Echoes of Freedom

Personal Reflections of Richard G. Cline

FOREWORD

Among my earliest childhood memories is one of my mother reading to us the popular children's classic, *The Little Engine That Could*. Because "I think I can," the underpowered little engine accomplished the daunting task of hauling a big train full of toys and goodies up and over the mountain to children on the other side.

In the 17th century, the philosopher and mathematician René Descartes meditated on reality and asked himself how he knew he existed. His conclusion: *cogito ergo sum*—"I think, therefore I am." Our little engine took the next step and said, in effect—"I am, therefore I can." This tiny children's book is a testament to will power and to the proposition that human will is a fundamental quality of our being.

Whether from this story or something else, I began to think about the power of human will. In fact, in a second-year high school geometry class, I remember thinking that if Euclid hadn't come up with his concepts, I could have, simply by willing myself to reason to the same conclusions. I could do anything.

So much for sophomoric arrogance. Shortly thereafter, the challenges and practicalities of college, career, family, and community took over—there wasn't much time for or interest in philosophical reflection—or, said another way more in tune with the thoughts in this paper, through the exercise of free will, I chose to do other things.

In recent years, five or so decades later, I have begun to think again about will power, free will, the freedom that enables free will, the institutions that encourage freedom, and the benefits that flow from giving human will the maximum opportunity for free expression. In this paper, I record these reflections.

". . . From every mountainside,
Let freedom ring!"

—from the song "America"
Samuel F. Smith, 1832

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Introduction

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We are told that freedom is a universal desire of humankind. This is easy to acknowledge. For those of us raised in conditions of liberty, freedom is so ingrained that we usually take it for granted. For those of us living in conditions where freedom is denied, it is something we yearn for, are willing to sacrifice personal security to obtain, and treasure when achieved. Yet, while we readily accept the proposition that freedom is valuable, the question of *why* we value freedom is more involved and contested.

This paper reflects my thoughts on why humans aspire to have freedom and how freedom relates to human satisfaction and societal welfare. In Section I, my reflections deal with the concept of *human will*: what it is, where it comes from, and how it relates to our humanity. Section II broadens this discussion by considering the nature of *free will*: its importance, the conditions that enable it, and the consequences of and limits on its exercise. Section III addresses *freedom* as the liberator of human will and presents a rationale for freedom's corollary, *responsibility*.

The question of how freedom is established and perpetuated raises the subject of *government*, which is dealt with in Section IV. This section

also includes comments on *politics*, the machinery that underlies all forms of government. Section V introduces democracy into the discussion. It predicates democracy's legitimacy and effectiveness on the outcome of collective expression of free will. In Section VI the *rule of law* is related to free will, freedom, and the consequences of choice.

Free enterprise usually accompanies democracy, and Section VII comments on why free markets operate effectively to produce material and societal welfare, postulating their success on a connection to free will as the essential quality of human makeup.

Finally, Section VIII deals with free will as it is reflected in *voluntarism and sharing*. Section IX concludes with some observations on the relative effectiveness with which *individualism and collectivism* embody free will and contribute to societal welfare.

The organization of my discussion is not as neat as the above classification into discrete parts suggests. Throughout this work, there is repetition and spillover from one section to another, because, in my mind, they deal with facets of the same subject. Still, the segmentation is based on a progression in which each theme builds on its predecessors.

I gave a good deal of thought to the title of this piece. Because my reflections and the quotations I cite all relate to one central concept, I think the title appropriately reflects the content. These thoughts are *Echoes of Freedom*.

I. Human Will

Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Will springs from the two elements of moral sense and self-interest.

—Abraham Lincoln

Will power—our greatest glory—consists not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Above all, we must realize that no arsenal, or no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. It is a weapon our adversaries in today's world do not have.

—Ronald Reagan

The spirit, the will to win, and the will to excel are the things that endure. These qualities are so much more important than the events that occur.

—Vince Lombardi

I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.

—Galileo Galilei

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What is human will? What is its significance? Where does it come from?

Human will is the mental process by which we intentionally choose a course of action. It embodies intent, purposefulness, tenacity, and determination. It can also include deliberation based on accumulated knowledge and futurity, a present decision to do something in the future. Thus, will is a fundamental aspect of human nature. Indeed, some say that it is the defining characteristic of our humanity.

