverted by wars and police states is painfully obvious. The less obvious tragedy is that governments pervert the minds of so many eager, capable people, and divert them from serving people in the free market to pointing guns at people, enforcing the will of special interests, protecting politicians, and killing each other.

The resources devoted to bureaucracies and their disastrous diversions of energy away from productive ends are staggering. If someone about to do something productive has to stop to ask a bureaucrat for permission, both they and the bureaucrat are kept from producing something of value, while even more energy is diverted to support them while doing nothing productive. This is made possible by the threat behind every regulation: if you don't do what we say, we will come and take you away. The effect of governments misdirecting resources is enormous. How much happier we will be without violence is incalculable.

A voluntary society represents a free trade ideal in which all interactions are free of force and coercion. In that environment, all relations are voluntary and we choose to engage because we think we will personally benefit. In a voluntary society, the individual person is considered the ultimate means of production. We are happier and

more prosperous because all of our interactions with others enrich our lives. Violence, coercion, and conflict are unproductive. Peace, self-ownership, and free trade are essential for any society to reach its potential.

II. MONEY

Most of us never bother to properly answer that nagging question, “Where does money come from?” Governments and banks like it that way. Money is simply a medium of exchange. Many things other than official paper bills function as money. Without a medium of exchange, a person who wants one thing has to find someone who has exactly what they want, and wants exactly what they have to trade. Something becomes “money” when it is widely accepted enough that people will take it in trade, knowing they can take it to someone else to get exactly what they want.

Historically, different things have served as money at the same time at the same place. Before centrally-imposed currencies, no economy was dependent on a single medium of exchange. This meant different ways of accounting for value or storing value could meet the needs of the market as they developed. One disadvantage was that whatever was being used as currency could not be employed or consumed. Without a single unit of accounting, the widespread reach of industry might have been hampered, but in the absence of a centrally-imposed currency, the market would have quickly established a universal standard as needed. Even now, at the height of centrally-imposed currencies, many transactions happen as barter, in some way off the record, or based on an alternative means of accounting for value.

Sometimes governments operate central banks themselves, sometimes they use “public-private” partnerships, but either way, coercion is what makes a currency the official medium of exchange. If you use a currency they don’t like, people with guns come and lock you in a cage. They need us to use the official money or else the modern banking racket doesn’t work. In a free market, banks provide very important money management services. While money is a medium of exchange, it is still subject to the fundamental forces of supply and demand. When the banks create more money, they are inflating the money supply, increasing the amount of currency in circulation, and devaluing all the money currently being held.

Creating money and forcing us to accept it is worse than stealing because it attempts to hide how badly we are getting cheated. It also hides who is responsible. Is it the central banker who creates more money? Is it the politician who votes for the debt? Is it the tax enforcer? Is it the banker who gets to decide who gets massive loans? Maybe it’s the voters who were fooled by politicians who do nothing to challenge this racket because they serve as its cheerleaders.

Many people profit from centrally-imposed currencies, so their supporters are fierce and well-funded. They are the politicians who deliver “pork” to their voters and payoffs to key demographics. They are the government contractors who give kickbacks to politicians in appreciation for exorbitant profits. They are the bankers and heads of financial institutions. The beneficiaries of this system have a huge advantage over everyone else, not just by getting so much “free money” but also by getting to spend that money before its price-raising effects are felt throughout the market.

Some central banks use “price stability” as their excuse for creating money. This is one way governments work as promised. As a healthy economy develops, production techniques improve, technology improves, and efficiency improves, so prices come down. This means the average person can afford more stuff, more services, and a higher standard of living. Central banks are limited in how much money they can create by complaints about rising prices, but to the extent prices do not go down as much as they should, wealth is being robbed from us by those who are getting all the benefits of being hooked up to the central bank.

The effects of a central bank are pervasive and far reaching. Not every new unit of currency created goes directly into the hands of the beneficiaries. That would be too obvious. Much of the money goes to various government programs. This money often ends up going to purposes valued by the market, but in a way that reinforces dependency on the central racket. Much of the money goes to educational institutions or other influential groups and the conversation is polluted with bias. Some of the money finds its way into economics departments at universities, where the next generation is taught that the fraud is not only harmless, but essential. This message is then echoed in the mainstream media.

Forcing someone to use a currency that is constantly losing value discourages savings. The distortion of the saving/spending balance has even worse long-term effects like malinvestment and bubbles. The flow of money created by central banks and other major financial institutions attached to them encourages wild market swings through reckless investment. Often coupled with the effects of central banks are government edicts, tax breaks, or other incentives that channel money into certain areas, creating massive bubbles that inevitably pop with painful consequences.

Despite attempts to kill competing currencies, technology is making it impossible to stop the increasing demand from being met, as more of us realize that holding government money is an avoidable way of paying taxes. Governments have often resorted to confiscation of precious metals or other strict regulations on their trade and ownership, but because they have never been perfectly effective, people have always sought to own gold and silver as alternative stores of wealth. Due to this demand, use of gold and silver has increased dramatically in recent years.

The most important developments in money will be those that do not just repackage or accelerate old forms of it, but create entirely new systems. Digital, decentralized “cryptocurrencies” are already being tested by the market and might just be the new money that completely replaces centrally-imposed currencies. No one knows what future markets will demand from their money, or how technology might meet those demands. Existing technology already empowers us to opt out of government money systems. When enough of us decide that we don’t want to get ripped off any longer, the government money racket will be obsolete.

The money racket is central to the existence of all modern governments. It doesn’t matter if the government is controlling the money, or the people controlling the money are controlling the government. Whoever is controlling the money is controlling the government and coercion makes the entire racket possible. When we are free to pursue our needs without the threat of violence, we will always be happier. Nowhere is this more true than in our choice of money.

III. CORPORATIONS & UNIONS

In the name of protecting us from corporations, most governments have created a legal framework that favors them as fictional legal entities. Some people think regulation, taxes, and laws restricting free and peaceful economic activity serve to reduce the power of corporations. In reality, large corporations support these policies, and people who control vast amounts of wealth pull the strings. Corporations love regulations because they hinder competition. They support taxes because they can afford ways around them. They love it when we turn to governments for protection from corporations, because the results usually protect them from accountability. For the super rich who might have owned slaves directly in the past, governments keep citizens on the big plantation of corporatism and tax slavery.

With the rise of corporatism, laborers (and anyone who did not benefit directly from corporatist policies) were at a great disadvantage. The formation of powerful unions was a predictable result. Everyone is entitled to freedom of association and speech. We can meet with whomever we like, when we like, and say what we like. As individuals, we have a right to choose to work or not work at any time and to communicate our reasoning with our employers. However, in the course of resisting the unjust powers corporations gained through government, unions themselves have gained unjust powers.

Unions do not have any special rights as groups that individuals do not, but governments have been happy to pander to them to build constituencies and make it appear that they’re looking out for the common people. Unions do not have a right to keep anyone from working. Unions ask governments for laws that allow corporations to buy benefits without paying taxes, but then every worker who is not in a union or working for a corporation is disadvantaged in the market for those benefits. Workers become more dependent on corporations and less able to opt-out of tax slavery.

When you have a “job,” you do not own it. A job is an agreement with someone, a group of people, an organization, or a corporation. No one can “take your job.” If the conditions around the agreement change, the agreement may be changed or terminated. The idea of a job as a possession is at the core of many bad

government policies that are excuses to use force against people exercising their rights. Just as members of a union have a right to stop working, non-union workers have the right to start working.

As free people, employees and employers have the right to set the terms of their relationships and walk away at any time if they are unsatisfied. Laws that force us out of productive relationships are especially brutal. Taxes on employment and minimum wage laws make otherwise profitable relationships unviable or illegal, and thus “destroy jobs” or prevent them from ever being created. Governments get away with so much “job-killing” because the unseen cost of jobs that were never created remains invisible, except in our imaginations and economic calculations.

While governments have created special privileges for unions, they have created far more for corporations, including various forms of “anti-strike” laws. A law prohibiting a strike says, “If you don’t work, there will be consequences!” which is the same as forced labor. If the government threatening consequences is also taking as much of our income as it can, we’ve got most of the elements of direct human ownership. But when people believe they are free, they are more productive. In a fair, healthy market for labor, we can properly value the most important assets: individual people.

Corporatism has spawned unionism and the result is a vicious cycle that feeds into statism. As people turn to government to protect them from corporations, corporations get more powerful, and then people demand more protection. Corporatism and unionism are tools of control and consolidation of power that drive up the cost of hiring people and increase unemployment. They both impede the freedoms necessary to properly value the labor of individuals.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

Modern living depends on many complex systems that challenge our ability to share resources. Technology has developed faster than our ability to create voluntary systems to share the bounty of new technologies. Governments have taken advantage of this to seize monopoly control over many important functions. They promote the dangerous idea that people are incapable of managing such systems without a coercive central authority. This keeps us from receiving the best services technology can provide. Governments have been operating the infrastructure racket for so long that many people assume we couldn’t have electricity, water, airports, telephones, railroads, gas, subways, waste disposal, or internet without their coercion. All these functions will be better without the threat of violence involved, as is true of all cooperative endeavors.

When someone points out that we can provide for all our needs without coercion, the typical response shows just how entrenched the idea of quick, thoughtless government “solutions” is: “But who will build the roads?!” Governments have run the roads racket for so long that we seem blind to the many consequences. As with any monopoly, the provider has little accountability to the consumers, so we generally get roads that are dangerous and full of potholes. When police are tasked with providing for the safety of the roads, they instead succumb to the temptation of using safety as an excuse for generating revenue with citations. Officials who decide when and where roads are built make their decisions based on the needs of special interests, often steering traffic and money to where it will get them kickbacks. Control of the roads has also made it very easy for governments to monopolize public transportation, limit consumer choice, and hold back the implementation of new technology.