If will is to be instrumental in our lives, it must embrace commitment, adherence, and discipline, qualities that differentiate it from spontaneous reaction and transitory desire. So conceived, human will is the wellspring of initiative, creativity and innovation, invention and art, and by extrapolation, therefore, of human progress, satisfaction, and welfare.

Social determinists would dispute the centrality assigned here to human will, as would those who attribute a central role to chance. Social determinism postulates that every human event, act, and decision is the inevitable consequence of antecedents that are independent of human will. Under this conception, outcomes are not influenced by will: it is irrelevant whether will is free because its exercise is not instrumental in our lives.

Determinism leads to the conclusion that the exercise of our will is ineffectual, a conclusion that most of us do not find satisfying and that we intuitively reject. Those who attribute a greater role to chance have a similar view of the impotence of will in influencing the human condition. They see little structure at all in the forces that shape the fortunes of individuals.

While the approaches of social determinists and chance adherents may be interesting as intellectual introspection, as social philosophies they are both self-defeating and inconsistent with human experience. Chance is often in the eyes of the beholder. Some see opportunities, others do not, and both groups act on their perceptions. These actions shape their lives, for better or worse. Moreover, there are too many instances of individuals, groups, and societies faced with similar conditions that achieve very different results. Thus, the role of will as an instrumental force cannot be dismissed by the arguments put forth by these opposing social philosophies.

What is the source of will? Creationists argue that it is not man's will but God's will that matters, and we should use our will to understand and search for God's intended path. Allowing that this may be true, choosing to seek God's will is in itself an exercise of will, and, certainly, the capacity of human will shows that its application has not been, and cannot be, narrowed to that quest.

Moreover, if you choose to accept the belief that we are created in God's image, human will is a reflection of the Creator's will and an attribute He possessed and intentionally bestowed on us. Rather than constraining its use, it seems likely that He intended will to be used without limit on or prescription for its application. This is not to suggest that a search for God's will or design is either meaningless or fruitless. But if God is the source of will, essentially, what He has granted is the power to figure things out for ourselves, to make our own choices.

There is little to be lost and much to be gained by seeking divine guidance, but in the final analysis, it is the individual that 1) chooses to seek that guidance; 2) evaluates the alternatives that spiritual meditation identifies; and 3) decides which alternative course of action to pursue. To the extent that divine inspiration occurs, the exercise of human will therefore plays an essential role in the effect of such guidance on our lives.

At the other end of the spectrum are evolutionists who contend that human beings, including their human will, evolved out of some primor-

dial concatenation of energy and matter. Step by step, by constant and random responses to the challenges of existence in an environment of competition for scarce resources, the fittest adapted, mutated, and survived. From an evolutionary perspective, human will—the capacity to make intelligent choices—developed as part of the toolkit that led to man's survival and prominence at the top of the ladder of living things.

These different approaches to understanding the source of will may imply different directions for, or constraints on, its use. But for purposes of this paper, the source of will is less important than its existence. Whether you view human will as bestowed by an intelligent designer or a consequence of random adaptation, you reach the conclusion that human will exists as an enduring and essential aspect of human nature and as an instrumental force that shapes our lives.


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II. Free Will

Man is a masterpiece of creation if for no other reason than that, all the weight of evidence of determinism not withstanding, he believes he has free will.

—Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

Free will and determinism are like a game of cards. The hand that is dealt you is determinism. The way you play your hand is free will.

—Norman Cousins

One of the annoying things about believing in free will and individual responsibility is the difficulty of finding somebody to blame your problems on. And when you do find somebody, it's remarkable how often his picture turns up on your driver's license.

—P. J. O'Rourke

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Once we accept the central importance of human will as an instrumental life-force, we confront the issue of its exercise. Relevant here is the concept of free will. Free will is the power or the capacity to choose among alternatives independently and

without external constraints, one's ability to exercise his or her human will without influence from external forces or persons. It confers upon individuals the power of self-determined intentionality.

Free will is one of the defining characteristics of our being. In fact, it is logically impossible to deny that free will exists since the denial of it requires its exercise. However, to fully embrace this power, it is essential that external conditions exist that enable human choice and decision to be voluntary and unconstrained. Thus, in civilized societies there is no such thing as absolute free will. There are both external and internal constraints on the exercise of will. External constraints include physical compulsion, intimidation, laws, and political dominance. Internal constraints include our perceptions of natural, social, or divine restraints as well as cognitive limitations, which vary among individuals and which hamper the effective use of free will by limiting the ability or the inclination to perceive and understand choices or their consequences.

What is the difference between human will and free will? Some would argue that will is, *ipso facto*, free—you can always choose to think and believe whatever you want. Others would say will is never free—that free choice, the exercise of will without any constraints, is always inhibited by internal and external circumstances. To a certain degree, this second view may be closer to reality than the former, since without the freedom to act, choice is relatively meaningless in a social sense.

Between these two absolutes is a more useful characterization, a gray area where thought, belief, spirit, and reason are completely free, and the power to act is relatively free. Within this conceptualization the power to act is constrained by: 1) one's moral sense; 2) self-imposed limitations based on common sense, experience, and good judgment; and 3) the recognition and acceptance of certain limitations essential to the perpetuation of a condition of relative freedom in an interconnected world. By "certain limitations," I mean those that must exist to assure survival of the individual, to recognize reciprocal obligations, and to provide an optimal freedom to act that does not, through human interaction, become self-

limiting. This is the sense in which I choose to define free will—absolute as to thought, relative as to action.

Further, while the real world suggests that there are constraints of many kinds on the exercise of free will, that reality does not deny human yearning for conditions that allow its expression or the conclusion that the desire to exercise will freely is an inseparable element of human nature. Indeed, to achieve the benefits of free will as an instrumental lifeforce, it is necessary for societies to minimize the constraints upon the free will of individuals.

To do this, societies have recognized a concept called freedom and have identified political and civil liberties designed to realize it. These are central concepts in our common experience because our empirical and intuitive understandings of people and the march of history suggest they are universal aspirations of humankind.

Freedom enfranchises the exercise of human will, and it is, therefore, a condition within society that allows us to express our humanity. If we accept this, it is a short step to conclude that denial of freedom unconstrained by collective consent—i.e., tyranny—is *prima facie* a repudiation of humanity.

Free will would be meaningless without choice, since without choices to be made, free will would not be employable. Thus, through the exercise of our free will, we can choose between good and evil, greed and sharing, responsibility and dereliction, evasion and forthrightness, action and omission. We can choose to overcome circumstance or be a victim of it, work or play, buy a car or an education, live in Paris or Peoria. We can choose to believe in any religion or creed or in none at all. We can elect to pursue our choices while abiding by laws and respecting humanity, or while being radicals who use any means to achieve dark ends. "The choices are all there, waiting to be made." And indeed, sooner or later, they are.

To the extent we are aware of and understand the alternatives, free will empowers us to make these choices. From them come mankind's successes and failures, satisfactions and disappointments, forms of social

organization and government. Coupled with the faculty that enables us to learn, we can anticipate the effects the use of free will to make choices will have on others and ourselves. As we exercise free will, we can choose to consider "ethical" and "moral" values, which can lead to "good." Or we can place the highest priority on our own self-interest or desire for wealth and power, unrestrained by these values, which can lead to "evil."

Free will is not an altogether comfortable concept. Most of us like freedom and the "blessings of liberty" that accompany it, but free will comes with some pesky baggage—responsibility, hard choices, risk, consequences. Sometimes we choose wrong. Sometimes none of the choices are good. Things don't always turn out for the better.

When that happens, we can choose to own the consequences and deal with them, or we can choose to see ourselves as victims of events beyond our control—in other words, *qué será, será.* In the main, however, humankind accepts and aspires to conditions that allow the will to be free, either because we think the satisfactions and benefits of free will far outweigh its burdens or because there is something in our will that simply has to break free—it's just the way we are.

If we do not like the choices we face and, thus, choose not to face them, that, in itself, is an exercise of free will for which we then face the consequences. Said another way, while choosing to do nothing may often have some merit, consciously not making a decision is still a decision, a choice, an exercise of free will.

The idea of free will is linked to concepts of responsibility for its exercise as well as to comprehension and acceptance of the consequences of choice. Choice begets responsibility. To the extent choice is limited or compelled by external influences, individual responsibility can't be ascribed.