If governments were not subsidizing the roads, not only would roads better serve us, but their costs could be assessed by the market. New technologies can’t compete with subsidized old technologies. Subsidizing roads has entrenched fossil fuel technologies, and is heavily supported by the car and gas industries. Without interference, communities might have created more sustainable systems based on walking and biking, and long distance travel would be more focused on mass transit systems. Without the roads racket, getting around would be a lot safer, more efficient, and better-suited to people’s needs, instead of the needs of government.

In many places, governments don’t operate utility monopolies themselves, but license corporations to enjoy monopoly privileges. It is just as true about electricity and water as it is about anything else: a monopoly policy that limits competition by force will lead to underserved consumers. They will pay more and services will be worse. Nowhere is corporatism stronger than in highly-regulated “free” markets for infrastructure, and this is where some of the worst corporate abuse happens. During periods of high demand, utilities run or regulated by

governments often force rationing of critical services when a free market would respond to that demand with increased supply.

As we wake up to the far-reaching consequences of government, we are demanding more options and technology is delivering them. A monopoly on providing electricity is useless when everyone has sufficient access to free energy through solar panels, wind farms, or geothermal generators. When the internet becomes a mesh of independent computers, the telecommunications industry won't benefit much from forcing out competition. Even the roads racket will be obsolete when we have flying cars or drone taxis. The effects of government control of infrastructure and utilities will eventually be rendered insignificant by technology. Until we abolish government, we will live with the consequences of allowing criminals to run essential parts of our lives!

V. OSTRACISM & BOYCOTT

Choosing who we associate with has far greater implications than most of us realize. We are communal by nature and depend on interaction with others. Rewarding someone's behavior by associating or doing business with them is the most significant endorsement. A society that rewards people for violence will get more violence. A society that tolerates people who violate the non-aggression principle will be ruled by aggressive people. A society that believes aggression is necessary in order to function will institutionalize coercion and reward those who provide what it considers necessary. More importantly, the choices we make as individuals determine how we will be treated. When all of those choices are added up, the preference of a society is clear, and it will be reflected by the culture.

Because of government propaganda, many believe that threats of force are the best way to change others' behavior: "Do what the politicians say because we the people told them to say that, and if you don't, you deserve to get locked in a cage." Any honest observer of society will see, however, the consequences of individual association have a far greater effect on regulating behavior. The simple obvious example is production: people make things that others want to consume. A large part of economic behavior is determined by what other people value as determined by sales.

In personal relationships, we generally choose to associate with people who make our lives better. Unfortunately, many don't realize that this should be the only determining factor in deciding whether or not to interact with someone. When we stay in abusive relationships, we are rewarding, and thus encouraging, abusive behavior. The same principles apply to the attitude of a community. You might want to buy something because it's a good deal and the product itself makes your life better, but if the seller uses your money to pollute the environment or support politicians, that needs to be factored in! A community that gives in to an abusive relationship with government will get more abuse.

When people decide not to support a company at the same time because of its behavior, it's called a boycott. Sales determine corporate behavior far more than regulation. Even with the worst of corporatism, the profit motive requires efficiently serving the needs of as many people as possible. If a company fails to meet people's needs, it goes out of business. Government regulations only serve to drive out competition, limit our choices as consumers, and stifle innovation. When our choices are limited because competing new businesses are stifled, corporations get away with bad behavior, especially when people depend on them for essential services. All of our choices as consumers have an impact.

Reputation, referrals, social status, and existing customer satisfaction can be factors in deciding whether or not to associate with someone, but when buying expensive items or medical services, we often seek formal approval or endorsement by experts. While governments will never fully monopolize this most important function, many try to with the licensing racket. Licensing sounds good because we all want reliable services and qualified people, but that's why it's unnecessary. There's nothing wrong with a group saying that if you don't meet their standards, they won't certify you – but when the governments do that, not only is it funded by taxation, it comes with the threat of force. This means governments decide who is allowed to do business based on the desires of their sponsors. This also serves as another form of taxation, because getting licensed is often expensive. When judging whether or not to do business with someone, rarely is government approval sufficient. In fact, government licensing is often so unreliable, that even if the standards were appropriate, it couldn't be trusted.

We don't have the right to vote for a politician who is going to hire an enforcement officer who is going to threaten people or punish them with fines (theft) for doing things we don't like. The only right we have in regards to someone doing something we don't like (if they are not violating someone's rights) is to walk away. Even in most cases when someone is violating the rights of others, walking away, fully disassociating, and encouraging others to do the same is far more effective than violence. When all the people in a community disassociate from someone, the result is ostracism. This may be geographical or not, but one does not need to be expelled from an area to be effectively cut off and isolated.

In cases of extremely violent and dangerous individuals, ostracism may be insufficient, but addressing that issue by pooling resources peacefully will be far more effective than by using this as an excuse to punish an entire society with taxes. We have an innate instinct for punishment, but justice is not served by another injustice. Choosing who to interact with carefully will achieve the stated goals of government regulation peacefully, efficiently, and morally. In our daily lives, we all have an important role to play in achieving a more free and just world. Every choice we make is an expression of our values. This powerful process of everyone expressing their preferences to determine social standards is only stifled by government.

VI. EVERYTHING IS ECONOMICS

When the principles of economics are applied only to things that can be valued in numbers, we miss out on their most important lessons. We tend to think of economics as "stuff having to do with money," but many exchanges of value occur without being counted in numbers at all. Every human interaction can be better understood as an economic exchange. We might think this cheapens interpersonal relations, but it actually elevates them.

Drawing an arbitrary line between what is and isn't part of the economy limits our understanding of how rich we all are, and keeps us from properly understanding our most important relationships with friends, family, and loved ones. We don't need paper or numbers in a relationship for there to be a great exchange of value. Even in a simple conversation, we are exchanging our time, energy, ideas, and attention. Every voluntary interaction happens because those involved think it benefits them. All voluntary interactions are economic transactions. Is marriage not a voluntary exchange of our most valuable assets of time, love, and affection?

When we arbitrarily separate what is and isn't considered economics, we diminish the value of that which we exclude. Pretending these principles don't apply in some situations encourages irrational behavior based on misunderstandings and inaccurate evaluations. This also creates openings for manipulation. The current system of measuring value that excludes relationships diminishes them and elevates the part of the economy prone to government manipulation. By expanding our concept of the economy, we can see the greater value in life that governments can never touch, and just how insignificant governments really are when it comes to the true sum of the human experience.

OTHER DESTRUCTIVE RACKETS

I. SCHOOLING

Providing the next generation with the skills to survive and thrive is critically important. When governments take over education, young minds suffer. The exploitation of the education racket is particularly vicious because to miseducate or under-educate a child is to cripple their future. Young minds naturally absorb information and seek the skills most essential to their happiness and prosperity. Threatening young people with consequences to ensure obedience stifles free-thinking and teaches the way of government: to accept rule by force.

Governments have always had an incentive to warp young minds to serve their purposes. With the rise of complex societies, governments had the means to force children into classrooms in what is sometimes referred to as “cemetery seating.” It is an appropriate term, because coercive education kills a part of every child’s vibrant individuality. In the industrial age, governments needed obedient workers with a specific set of skills. Forced education indoctrinates children with government values. It is much easier to convince young people to join the military and kill strangers if they have been “taught” that this is glorious. Governments also benefit from being able to keep certain knowledge away from students.

When governments control education, people become more dependent on institutional jobs because they are less capable of living independently. A government that controls education will never teach us to stand up for our rights. A government that is responsible for the development of young minds will teach them what to think, not how to think. A government that can control what we know, and what we don’t know, can control what we do. Government schools will never teach an alternative to blind allegiance. The consequences of government education are far-reaching, profound, and compounded with each generation.

While government control over schools (whether by regulation or complete takeover) always hinders learning, it is important to see education as a much broader concept. Like a flower growing through a crack in a sidewalk, even someone whose schooling is thoroughly controlled cannot be prevented from flourishing. Especially now, with greater access to the internet, children are capable of educating themselves. In many places, parents are in a continuous revolt against forced education. Most want what is best for their children and seek alternatives like homeschooling, private schools, and various forms of self-guided learning. Parents who care too much to trust their children’s minds to government and children who learn more online than from the mental prisons of forced “education” are exploring such alternatives like never before. Young minds absorb information much better by the indulgence of their curiosities and stimulation of their passions than by force.

II. MEDICAL CARE

As an essential service that invokes strong emotions, medical care invites government meddling. Modern medicine has made incredible things possible, but many life-saving procedures remain very expensive. In the natural course of new technologies, prices start high and come down over time. Tragically, government regulation in rich countries has kept prices high so many life-saving technologies remain out of reach for people in poor countries. Efficiency is not just about economic productivity in terms of having more stuff. It also means saving lives.

Even if we had a nonviolent market for medical services, some advanced life-saving technologies would remain too expensive for most people. Fortunately, the nature of the need for these services presents a solution that the market readily provides: insurance. This means people who don’t need services right now can buy

insurance and pool their resources. When they need an expensive service, the insurance company, which makes money by providing the service of pooling risk, pays for it. Of course this is not a perfect solution, but it is a very powerful way to give the poor access to treatment they might never be able to afford individually.

Unfortunately, many insurance corporations end up with the same special privileges as the best government sponsors. This leads to lower accountability to the consumer by limiting choices, often resulting in denial of coverage and hospital bills that bankrupt families. In some places, government has taken over the medical insurance industry as the sole provider. This may have an effect on helping the poorest of the poor temporarily, but eventually it hurts everyone by making care less accessible or by inefficiently diverting so many resources into the medical industry that other areas of the economy suffer.