For a variety of reasons, including lack of information, ignorance, apathy, immaturity, and mental capacity, we don't always perceive our choices, believe they are or should be actionable, understand consequences, or develop a sense of responsibility. Further, environmental circumstances of family and religious beliefs; cultural, racial and political

domination; educational and conceptual influences; as well as the harsh realities of life can establish strongly held beliefs which, well-founded or not, obscure reality and effectively shut down our will to consider certain choices and our inclination to respond to those we do recognize. These *external* influences can be so powerful that they establish themselves as *internal* limits on the application of will.[1]

Fortunately for the human condition, will is a freedom-seeking characteristic, strong enough that, sooner or later, individuals choose to see possibilities, accept risks, strive for truth, recognize facts, break free from restraints, seek different paths, overcome odds, and persevere. "Where there is a will, there is a way." As much as freedom empowers will, will has the power to make itself free.

1 History and current events suggest some beliefs, their indoctrination, and their manipulation can be so powerful that they not only obscure choice but become imperatives of behavior. Among other examples, certain extreme religious dogmas come to mind. Psychological factors, such as intense feelings of insecurity, inferiority, anxiety, fear of change and domination, antipathy and revenge, or compulsion resulting from psychosis can also create such behavioral imperatives.

III. Freedom, Liberty and Responsibility

What is freedom? Freedom is the right to choose: the right to create for oneself the alternatives of choice.

—Archibald Macleish

Let freedom reign. The sun never set on so glorious a human Achievement.

—Nelson Mandela

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

—Thomas Jefferson

Many politicians lay it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. This maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned how to swim.

—Lord Macauley

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

—Victor E. Frankl

The man who asks of freedom anything other than itself is born to be a slave.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

If we wish to free ourselves from enslavement, we must choose freedom and the responsibility this entails.

—Leo Buscaglia

Freedom is the emancipation from the arbitrary rule of other Men.

—Mortimer J. Adler

Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

—Martin Luther King

God grants liberty only to those who live it, and are always on guard to defend it.

—Daniel Webster

Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves.

—Abraham Lincoln

Act only according to that Maxim by which you can at the same time will that it would become a universal law. Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end. So act as though you were through your maxims a law-making member of a kingdom of ends.

—Immanuel Kant

The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good, in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.

—John Stuart Mill

You can protect your liberties in this world only by protecting the other man's freedom. You can be free only if I am free.

—Clarence Darrow

How absurd men are! They never use the liberties they have, they demand those they do not have. They have freedom of thought, they demand freedom of speech.

—Soren Kierkegaard

I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

—Voltaire

The only way to make sure people you agree with can speak is to support the rights of people you don't agree with.

—Eleanor Holmes Norton

The very aim and end of our institutions is just this: that we may think what we like and say what we think.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

When any government, or church for that matter, undertakes to say to its subjects, this you may not read, this you must not see, this you are forbidden to know—the end result is tyranny and oppression, no matter how holy the motive.

—Robert Heinlein

If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, then he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

—John Stuart Mill

Liberty is always dangerous, but it is the safest thing we have.

—Harry Emerson Fosdick

I recommend that the Statue of Liberty [on the east coast] be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the west coast.

—Victor E. Frankl

When the freedom they wished for most was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free and was never free again.

—Edith Hamilton

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Freedom is the state of being free, unconstrained by the arbitrary dictates of others. It is the essential external condition that liberates human will so it can be meaningfully expressed, and that protects it so it can continue to be free.

Freedom liberates the human will, and it embraces the power to think, act, and speak without externally imposed limits. If free will is a defining quality of our humanity, it is a short step to conclude that denial or unlicensed infringement of freedom repudiates our humanity.

Among the spheres to which freedom may extend are:[2]

- Political freedom—the absence of political restraint, particularly with respect to freedom of expression, including speech, assembly, and protest; freedom of association; freedom of religious practice; and freedom of the press and of access to sources of alternative information.
- Personal freedom—the freedom to travel and to seek personal advancement, education, and occupation; freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, and home; and freedom from not being arbitrarily confined in prison or the gulag.

2 For an expansive statement of freedoms and related human rights, see the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

- Economic freedom—the freedom for individuals to pursue material self-interest with actions that are unfettered by governmental restrictions, direction, or entrenched and excessive economic power.

- Freedom of expression or speech—the freedom to openly state and express views without restrictions on the creation, use, modification, and dissemination of ideas in a society by government or by others who hold power in that society.

- Freedom of thought—also known as freedom of conscience—the right of individuals to consider and hold particular thoughts or viewpoints regardless of those held by others, those imposed or directed by society, or those established as acceptable ideas.

Are there justifiable limits to freedom, to the exercise of free will?

The classic answer is that the exercise of my free will, my freedom, must not unjustifiably encroach on the exercise of your free will and your freedom. "My right to swing my fist ends where your nose begins."

Thus, the flip side of my freedom is my responsibility to avoid infringing on your freedom. In a world of human beings, freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin, and responsibility establishes the outer limit of freedom's exercise.[3]

The balance between freedom to exercise our will and responsibility to exercise it with regard for others' humanity is the guidepost for individual conduct that can successfully negotiate the path of our existence. The recognition of the need for this balance is the foundation for moral and ethical thought and behavior. This is captured in a prescription we call "The Golden Rule": "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." [4]

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3 This statement deals with constraints on freedom based on self-recognition of responsibility. Following sections of this paper deal with restraints imposed by the collective will of people, freely expressed.

4 In a somewhat similar concept, Immanuel Kant theorized a single, rational, and universal moral

We respect others' humanity through an "implied contract" that begins with recognition of the freedom/responsibility paradigm. In the best of worlds, all parties subscribe to and implement that contract. Social structure evolves, taking into account humankind's universal desire to exercise will freely and the consequent imperative to exercise it responsibly.[5]

Human responsibility extends not only to avoiding choices that impinge on others' freedom. It may also extend to the responsibility to exercise free will affirmatively, to make choices that enable others to enjoy the benefits of freedom. Deprivation and oppression limit opportunities for countless individuals to exercise free will. Circumstances of birth, health, education, mobility, and poverty constrict both the perception and the ability to mobilize free will for self-benefit. Free will is relatively meaningless to the extent that individuals, for whatever reasons, lack the capacity for self-sufficiency, effectively denying them a full range of choices. The existence of such realities begs the question—does our freedom imply a duty to do something about them?

If we accept the conceptual notion that freedom is inextricably linked with responsibility, it then follows that our freedom is accompanied by a real-world responsibility to share the products of our human gifts, to deploy them, to make choices that open the doors of freedom and opportunity to less advantaged people, thereby benefiting not only those individuals but also general societal welfare. These obligations can be recognized individually, in group action, or collectively through freely established governmental power.

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principle from which all other moral obligations are generated and by which they can be tested. His "Categorical Imperative" describes an unconditional obligation that exists regardless of our will or desires and is formulated in three relatively equivalent ways. These—The Formula of Universal Law, The Formula of Humanity, and The Formula of Autonomy—are quoted at the beginning of this section.

5 Responsibility to avoid impinging on others' freedom, as described here, is intended to extend beyond direct and immediate interactions and harmful conduct. It is also intended to include action that can constrain future freedom, circumscribe choice, and perhaps threaten existence, such as irresponsible acts that degrade the environment or waste valuable resources.

With regard to collective governmental action, the challenge is striking a balance between the responsibility that accompanies freedom and the burdens that excessively diminish it. At least in theory, in a government based on electoral accountability, that balance is always subject to adjustment.

While our will and the yearning for freedom to exercise it may be bestowed on us by God, natural evolution, or some other external agency, and are embedded in human nature, freedom itself is not so granted. Freedom is an external reality that must be conceived, institutionalized, maintained, and defended by human beings through individual and collective choice and action.

With regard to the defense of freedom, it is ironic that freedom must sometimes be compromised to defend it. While we can easily recognize the reality that freedom must be limited by interpersonal responsibility, it is more difficult to accept that the freedoms we have come to take for granted may need to be constrained when freedom itself is under attack from external sources. Such compromises have typically occurred in wartime but they have also been imposed when other threats are in play. Surveillance under the USA Patriot Act, implemented in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and harshly criticized for weakening protections of civil liberties, is a case in point. The controversy about this and other tactics used to defend the concept of freedom and personal security has often been more divisive than enlightening. More broadly, there is continuing tension between personal or state security and personal freedom. In our democratic society, such tensions are dealt with through the political process, making specific freedoms conditional, subject to political adjustment.