We all want reassurance that the medical care we get is safe. This demand is enough to drive a lot of resources towards safety and consistency of care. Many governments exploit our fear of medical tragedy to take over this essential market function. They require licenses to provide treatment, approval to distribute drugs, and obedience to regulations for all the ways medical care is paid for. When governments require a license, they force people to meet their standards, which often stifles innovation. The standards are often meaningless, but because people trust government, they will accept treatment from anyone as long as they have government approval. That's how most horror stories occur, rather than from people working without a license. Where governments control drug safety, the results are staggering: millions of people have died from government-approved drugs, and millions more have died while life-saving drugs were kept off the market. Government control of the medical industry has the same disastrous effects on prices, availability, safety, and customer satisfaction as in any other industry.

III. WELFARE

One of the noblest elements of our nature is our desire to help the less fortunate. As members of the human family, we want to see each other succeed. It hurts any compassionate person to see others suffer. Governments love taking advantage of this and when they have the capacity to steal from everyone and control the conversation with propaganda, it's easy to convince people that they want to steal from the rich to give to the poor. In reality, most government welfare programs steal from the working class to give to the poor in a way that entrenches government so it can continue to steal from everyone to give to the super rich.

People support government welfare programs because they like the immediate effects. The problem is they don't see the bigger picture and the hidden consequences. It is naïve to think we can simply elect politicians and trust them to address problems of poverty and wealth disparity. Governments have been the primary tools of creating wealth disparity. If we want to achieve a legitimate goal, using coercion will usually result in the opposite of what we want. The warped incentives of welfare lead to warped behavior like basing major decisions on qualifying for benefits. This is true of welfare programs that end up creating huge dependent classes of people who will always vote for more coercion. Welfare turns its recipients into government apologists who will promote a system that keeps them down because they think it's in their best interest.

In the name of "fighting poverty," governments create massive and complex bureaucracies that control housing resources and manipulate the labor market to force people into bad jobs. They spend stolen money on no-bid contracts for anything they can get us to believe will help the poor. If the people who genuinely care about helping the poor were directing those resources, they would be used far more effectively.

The realization that welfare programs are destructive presents another problem: how do we phase out these programs without pulling the rug out from underneath so many dependent people? The answer is quite simple: restore the power of local communities where people are affected. It might not be easy, but we will all be better off when peaceful solutions displace violent ones. It is also essential to remove economic barriers that stifle upward mobility and self-sufficiency, such as minimum wage laws, regulations that make it impossible to start a new business from nothing, or the laws that, in some places, make selling goods on the side of the road illegal.

Despite so much being taken by governments, most societies still have a great capacity to help the poor. There is nothing wrong with taking money from a government. Money spent on welfare is money that can't be spent on violence. Nonviolent solutions are always more effective than violent ones. When we choose to help the poor, it is far more effective than governments taking our money "to give to the poor." We can build

the institutions and culture necessary to elevate the least among us without coercion. We can be compassionate without using force to help those in need.

IV. PROHIBITION

People have used drugs to control their minds for as long as we have known how. We do this for many reasons, from recreational highs, to performance improvement, to increased sociability. In any case, only the owner of the mind in question should decide what goes in it. There is a human tendency to want to control the minds of those around us to ensure that no one in our community is a threat to others or isn't working hard enough to support those around them. Governments take advantage of this with various policies, some of which are intended to make us more productive taxpayers, but all of which serve special interests. Prohibition of any substance is premised on the idea that your body is government property, and you do not have the right to decide what goes in it. Possession is never a crime.

The prohibition racket is very prominent in modern governments because there are many beneficiaries. In most places, alcohol is the dominant recreational drug and the industry behind it spends plenty of money keeping the competition away by paying off politicians who reinforce the false premises, faulty logic, immoral enforcement, and outright lies of prohibition. In the case of marijuana prohibition (as well as for numerous other natural drugs with healing properties), the pharmaceutical industry has an enormous incentive to keep cheaper (sometimes free) and more effective drugs illegal. Keeping drugs away from people who want them is an impossible and endless task that "requires" vast resources to be diverted to police and those who equip them. These groups all have an interest in supporting prohibition and many have no problem lying to the public or hiring politicians to do it for them.

Prohibition policies, once enacted, become entrenched very quickly, not just because of the financial incentives, but also because it is such an easy racket to maintain. People will always do drugs. Enforcement is a matter of what society will tolerate and the only real check is the conscience of the enforcers. Real crimes require victims, but prohibition is based on calling a victimless behavior a crime so that police have an excuse to sacrifice their morality. Once there is a critical mass of enforcers with socially-accepted enforcement policies, there is nothing to stop them from planting drugs on their victims, making it very easy to keep prohibition profitable.

One assumption of the drug war is that some drugs are illegal because they are dangerous or unhealthy. In other words, because doing drugs might ruin your life, if you're caught with them, the government will ruin your life. In many places, most common drugs that aid productivity are allowed. If a drug is unpopular enough that it can be demonized, but widespread enough that banning it can be profitable, it will probably be made illegal.

To the extent that drug use is a legitimate problem, nothing makes it worse than charging in to point guns at everyone involved. This drives the market underground, creating new problems of violence and addiction. People who can't control their use are less able to get help. It also drives up prices for the addict, encouraging financial destitution. Some will say prohibition is futile because it doesn't achieve its stated objectives, and many governments can't even keep drugs out of prisons. They are missing the point: prohibition works exactly as intended and is a very profitable racket.

V. PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

There are no more precious resources for humanity than those essential to all life on earth. We all have a right to breathe the air, drink the water, take nourishment from the earth, and put to use all manner of natural resources, so long as we do not interfere with anyone else's access to these resources. We are perfectly capable of protecting the environment, while respecting these rights, without resorting to government coercion. Using violence will often produce the opposite of the desired result, and in protecting the environment, using government has resulted in massive pollution, squandering of resources, and the destruction of countless lives.

When governments are trusted with the responsibility of protecting the environment, it does not change the nature of government. These protection rackets' only incentive to protect the environment is to preserve

their credibility in order to serve their special interests in more important ways. When they can, they will gladly sacrifice the environment to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Even when their true intent is legitimate conservation, or the people so demand it that they are forced to try, these violent institutions are not very effective.

Governments cannot effectively protect the environment because in order to exist, they have to impose a warped view of property rights. Because governments exist to serve their sponsors and have monopolies on courts, their courts will almost never provide justice to individuals suffering from the effects of pollution. The policies of corporatism remove accountability at every level possible. This is especially true of “government-owned” land that is rented and severely damaged by people who have no legitimate ownership stake in it.

Because we all have the right to claim natural resources as our own by putting them to use, we have the right to claim land that is not being put to use. Governments depend on the ability to arbitrarily claim land and they extend that false right to their favored citizens. It is an essential human right to be able to claim a plot of land to make a home or to be productive. Already, under most governments, this is nearly impossible. Instead, people with money or the right connections are allowed put up fences (real and virtual) around massive plots of land. When people can use the land in accordance with their rights, the true landowners will have an interest in preserving its value. When we demand a proper respect for property rights, and a consistent standard of what constitutes fair use of environmental resources, we will put an end to the squandering and destruction encouraged by government.

The same fundamental principles apply to the preservation of rare species and other natural treasures. Making it illegal to kill endangered species means poachers will only have to get around a government. Giving people an ownership interest in the most valuable of resources, possibly a widely-distributed ownership, means anyone who would violate their property will have to defeat security commensurate with the value of those resources. Governments put corrupt people in charge of managing precious natural resources who will never be as capable of defending them as those who truly value them, and the experts who understand their value. People who have an interest in preserving rare species have an incentive to protect them. Turning to governments to protect endangered species is hoping we can cast a vote and forget about the problem. We are turning our backs on them when we entrust their future to such an ineffective system.

Climate change has become a favorite excuse for governments to tighten control over the energy industry. No matter how big a problem climate change may be, it does not justify more coercive control. Whatever challenges humanity faces, we will address them more effectively by cooperating. Governments are already experimenting with weather modification in ways that are harmful to the environment. Only because it is being pursued by governments is it possible with so little transparency and accountability.

Many environmental issues are large and complicated, so most people are eager to avoid responsibility and trust governments to maintain access to clean food, air, and water. But even the problem of air pollution can be attributed to government subsidization of the oil, gas, and auto industries, especially by paying for the roads. If the cost of pollution and roads were not removed from the price of driving, we would have a natural incentive to develop technologies that avoid those costs, or at least deal with them more efficiently. Governments remove many natural incentives to develop cleaner and more efficient technologies.

A free market system will provide for the optimal usage of natural resources and properly value them, from the least to the most precious. Owners make better guardians than renters and governments rob us all of our chance to take a responsible ownership stake in our planet. Through conscious consumerism, or by the usage of ostracism and boycott when necessary, we can all play a role in setting appropriate standards for the use of natural resources. Regardless of our personal views on what resources are important, turning to coercion to protect them will only serve the needs of government sponsors.

VI. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

There is nothing more valuable than what we produce and hold in our minds. Every new idea is the product of many past innovators. We see further and invent more only because of those who propelled us forward not by hoarding their ideas, but by sharing them. For true creators of ideas, it is extremely arrogant to claim responsibility

for new ideas beyond the insignificant contributions we have made to the innovation of all those who have gone before us. But governments all over the world have stepped in to appeal to the egos of intellectuals and artists alike to create the most arrogant racket of all: intellectual property. Preventing people from copying ideas keeps them from improving on them and severely impedes human progress.

In the development of new ideas or creative works, there is legitimate “intellectual property,” but only as a metaphor. By confusing this with real property, we invite the use of force against the free flow of ideas, and governments are happy to accept! This metaphor of intellectual property can be very important in the development of new ideas and in research and development. When ideas are held in secret through the exercise of property rights and contractual agreements, that is legitimate. When government force is used against ideas or data, that is a criminal violation of someone’s real property rights.

The concept of “intellectual property” as we know it today directly contradicts real property rights. If you own physical property, and want to copy music on your computer, write down something someone else said in a notebook, or carve a stone into a wheel, you don’t owe anyone for the use of ideas that you have used your own real property to recreate. The creator of ideas can control how ideas are shared, but only once. After that, the only way to control the flow of ideas is to use the government to violate the real property rights of others.

The most offensive part about the intellectual property racket is how it shifts the focus from innovation to stopping innovation. In a true free market, which is by definition free of coercion-based intellectual property, (as the world had been for ages until relatively recently) the focus is on the next idea. If we want to compete and stay ahead, we have to be the most creative. That’s what is rewarded. We wouldn’t say the fashion industry lacks innovation because specific styles can’t be patented. Imagine a world in which the cut of a sleeve can’t be copied. Or the idea of pants! If only one company was allowed to make jeans and someone else tried, they could send police to shut down their operation. Or food! Imagine if chefs couldn’t copy recipes!

In the media today, the ravages of IP are plain to see. Look at the consolidation of power in the music industry. How much better would our lives be if everyone who made music was making it for the love of innovation and what we heard wasn’t decided by radio stations and record labels? Same with movies! We should not have so much power concentrated in the large corporations that come to dominate any field subject to the intellectual property racket. Taking away this corporatist advantage would radically improve creative innovation.

As for inventions that require massive development costs, the ideas should be allowed to go to those most efficiently capable of producing the goods people want to consume. For inventors, this would mean we can’t come up with one idea, file a patent, then sit back and collect royalties. This would open the field up to everyone, make it more competitive. To make money as an inventor, we would have to be good enough that people would want to support our next idea, which is essentially what corporations do when they take the best minds into their labs and claim to own their ideas. Crowdfunding is one thriving alternative model. The same principles apply to software development. Working on code in the sequestered way dictated by “intellectual property” (as opposed to open source) means stifling collaboration.

In the case of the pharmaceutical and medical technology industries, the intellectual property racket has had disastrous consequences. Instead of developing drugs that best serve our needs and save lives, resources are diverted to developing drugs that make more money due to artificial incentives. Lives are lost because market forces are kept from bringing down the cost of new drugs.

The internet has removed so many barriers to sharing ideas that some business models based on the intellectual property racket can no longer compete with those based on free data. Without the need for physical distribution networks for music, video, and everything else that can be digitized, it is easy for anyone to compete as a content creator on the merit of their creative works. Content creators who want us to benefit from their work will encourage sharing.

Because it is morally wrong to use force to impede the free flow of ideas, as free people, we have the right to copy music, movies, text, and ideas. Because the free flow of ideas is essential to human progress and happiness, we also have a right to defy and resist any attempt to take our real property in the name of the dangerous fiction commonly referred to as “intellectual property.”

GOVERNMENT & LOVE

I. SEX, MARRIAGE, & FAMILY

We shouldn't have to insist that our personal, romantic, and family relations be absolutely free of violence and coercion. We expect freedom in our relationships, but how we relate to the relationships of others is an entirely different matter. While many people want to help others have more fulfilling relationships, some simply want to exercise control over others and impose their values. This is where governments come in with their laws and their coercion. Because every law is backed up by the threat of force, every law aimed at controlling personal relationships is guaranteed to reduce their quality.

When people are insecure about their sexuality or ability to reproduce, that insecurity is projected in attempts to control the private relationships of others, but the real threat is their own insecurity. All societies have developed norms of sexual behavior over time to ensure procreation, but imposing them by force is guaranteed to reduce satisfaction. While such laws may encourage (or in some places discourage) procreation, they do so at the cost of quality parenting. People who receive financial incentives for having children will be less enthusiastic about parenting than those doing it for the intrinsic satisfaction.

Laws attempting to control sexual behavior are backed by the threat of violently invading someone's bedroom. If people are involved in a relationship or exchange of physical pleasure in which both consent to what is happening, it is a crime to interfere with their relationship. Such laws are generally unenforceable anyway. They serve greater purposes than their absurd stated objectives by allowing governments to set the standard of sexual behavior and by giving them another weapon to use against deviants.

As many people understand it, marriage is a lifelong commitment between individuals based on a sacred vow. Before governments got into the marriage racket, the nature of these commitments was determined solely by the individuals involved and the religious or community institutions they made part of their commitment. In many places, the control of "marriage licensing" allows governments to control who can get married. The marriage racket also means governments control divorce, which would be bad enough without giving people the chance to seek decrees from judges backed by force. This is particularly disastrous when it comes to the effects on children, especially because they grow up thinking that when they have disputes, they should be settled by coercion.

When relationships turn violent, whether between spouses, parents and children, or any family members, intervention by force may be justified to protect those unable to protect themselves or remove themselves from a dangerous situation. However, trusting this noble purpose to government usually backfires. It forces people into unhealthy relationships and creates false incentives. In some governments, great bureaucracies are dedicated to managing family relationships. Even the decrees of bureaucrats are backed up by force, leading to predictable consequences that governments use as an excuse for more government. If a society accepts that a coercive monopoly is an acceptable way to manage personal relationships, it will fall into a spiral, that if unchecked, guarantees the destruction of healthy relationships. When we demand to peacefully coexist with those we love, and peacefully walk away from those we don't, our most sacred relationships will be much more satisfying.

II. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Believe it or not, children are people too. Even before birth, we are all capable of expressing our will and deserve to have it respected without forceful interference. Parents make up all kinds of excuses to make their job easier, but the most destructive are those that deny children these fundamental rights and claim children as the property of parents. A child is a person, not a piece of property. When a child is respected as a person, it is no longer acceptable to strike a child or violate their rights in any way. In no way does this diminish the extreme responsibility parents take on as guardians of those who are not yet capable of meeting their own needs for safety and security. Treating children like property might make a parent's job easier temporarily, but it stunts their psychological development and conditions them to be treated like property by other authority figures, which is exactly why governments encourage this behavior.

Most governments create a legal framework around the idea that children are the property of their parents or at least are not fully people until they attain an arbitrary age or legal status. This reinforces the idea that rights are merely privileges to be given or taken away by an authority. While parents take on a certain responsibility as caregiver, they have no right to deny the will of a child to the extent it is properly expressed. Parents are not justified in using government to help them enforce their false ownership of a child. Children know when they are being treated like property and tend to resist it. The best parents are those who raise their children with an understanding of the great responsibility of parenthood and establish relationships based on understanding and respect, rather than the threat of force.

Most parents have a genuine desire to ensure their children are educated, but the government takeover of the education industry has led to a sense of helplessness among parents. In their eagerness to meet social standards of education, they are generally happy to turn their children over to government. Because children are people, they have the right to choose the course of their own education, not just from some arbitrary age, but from the moment they are capable of expressing a preference. This ensures the optimal engagement of a child's mind, which is constantly seeking to observe, learn, and develop the skills essential to providing for its own happiness.

As we are all empowered by the wisdom accumulated through the ages, children are especially empowered. This is particularly true as technology makes information accessible at younger ages every day, and parents attempting to control their children are no longer capable of doing so by keeping knowledge from them. While people in general are smarter than they have ever been, children are even more so, and society will adjust and be happier for it. As they demand their rights of personhood, children will get them, and the sooner they do, the happier we all will be.

III. THE EVOLUTION OF PARENTING

When we create another life, we take on a special relationship with that individual as a parent. The same is true when we adopt a young person and take on the responsibility of a parent. As with any relationship, it is up to us to decide the terms. It is critical to respect that we do not get to decide the terms for others and we do not get to impose our standards. The most important thing you can do as a parent is ensure that your relationship with your child respects their personhood. As we better understand parenting, we can eliminate the use of force as a tempting, but counterproductive, technique to influence our children's behavior. But truly respecting and nurturing a fellow human means much more than not spanking them.

As we become more efficient, we free up more time and energy for better parenting. If the moral argument was not compelling enough, science has clearly demonstrated that hitting children interferes with the healthy growth of their brains. Using violence against children teaches them that violence is an acceptable way to settle disputes and influence others. When a parent hits a child, they often forget the physical nature of the relationship from the child's perspective and just how intimidating they can be. This also warps a child's view of authority. The use of violent language, yelling, and anger can have the same effect and teach children the same destructive habits.

Parents should use reason and logic to influence the decisions of their children and use force only when immediately required for safety. This is the same standard by which we would like to be treated as adults.

Communicating needs and requests is more effective than making demands and threatening consequences. Sometimes this requires patience, but a little patience to inform and educate early on will save parents from dealing with irrational behavior later. When parents say, “because I say so,” they are conditioning their children to submit to authority and missing the most powerful opportunity to teach by example. This principle should be applied more broadly to our attitude towards our children’s education. Parents should facilitate natural learning, not force their children into indoctrination centers. Only by teaching our children with reason and logic can we expect them to be able to think for themselves.

While you have no obligation to use your body to bring an unborn child into the world or to nurture a child, parents enjoy the privilege of defining a sacred relationship. If you define it as one of ownership and domination, you will raise a child who will contribute slavery and servitude. Effective parenting will break the cycle of violence, and each generation will be much more loving and capable than its predecessor because we naturally strive to be better parents.

IV. BULLYING

To anyone who understands bullying, it is ironic to see government schools trying to tell children that bullying is unacceptable. What they are really saying is that bullying is only acceptable when done by government. Children are too smart to miss the hypocrisy. Governments depend on controlling language. Words are redefined or vaguely defined to serve their needs. Any time we introduce a specific definition of bullying, it reveals that government is the biggest bully of all.

To bully someone is to try to affect their attitude or behavior through intimidation or threat. This implies the use of some superior force. By definition, there is no organization of force superior to government. Every law it passes is backed by the threat of force. Predictably, government bullying is not restricted to its “official” and stated purposes. Because they create arbitrary authority, governments encourage bullying by individuals who can use authority against people, like police, bureaucrats, and politicians.

Children are great at learning by example. The bullies on the playground are most often the children of parents who bully them. Telling children that government is good conditions them to be bullies. When we vote for politicians (who at best, manage institutional bullying, and at worst, are horrific bullies themselves) but tell our children not to bully, we send a clear message: “Do as I say, not as I do.” Not only does this insult the intelligence of our children, it doesn’t work. They learn that if it’s fine for government to be a bully, it’s fine for them to be bullies.

This creates a general culture of bullying in which relationships are tainted by coercion and intimidation. It is easily identified when it takes a physical form, but the emotional forms are just as destructive. People who bully emotionally are sure to have far less satisfying relationships than those who relate to others with respect. A society dominated by institutional bullying and hypocrisy will surely produce more bullies.

V. RACISM

Besides the problems of racism itself, there is a problem in the way the term is used to describe different things at different times and how it is used to stifle open conversation. We all judge each other and make decisions based on limited information. We develop groups and categories to more quickly evaluate people and decide how to interact with them. It would be an absurd denial of reality to say that racial differences don’t matter, even though there are universal features of the human experience we all share. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging racial differences, celebrating them, making objective comparisons, or even making fun of those differences. Some would say that none of these cross the line into “racism,” but vague definitions often lead to suppression of open discussion in the name of political correctness and deceptive political action.

When racism is used to single people out based on our judgement of their groups rather than judging them as individuals, it is detrimental. We have the right to choose our associations for whatever reasons we like, but judging an individual as a member of a collective as superficial as race keeps us from enjoying the full potential

of our relationships. Unfortunately, simply expressing preference is not enough for some people, so they look for ways to impose their judgements on others, whether positive or negative. This is where governments step in to take advantage of “racism.”

Using any judgement about a person to justify an act of force against them is wrong. Racism happens to be a very common justification and one of the most vile because it denies people their individuality in the mind of the racist who sees them only as a member of a collective. Our tendency to evaluate people by race provides governments with another opportunity. All we need to do is look at a map of the world to see that the forced collectives formed by governments generally reflect racial groups. What is not so obvious is how governments stoke racism through nationalism.

Historically, racism has been used as motivation for the most catastrophic violent atrocities. All racial judgements are subjective evaluations, but when a judgement of superiority is combined with a government’s belief that it owns everyone in its territory and can engineer society by violence, mass murder is often the result. Whether done by governments or individuals acting on their own, to steal from, assault, or kill someone is to govern them. Widespread violence by individuals or small groups motivated by racism are just as wrong as racist wars or purges, but much easier to deal with than when all of that racism is violently institutionalized in government.

Governments use racism as justification for all kinds of policies that further entrench the practice of evaluating people by race. Some governments do this with policies intended to reverse racism, which tend to have the same disastrous effects as welfare, but targeted to a specific race. The super rich especially appreciate racism because the artificial divides it creates are a convenient distraction from the genuine divides between the super rich and the rest of us. Governments use racism to keep us divided and conquered.

TRUE PERSONAL FREEDOM

I. EMOTIONAL SLAVERY

As free, beautiful, independent people, our greatest gift besides life itself is emotional freedom. No one can tell us what to think or how to feel. But if only it were so simple! Our emotions are critical to how we deal with the world and how we relate to each other. Without negative emotions, positive emotions are almost meaningless, but we can choose if we want to dwell on the positive or the negative. We cannot control our immediate emotional reactions or deny that they exist, but they provide openings for manipulation by others. To someone who has mastered their emotions, others can only provoke momentary lapses in whatever state of mind they have chosen to adopt, but very few have such mastery, and most of us fall far short.

Invoking emotions in others is a powerful way to control those who allow themselves to be manipulated. We see this every day in our individual relationships, and those that are dominated by emotional manipulation tend to be miserable! Sometimes this is not done deliberately, but is just as destructive when done subconsciously. It often occurs as a result of poor communication skills. When people feel unable to properly express themselves, they resort to emotional appeals or the examples set by those around them, especially their parents. Parents often use such weapons against their children, who learn by example. Awareness is all it takes to stop and prevent it, but that requires discipline and vigilance.

Effective communication can resolve nearly all human conflicts. We often communicate aggressively without even knowing it. We often communicate using deception and emotional manipulation to control others. We hold back from open communication because we fear being judged. Sometimes, we forget to listen to the needs of others because we are too busy judging them. We tend to hear comments as attacks and get defensive. These dysfunctional patterns of communication reinforce emotional slavery. True freedom means being able to communicate honestly, openly, and without judgement. The language of emotional slavery leaves us vulnerable to unsatisfying relationships. Nonaggressive communication fosters emotional freedom and fulfillment.

Governments can control us by the direct threat of force, but it is relatively inefficient and creates far more resistance than emotional manipulation. Governments are especially adept at using propaganda to induce fear among citizens to control their behavior. When people are frightened enough, they turn to governments for protection. Because we all fear the judgement of others to some degree, governments also use propaganda to manipulate our perception of the expectations of others. If propaganda creates the impression that all the other citizens expect us to be obedient, our default position will be obedience, and that can only be overcome with careful, rational analysis. Any time someone trying to control us can fill our heads with emotions, they can keep us from thinking clearly and lead us to believe in whatever bad ideas advance their agenda.

Whether negative emotions come from governments, individuals, or circumstance, allowing them to dominate our thinking is emotional slavery that leads to voluntary submission. When someone tries to frighten us, we cannot always control how we react, but we can choose to stay in a state of emotional reaction, or center ourselves and rationally analyze the situation. When we choose to remain in an emotional state that is chosen for us, we are voluntarily submitting to control. By claiming control of our outlook, we can make ourselves impervious to emotional manipulation from individuals and governments. Imagine how much better the world would be if no one succumbed to government fear! Without fear, the racket wouldn't be possible. Governments couldn't convince us to support wars, or the policies of the police state, or the idea of government itself. Patterns of manipulation are passed from generation to generation, but with increased consciousness of this

broader problem through therapy, mental health awareness, better communication habits, and better practice of meditation, these habits are slowly being unlearned.

II. HEALTH FREEDOM

There is nothing more important to living well than a fully-functional mind as part of a healthy body. We all value our health, and yet we trust governments to tell us which food, drugs, and chemicals are safe. They only care about our health so long as it serves their interests. Besides the desire to keep citizens docile and obedient, when it comes to the health industry, governments increase their power by getting citizens to trust them, then selling that trust to the highest bidders in the food, pharmaceutical, and medical industries. Government approval is not good enough if you care about your health. If we are to be free, we must be healthy. If we are to be healthy, we must stop trusting governments.

Except for those who are completely food-independent (by gathering, growing, raising, and/or hunting all of their own food) we rely on many indirect information sources to determine if the food we consume is safe. We seek the approval of experts and authorities to save us from having to do a detailed analysis of everything we eat. There's nothing wrong with that if we know who to trust. Many private organizations test food for pollution and bacteria and are critical to ensuring food safety all over the world. In many places, governments have completely taken over food safety services. This often results in bribes, lower standards, poor oversight, and opportunities for unscrupulous people to take advantage of people who will eat whatever governments say is safe.

Abuse of food safety authority often means that foods which are unsafe are approved because of bribes, while healthy food producers are shut down or harassed by regulators. Natural, decentralized, or organic food sources are made illegal, and producers who can't or won't buy off politicians get shut down. Some extreme interventions have obvious disastrous effects, but the less obvious and more widespread effects can be worse. When foods are subsidized, the market is distorted and industrialized crops become much cheaper, crowding healthy foods out of the market. The detrimental effect on the health of poor people, who have no choice but to eat the subsidized food, is immeasurable.

A relatively new intrusion in the food industry is the regulation (or more importantly, protection from liability) related to genetically-modified food production. Genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) have great potential. We can now alter the genetic properties of so many living things to better meet our needs. However, this technology comes with many dangers like making food less safe, polluting non-GMO crops, and throwing ecosystems out of balance. Because this technology is being pursued by massive corporations already adept at bending governments to their purposes, we suffer the consequences of the unsafe side effects of this technology without the chance to hold producers liable. Conscious consumerism can address these problems, but as long as we trust governments to decide what is safe, we don't stand a chance against dishonest producers.

When governments are used to control pharmaceuticals, many life-saving drugs are kept away from people until their manufacturers can navigate the approval process. Many unsafe drugs are approved because the regulators have been bought off. Due to subsidization of the pharmaceutical industry, patients are encouraged to turn to pills when much more effective, but less profitable cures are available. Doctors who are protected from accountability and paid to push prescriptions will sacrifice the health of their patients for profit. In some cases, doctors can be made liable for not providing specific treatments. Vaccines have a role to play, but because of their mass appeal, they are often required, subsidized, or pushed by governments, and "public health" is compromised to serve government sponsors. While modern medicine has its virtues and can accomplish things natural remedies never could, the balance between natural remedies and modern medicine is skewed toward corporate interests by trusting governments to oversee the health care industry.

The modern, government-controlled lifestyle makes people unhappy in many ways. When unhappiness is uncontrollable, it is known as depression, and it affects millions of people all over the world. But unlike many diseases, depression is not an organic phenomenon, and aside from the obvious ways that governments make us unhappy, there are some specific policies that promote depression. Many government-approved ingredients in processed foods, pollution deemed acceptable by governments, and drugs judged safe by governments cause

depression. Governments also promote depression-inducing tax slave lifestyles with limited access to nature. By choosing a different lifestyle, we can avoid these risk factors.

The choice is clear: trust the government and sacrifice your health for corporate profits, or think for yourself and enjoy a healthy life. While governments limit our choices and make healthy living more difficult and more expensive, this is one area where we still have many choices. We can grow our own food, be more conscious consumers, exercise properly, eat right, seek natural remedies, and collect our own water! We can opt out of the unhealthy lifestyles promoted to keep us enslaved! Choosing to be unhealthy and susceptible to chronic diseases makes you more dependent on modern medicine. In the long run, investing in your health pays off by helping avert chronic disease. If you can't be healthy, you can't be free.

III. WORK FREEDOM

Because governments exist to serve the needs of their sponsors, they often herd people into tax slave jobs that make them miserable. This is achieved through "education" and propaganda, but also by more direct means like taxation, incentives, and impeding creation of small businesses. Governments also employ numerous people directly because it gives them more control and makes people even more dependent. More people employed by governments means fewer people who will want to challenge government power. Government employees are often well taken care of, but they are also responsible for all the immorality attributed to government.

If you work for a government, you might be doing very good work, but it is important to acknowledge that the money you are paid comes from some form of theft. Governments often take over legitimate social functions, like public safety and charity. Even people who provide value as government workers are, at best, contributing to dependence. At worst, they are committing horribly immoral acts as enforcers who point guns at peaceful people, or carry out other acts of coercion. Most government employees are simply feeding off the taxpayer and providing little value to society. If you work for a government, you might have been promised great pensions and benefits. All such promises from government are promises to steal from future taxpayers. Government pensions are not as dependable in the long run as they would have you believe, especially now, as so many governments are being replaced in revolutions or defaulting on their debts.

Many people who don't work for government do so indirectly, and not just as taxpayers. If you work for a corporation that contracts with government, you might be having a worse effect than someone working for it directly! Many people in this position understand exactly what they are doing. They are working against the cause of freedom and sacrificing their morality for a paycheck. This may come with perks, but you can't buy happiness, and without living virtuously, it is much more difficult to be happy.

In most countries it is difficult, but not impossible, to make an honest living without sacrificing a portion of the fruits of your labor as taxes. We should all strive to minimize the amount we pay in taxes in order to defund government violence. If we want to minimize our contribution to evil, we must consider how we can change our lifestyle or sources of income. Because governments cannot steal from what they cannot see, they demonize people who work "off the record" or "under the table." However, this course is far more noble and moral than working in a way that guarantees you will be a sponsor of government violence.

Sometimes, working off the record gives you much more flexibility. You may find this flexibility is worth earning less, but it often leads to earning more, as you can be far more creative. Creatively directing resources is the heart of entrepreneurship. Governments work very hard to beat this creativity out of citizens to keep us working as tax slaves, but it is easy to rekindle and very rewarding. Governments stifle entrepreneurship with regulatory barriers to small businesses, but a true entrepreneur is not discouraged by challenges.

Governments and banks encourage tax slaves to take on debt as a way to make them dependent on their jobs. Many people fall into this trap by living beyond their means. Sometimes high earners are trapped by their salaries when they use them to take out loans for big homes and expensive cars. Debt makes you a slave and we should all avoid putting on any more chains than necessary. Sometimes, earning less money, or just living within your means, provides more flexibility and freedom.

The most important thing to consider when choosing how to apply ourselves is whether or not the work is consistent with our values. Many of us sacrifice doing what we love for a steady job, or one that meets the

expectations of others. Do not succumb to such emotional servitude. If you can't find a way to sufficiently support yourself or your family by doing what you love, at least do something you can be proud of. When we sacrifice our values for immediate material gain, we suffer in the long run. Assert your freedom by applying yourself to what you love.

IV. HAPPINESS CAUSES FREEDOM

If we don't know how to be happy, what's the point of being free? What good is it to live in a free society, in a free country, or a free world, if we are so emotionally crippled that we are incapable of enjoying it? Why would we struggle to escape the oppression of police, parliaments, and presidents, if only to remain enslaved to fear and insecurity? Many of us would assume freedom should lead to happiness, but that does not correctly describe the relationship. The way most of us understand freedom and happiness is backwards. Happiness is not the result of freedom. Happiness causes freedom!

Do we need freedom to be happy? Most certainly not! Happiness is not pursued, captured, beaten over the head with a club, and hauled home to be enjoyed for ever and ever! It is often pointed out that money can't buy happiness. Money can "buy" happiness only to the point at which money can no longer buy independence, but even that independence is based on an illusion of external conditions. The most successful people, by any measure, are as prone to misery and depression as anyone. Looking at the modern world and antidepressant consumption, we might conclude that wealth causes depression! Even a brief examination of the human condition reveals that happiness is not a pursuit, as much as a choice.

True mental freedom is empowerment to choose your state of mind. If the only happiness you ever know is dependent on external factors, you will remain a slave to circumstance and never be truly happy. You can only swing between happiness and fear, knowing deep down that if conditions beyond your control change, you won't be happy. What a sad state of emotional servitude and vulnerability! A crude animal in such a primitive state is dangerously prone to manipulation. While you will never control the challenges that life presents you, and you may never master your animalistic reactions, your mood and your frame of mind are **YOUR CHOICE!** This is the unique gift of human consciousness. This is the great beauty of human nature. This is the foundation of our capacity for love and connectedness . . . and thus freedom!

Being happy is as simple as changing your mind! Of course, this speaks to a range of mental states we can choose. With true mental freedom, we can choose to be determined, thoughtful, compassionate, patient, loving – but beneath all that, why would we ever choose to be any less than perfectly happy? While it really is that simple and it really is that easy, it is a discipline of happiness.

Emotions serve an essential role for survival. Fear and the "fight or flight" response have saved countless lives, but such hardwired responses often take over our evolved brains and keep us from fully using them. Rational fears become anxiety and insecurity. Disappointment becomes depression. Hostility becomes anger and hatred. The discipline of happiness is separating these reactions from how we deliberately choose to live our lives. It is the practice of living well. This empowerment liberates us (as individuals and as a species) from all past misdeeds of our primitive nature. Living well is not just the best revenge, it is the only revenge worth having! Happiness is the ultimate measure of success. But if you choose to dwell in fear, disappointment and hostility, and choose to be unhappy . . . then you'll be unhappy.

We are programmed to fear death, but wouldn't you rather face it rationally? Calmly? Happily? Fear not only makes us vulnerable to manipulation by those who would oppress us, it also tempts us to become oppressors. The tyranny of democracy encourages the broadest participation in fear-based oppression. Every politician's pitch is based on some version of, "If you give me power over you, I can make you happy and take away your fear." In the act of voting, we are not choosing leaders for ourselves, we are trying to impose our choice of leaders (and fears) on others.

Instead, we should seek to be the alphas of our own lives. Someone who is truly emotionally free has no need for imposed external authority. The people who are the driving force behind statism are not happy, and truly happy people are not very political. The freedom movement is not a political movement. It is an anti-political movement! A truly happy person can appeal to the better nature of fellow human beings, can meet them with

peace and persuasion and displace coercion with voluntary relationships and self-government based on self-ownership.

A person who knows their own capacity as a free, beautiful, independent person will never say, “But what will people think of me?” A person who can be happy in any situation will never say, “But what if I lose my job?” A person who knows self-discipline will never say, “But what if the sacrifice is too great?” The compassion of a truly happy person will say, “How could I possibly not share my joy and let some poor victimizer continue in the misery of oppressing others?” Only a mental slave will hate their oppressors. A free mind will pity them, and seek to share joy with those who are deficient in love. We should not “fight” oppression, or “struggle” for liberation, but rather empower those who have succumbed to mental slavery.

The greatest weapon against tyranny is a mind that refuses to submit to manipulation. If we want to be warriors for truth, soldiers for justice, and champions of freedom, we must first attain the discipline of happiness and a great capacity for living in love. Be the master of your own mind. Choose your demeanor at all times. Never meet a fellow person with force or coercion. Strive to live by reason. Smile because you’re alive. Remember, HAPPINESS is the ultimate act of defiance.

THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM

I. THE ASYMPTOTE

This is a very interesting time to be alive. We are coming to, if not already in the middle of, a crucial turning point in human history. Technology has always followed an exponential growth curve. It may have taken millions of years of gradual development to get to where we are today, but now, development is rapidly accelerating. It's true that exponential curves never quite get vertical, but the curve of human progress is approaching the point at which it might as well be. That point can only be described as the asymptote of humanity, and it is nearly upon us. All aspects of our lives that can be driven by technology will be accelerating so fast that we won't be able to tell if the lines are vertical or not. The amount of change that occurred in the last several million years will soon be happening on an annual basis. And then on a daily basis. And then on an hourly basis. And then we will have hit the asymptote.

Technology has already radically altered the human experience. We tend to take it for granted, but our lives today are radically different from those of just a generation ago. In another generation's time, they will be even more radically different. While there is the underlying curve of all technological development, we can now see it following the development of computing power, which follows a clear exponential curve. Overall productivity, life expectancy, transportation capabilities, and so many other crucial aspects of our lives are now driven by this curve. We will soon have computers smarter than us! Some would say we already do.

This new era of human existence brings great possibility and empowerment in ways we cannot imagine – in ways most people today can't even see how they're disempowered. Governments depend on our acceptance of coercive systems, but technology is already empowering millions of us to form more effective voluntary associations. How will you convince someone to go to war and kill strangers that they can easily communicate with on the internet? How will you convince someone that forced welfare is necessary when the average person can support a family for life by working for just a year? How will you convince someone to accept control by force once we have figured out the peaceful ways to accomplish everything people used to think required governments? In many ways, technology is already rendering governments obsolete, but that process is about to take off!

Just using technology automatically leads to individual empowerment and will inevitably lead to greater freedom. Unfortunately, governments have always known this and sought to control technology. They have spent obscene amounts of money to ensure their technological capabilities are always one step ahead of the rest of us. This may be futile in the long run, but only if we wield technology appropriately. If we hit the asymptote before we banish statism altogether, we run the risk of this technology being used for destructive ends. We already live under the shadow of nuclear annihilation, but even more dangerous technologies are on the horizon.

All technology is fundamentally empowering. The only question is to whom and to what ends. The profusion of cameras is scary when governments use them to monitor citizens, but it's exciting when it offers new tools for accountability and can be used to stop real criminals. Identification chips in our bodies are scary if governments can use them to cut us off, but they are empowering when used to better control the technology around us. Computers in our brains are scary if government spy agencies can read our thoughts, but they also have the potential to make us smart enough to not need governments at all!

You might think, as exciting as this all sounds, most of us won't live to see it. Fortunately, medical technology is also driven by computing power, and therefore, so is life expectancy. If you are young and healthy today, by

the time you reach age 100, we will have probably figured out the cures for all the diseases that 100 year olds die from! Maybe by the time you're 200 years old, we will have figured out the cures for all the diseases that 200 year olds die from! Human life expectancy has been increasing in line with technological developments, and to beat old age forever, we only have to make it to the point at which life expectancy is increasing more than one year per year. That could be a lot sooner than you think!

We can see some technologies on the horizon and predict their impact. Cryptocurrency or other decentralized digital money will render government money irrelevant. Self-driving cars are right around the corner, but their impact will be insignificant compared to the inevitable leaps forward in our concept of personal transportation when flying drone taxis are possible. Maybe we'll have little helicopters that drop down luxurious cabins on a cable that we can summon at will. Flying drones are already showing great potential – at least when governments stop using them to kill and allow them to deliver food instead. 3D printing will soon allow for complex manufacturing at home and we may soon have metal and plastic on tap the way we now enjoy water, gas, electricity, and data. Imagine what we will be capable of when molecular 3D printers are small enough to fit on our fingertips and can be controlled with the computers in our brains! It seems personal energy independence is now inevitable. What happens when we can print rocket ships in our backyards?

It seems like we're fighting over the silliest of stuff while the human experience is being radically altered. We're not just rearranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship, we're shoving people out of the lifeboats! As we approach the asymptote, it is important that we come together in peace and harmony to use technological empowerment for good. It is crucial to spread awareness, empowerment, and the message of freedom. We may not be able to change the destiny of humanity, but we will enjoy shaping this beautiful process much more than just going along for the ride.

II. THE INTERNET EFFECT

The most important modern technology that will help us bring about a voluntary society is already flourishing: the internet. Many people described it as revolutionary when the internet forever changed the way we communicate, shop, navigate, and research – and it was – but that was just the beginning! The internet is still in its infancy and rapidly evolving. Society is just starting to feel its effects. Governments understand the threat of the internet and have made various attempts to control it. Some large governments have already gone to great lengths to curb its impact, but this is a losing battle. However, we must remain vigilant to any attempts to stifle the free flow of information to ensure this most powerful tool can be fully utilized as a force for positive change.

Simply as a tool to increase productivity, the internet is an unstoppable force. Those of us with unfettered access take for granted how having such a wealth of information readily available makes life easier and more efficient in so many ways. Thanks to smart phones connected to the internet, even our conversations have become more effective as we don't have to "debate facts" any more. Comparison shopping has reduced profit margins and made the market far more competitive. When someone figures out the solution to a problem, it can be shared around the world nearly instantaneously.

The global connectedness created by the internet is already making it more difficult to exploit us. Wars are always based on lies, and while governments still can and do lie, this is much more difficult. In government indoctrination centers known as public schools, kids with smart phones can directly challenge their instructors. Most children with internet access already know they can learn far more from turning to the internet instead of government.

The internet is causing the collapse of nationalism. Governments took advantage of the tendency for local pride and convinced their people that their country was the best at everything and governments were the reason. Governments never let the facts get in the way of a good story, but the internet has a way of inserting undeniable facts into the conversation that temper national pride. The fact that everyone with a smart phone can record and fact check the lies of politicians, then share their findings with the world, has already made governing much more difficult. It used to be very easy to lie and get away with it, but not in the age of the internet!

Governments have relied on their control of the media to control the conversation. This includes everything from keeping facts away from us to distorting irrepressible stories. In the age of the internet, control of the

conversation has been decentralized. Anyone with a story to tell or facts to share can get online and challenge the official narrative. In order to maximize the benefit of the internet, it is important to support independent media. Centralized control of the conversation is also being rapidly eroded by the phenomenon of sharing through social networks. No longer does a central authority decide what information is important. This is not just a new sharing of values and perspectives, but a new filter for relevance.

Many large governments have sought to control the internet because they know that shutting it down entirely, now that we are aware of its benefits, is impossible. They will always exercise as much control as they can, and it is quite efficient because they can control the internet through central hubs. Soon, these types of controls will no longer work because the internet will be decentralized, but governments can poison the conversation in many other ways. One of the internet's greatest assets is its ability to capture a broad reaction in public comment sections. Governments hire people to sit behind computers all day with multiple false identities to get us to think, for example, that everyone loves something that government just did. While governments have no problem stealing the money necessary to hire armies of spammers, some have invested in "sock-puppet" software so one person can swarm a conversation with multiple fake profiles. To use this in any capacity is a fraud, but because governments are based on the fraud that we need them in the first place, it makes perfect sense that they would have an interest in this technology. As the internet continues to evolve, the sock-puppets might be filtered out, but not without a degree of vigilance from those who value the integrity of the conversation.

Sometimes for worse, but overall much more often for better, the anonymity of the internet allows us to say things we might be afraid to say "in real life." The therapeutic effect of this cannot be underestimated as millions have already benefited from support communities that were impossible before the internet. We can challenge the status quo in ways never imagined and speak out without fear of retribution. This should inspire us to be more conscious consumers of information. Governments depend on lies and deception to maintain their rackets, but now, we have the "truth button" at our fingertips!

III. THE PARADIGM SHIFT

The current global paradigm of social organization is statism. Statism is based on a central authority, rule by force, and subservience to the collective or ruling class. It is coming to an end as we wake up to a new freedom paradigm based on human rights, nonviolence, and self-ownership. This transition from the paradigm of statism to the paradigm of freedom is the most important paradigm shift in human history. We are very fortunate to be living at such an exciting time. Because the statist paradigm results in violence, suffering, exploitation, and the stifling of potential, the freedom paradigm will bring prosperity, happiness, harmony, and a new phase of human existence.

There have been similar fundamental turning points before. Learning how to manipulate fire changed our lives forever. The rise of complex language made society itself possible. Mastery of agriculture was a major turning point. The industrial revolution could be placed on this scale. Maybe the rise of computers and internet access in our daily lives was a turning point. In another thousand years, it might be looked back on as just another primary shift in the human experience. However, there is something fundamentally different about the paradigm shift to freedom because it lays the foundation for the realization of so much more of our untapped potential.

For the paradigm shift to occur, it has to be embraced by a critical mass of people. We are rapidly approaching the tipping point at which statism will be untenable, not just because the institutions are unsustainable, but because we are rising up and demanding our rights. This is not just a process of education, but also of inspiration. Because they fear the transition, some will rationalize their slavery despite knowing that they will be better off when free. Toppling governments will not be helpful if self-government is not first embraced and demanded. The shift requires a deeper understanding of what it means to be a free, beautiful, independent person.

How will this paradigm shift shape society? Should we ask for gradual abolition? Should the beneficiaries of the current system be compensated? Should we ask for some justice, while tolerating some injustice? To timidly ask for a reduction of injustice is to ask for the perpetuation of injustice. Dismantling governments as peacefully as possible will take work, but we should demand no less than absolute freedom. When this paradigm shift is complete, asserting that governments are necessary will be as laughable as asserting that the flat earth is the center

of the universe. All such shifts seem crazy and uncertain before they occur, but after, they are seen as inevitable. The relevant trends already indicate that creating a peaceful, voluntary, world without government is our destiny.

IV. EDUCATION, ACTIVISM, & AGORISM

Achieving a free society requires a great deal of education. The current statist paradigm has been beaten into every mind governments can touch, because exploiting people is so much easier when they believe their exploitation is necessary. There are plenty of people who are ready and eager to hear the message of freedom, but others need to be shaken by the collar, as if to wake them from a stupor. There are those who will eagerly pursue self-education once given a peek behind the curtain. There are those who need encouragement and assistance. But for all those who cling to statism as if mistaking an anchor for a life jacket, there is activism to separate them from their delusions.

Education of others starts with education of ourselves. To be advocates for freedom, we don't need to be academic experts, but it helps to have a complete grasp of the message. It helps to have a thorough understanding of how statism affects those around us. This is not just researching, but listening and observing in order to point out the most relevant immediate tangible benefits of increasing freedom. Do not underestimate the significance of studying economics to understand the destructive consequences of governments. Be prepared to relate economic principles to real needs. We must be as careful about what we put in our brains as our bodies.

Education in the name of freedom can take many forms. Sometimes it's as simple as sharing a thought in conversation or an important news story on the internet. If we find satisfaction from such efforts, there is nothing wrong with keeping it simple! In fact, one-on-one conversations are often the most important factors in changing how someone thinks. Of course education includes flyering, blogging, writing books, making art, hosting events, certain elements of running for political office, making speeches, standing on a street corner with a bullhorn or a sign, writing letters, organizing petitions, graffiti, hanging posters, media production, chalking, skywriting, picketing, protesting, or just wearing a button to start a conversation.

When advocating for freedom or educating those around us, it is important to stay true to core principles. If we argue for the fantasy of limited government, we are promoting at least limited injustice, which is still promoting injustice. One approach when discussing these issues with people close to us is to personalize government violence. It helps people understand the immorality of what they are advocating when we can put their positions in terms of individual implications. Every time they advocate for government, they are suggesting that some form of violence be used against us for disagreeing.

All education is a form of activism because it seeks to change the status quo. In a sense, every deliberate act is a form of activism, but that might be too broad a definition to be useful. Activism can be a powerful way of grabbing people's attention to educate those who would never seek education on their own. Street theater, protests, and civil disobedience have this effect. More direct actions, like widespread disobedience, boycotts, direct interference with enforcers, tax resistance, seizing land, ignoring trade restrictions, going on strike, or even rejecting elements of government altogether, can achieve immediate change. Blind obedience is thoughtless and reckless, but disobedience is always thoughtful and deliberate. Disobedience is civil. Obedience is uncivil.

It's easy to talk about the ideal of a voluntary society, but it takes some effort to actually create one. Fortunately, it is already happening all around us in our daily lives. Did you point guns at people or threaten them with violence today or did you only initiate non-coercive interactions? Every time we create a relationship free of force, violence, and coercion, we are helping to build a freer world. When those relationships are deliberately conducted outside the government's ability to inject violence through taxation, legislation, or other means of control, we are practicing agorism.

The term agorism comes from the ancient Greek word for an open marketplace, "agora." Governments try to demonize agorist activity as the "black market," but that is only because they want our trade to occur where they can control and tax it, in their coercion-dominated "white market." Agorism comes naturally to anyone who can see its tangible benefits. To achieve a voluntary society, agorism will be essential to building the economic structures that will help us wean ourselves from governments.

While we might be tempted by flashier activism, reaching out to those closest to us and in our communities is most important. Help people understand government and how to avoid its exploitation. Start creating a freer society in your community by building it yourself. If you can't convince your friends and family to not support using government against you, it does you no good to try to wake up those who might never support you if your activism gets you in trouble. If you find the message of freedom valuable, share it as a gift. It only increases in value the more it is given away.

V. LOCALIZATION

Given that it is our destiny to achieve a voluntary society, there are only two ways statism can end: a violent collapse or a peaceful transition. Current government systems are clearly unsustainable. If we do not start paying attention and facing up to our problems, we are headed for sudden failures of the very systems that many of us depend on. While it would be nice to be able to push a button and instantly end all coercion in the world, such a button does not exist. While pushing such a button would certainly make the world a better place, it would also have unforeseen consequences. Where there is revolution without evolution of thought, there is a power vacuum. Instead of provoking instability, we should encourage self-government to fill that void so we can have a peaceful, orderly transition to a world without governments. The way to do that is localization.

Localization is dismantling governments from the top down, first restoring power to local communities with the end goal of eliminating all organized coercion, and establishing a voluntary society based on self-ownership and universal nonviolence. In many places, governments provide the best means available to achieve this through existing subdivisions and the electoral process. In some places, localization will be most effective when central governments are simply overthrown, but it must be done with a clear rejection of any central government, not just to replace it with another.

Localization appeals to people who don't quite support freedom, but simply want a greater say in how they are governed. The more local government is, the more relevant the voice of the individual. Under most governments today, even those with robust democracies, individual voters know their influence is usually insignificant. The global call to localize will unite people of all political persuasions, except for those who want global government.

Localizing has many immediately tangible benefits with universal appeal. Smaller local governments will be less likely to make war. Policies of social control will reflect local cultures more than the edicts of those in a distant capital. Natural resources will be used to serve local communities, rather than corporations controlled from far away.

Large central governments have proven to be great tools for consolidating wealth in the hands of the few and the enforcers are paid to keep it that way. Localization provides the opportunity for communities to reclaim unjustly-acquired property and make it more widely available if returning it to its rightful owners is not possible. This is especially important for land that has been sequestered, but can be made available for homesteading and other productive purposes.

The alternative to localization is to fight inch by inch, law by law. If we adopt this strategy, we will continue to lose ground as politicians pat us on the head for engaging in the political process while they laugh and take another mile behind our backs. We will not achieve a free society by begging governments for freedom. We will do it by demanding immediate restoration of power to our communities. The first places to embrace this strategy will lead the world toward freedom. They will be the most prosperous and the most secure. It is crucial to reverse the trend of consolidation of power as soon as possible. The longer we wait, the more difficult it will be.

Localization starts by practicing localism – building up our communities and creating the organizations to make ourselves less dependent on central governments. We could even say that localization is inevitable, it's just a matter of how. If we ignore the problems, we can sit back, wait for the collapse, and hope our governments spare us in their violent death throes as they cling to power. If we face up to these problems, we can begin a peaceful transition that will immediately yield positive results. It will most likely be a mix of both, as some would argue that the violent crackdowns against protesters around the world are already a sign of governments losing control. The sooner we embrace localism, the sooner we can end this violence and all the violence of statism.

VI. IS THIS A REVOLUTION?

When we see government for what it is, we are tempted to call for revolution, a relatively quick change. The transition to a truly free society will not happen overnight, nor should it. Clearly, this is an evolutionary process, not a revolutionary one. As we have seen in the past, revolutions without changes in the paradigm have resulted in more of the same. In some places, revolutions will be necessary. Hopefully, they will be backed with sufficient wisdom to avoid turmoil, violence, and the creation of new governments. The point of the message of freedom is not simply to abolish all governments, but to abolish all tolerance for being governed. Given the rapidly-accelerating pace of information, the shift from the statist paradigm could happen relatively quickly, but building a new society will take years, if not decades or even centuries.

The shift will not be smooth. Governments all over the world are already violently suppressing insurrections, censoring critical information, and silencing activists with incarceration. In some places, it will be worse than others. In some places, it will be quicker than others. When we see how people in other areas benefit from embracing the message of freedom, there will be a cascading effect. There may be revolutions within this global process, but this is far greater than any revolution. The transition to a free society, once begun deliberately by a critical mass of people, will be an evolutionary turning point bigger than anything that could be called a revolution.

Clearly, we are already capable of far more than we are achieving as a species, but to reach our potential requires a dramatic change in thinking. The only worthwhile revolution is one with a fundamental change in the paradigm. The new paradigm will demand universal nonviolence, and thus the abolition of governments. Anything short of that will only result in a new dispute about how or against whom to use government force. Understanding freedom leads to more than a preference for a little less violence and coercion. It creates a passion for justice based on absolute principles. If we do not reject every violation of freedom, we may as well concede that freedom is not important, and we would rather live like comfortable slaves.

If the message of freedom has stirred a passion for justice in you and changed the way you see the world, it is your personal revolution. If you do not share this message, then that revolution dies with you. Short of life itself, the message of freedom is the greatest gift you can give, and it gets stronger every time it is shared. If you embrace the message of freedom, having lived until now in a state of ignorance, frustration, or emotional slavery, it will be the beginning of a whole new life. And it starts right now. You know what you have to do.

AFTERWORD

If I've learned one thing from all the interactions of my entire life, it is that there is a universality of the human experience. We all want to live peacefully. We all want fair treatment. We all want to be able to prosper. We all need freedom. We all need love. We all suffer under statism. Governments want us to identify as citizens, but we are much more than mere subjects of protection rackets.

Please take this message as a gift. By asserting its value, you give me the greatest appreciation possible. Please share it with someone and use it to start a conversation. I hope it has sparked a passion in you. I hope you will show your appreciation by supporting my efforts to further these ideas and spread this message. If this book is not the perfect outreach tool, write your own! Feel free to borrow ideas, language, or exact words from this book. Share the message, and help build a free world.

The contents of this book will never be restricted by any claims of "intellectual property." You can rip it, copy it, rewrite, criticize it, broadcast it, burn YOUR copies of it, translate it, misrepresent it, and profit from it. I will not stop you! But now that you've finished the book, please consider showing your appreciation by helping to pay for it. This book is available to millions at no cost in print and in every electronic format possible in every language possible because of the support of people like you. If you would like to donate specifically to the cause of promoting this book, simply designate your donation for book promotion by letting us know. If you'd like to buy print copies in bulk, please let us know your needs. I am available to discuss the ideas in this book online at forums.adamvstheman.com or in person by request via email at adam@adamvstheman.com. For more information, to show your support with a donation, and to find out how you can help spread the message, please go to adamvstheman.com/freedom.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Kokesh joined the US Marines at age 17 and volunteered for combat duty in Iraq in 2004. This critical experience showed him that war is a racket and led him to deeply question his most cherished statist beliefs. He first rose to fame as an anti-war activist before branching out into other areas, often taking action too risky for other activists. In 2010, he became an independent journalist as ADAM VS THE MAN. He has been arrested and gone to jail dozens of times standing up for his convictions. He began writing FREEDOM! while caged in Washington, DC. While he has inspired millions with his speeches, videos, and civil disobedience, his greatest contribution to the cause of freedom is the concept of localization as a way to overcome statism and achieving a free world. To learn more, please go to adamvstheman.com.

The wisdom within these pages has the power to unlock our potential as a species and establish an enduring civilization based on peace, self-ownership, and nonviolence.

You, as a free, beautiful, independent human being with inalienable rights, own yourself! You can do what you want with your own body and the product of your labor. All human interactions should be free of force and coercion, and we are free to exercise our rights, limited only by respect for the rights of others. Governments rely on force, and force is a poor substitute for persuasion. When you learned “don’t hit,” “don’t steal,” and “don’t kill,” it wasn’t, “unless you work for the government.” Governments frighten us into thinking we need them, but we are moving past the statist paradigm and rendering them obsolete.

This book will empower YOU to be more happy, free, and prosperous, while putting you in a position to help shape our destiny.