For this and other reasons, it may be useful to distinguish between the concepts of freedom and liberty. We usually use the two words interchangeably. However, freedom more appropriately relates to specific subjects—i.e. "freedom from x," or "freedom to do y." Liberty, on the other hand, is a broad and somewhat amorphous condition that exists in the context of a state that provides geographical boundaries and a fabric of

laws within which human beings can be practically and responsibly most free. Related to the foregoing paragraph, we can then restate its beginning irony to observe that "freedoms must sometimes be compromised to defend liberty," and we can define liberty as the political expression of freedom.

To pursue this, we must turn to the topic of government's role as the formal agency for perpetuating or denying conditions of freedom that enable our human will to be expressed.

IV. Government and Politics

Of the best rulers, the people only know that they exist; the next best they love and praise; the next they fear; and the next they revile . . . . But of the best when their task is accomplished, their work done, the people all remark, "We have done it ourselves."

—Lao-tzu

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

—Lord Acton

As in a country of liberty, every man who is supposed a free agent ought to be his own governor; the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people. But since this is impossible in large states, and in small ones is subject to many inconveniences, it is fit the people should transact by their representatives what they cannot transact by themselves.

—Montesquieu

That government is best which governs least.

—Henry David Thoreau

That government is strongest of which every man feels himself a part.

—Thomas Jefferson

The will of the people is the only legitimate foundation of any government, and to protect its free expression should be our first object.

—Thomas Jefferson

The English think they are free. They are free only during the election of members of parliament.

—Jean Jacques Rousseau

Government is not reason and it is not eloquence. It is force! Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master. Never for a moment should it be left to irresponsible action.

—George Washington

What is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.

—James Madison

The worst thing in the world next to anarchy, is government.

—Henry Ward Beecher

Remember that a government big enough to give you everything you want is also big enough to take away everything you have.

—Davy Crockett

The constitution is not neutral. It was designed to take the government off the backs of people.

—William O. Douglas

The argument of practicing politicians . . . is that politics is ultimately about control by whatever means. You win, you control.

—Daniel Henninger

Bad officials are the ones elected by the good citizens who do not vote.

—George Jean Nathan

The punishment which the wise suffer who refuse to take part in the government, is to live under the government of worse men.

—Plato

Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free people and who would preserve what is good and fruitful in our national heritage.

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

Be thankful we're not getting all the government we're paying for.

—Will Rogers

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If will is an essential human quality, and if the yearning to exercise it freely is embedded in human character, it follows that one of the most important roles of government, perhaps *the* important role, is to assure freedom—the external condition that empowers will and permits humanity to be expressed. The recognition of humanity's need for the conditions, the establishment, the promotion, and the defense of freedom are justifications in humane societies for both government and the laws that governments make. Conversely, if free will is the essence of humanity, we can conclude that governments that oppress responsible freedom deny humanity and have little justifiable legitimacy aside from providing security.

Recognition of the responsibilities that accompany freedom compels us to accept the legitimacy of government based on the exercise of our free will. Legitimate government assures optimal conditions for freedom, through establishing boundaries that contain it within limits

defined by mutual responsibility for its exercise. Within these boundaries, everyone can enjoy maximum freedom—and opportunity—to exercise free will. Collective rights and responsibilities, those owned by society in general and defined and protected by government through its power, are legitimized by their connection to freedom and the responsibility implicit in it.

Intuitively, and sometimes explicitly (as in the principles articulated in the founding documents for our government), people who live in free societies recognize this legitimacy. Representative government expresses this recognition, and with it we enfranchise government to establish the framework that can enhance individual satisfaction and societal welfare. Government then the guardian of our "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness," establishing collective security, equality of opportunity, protection from abuse and crime, and justice for the disadvantaged.

Within a representative government, individuals and groups have different views about where to draw the line that balances freedom with responsibility. Determining that balance is a key function of democratic politics.

Politics deals with the quest and the contest for the power to decide what issues will be addressed and where the line will be drawn. It is about the power to control others' human will, to define and enforce group responsibility, and to impose restraints on the exercise of will for the perceived betterment of societal welfare.

In democratic political orders, it is essential to recognize that by voting or participating in the political process, you are using free will—your power—to choose others who have power over your free will. Conversely, to the extent you choose not to vote or simply fail to participate in the political process, you are ceding to others the power to decide who has power over your free will.

Government deals with more than intangible concepts such as freedom, rights, responsibilities, and duties in their abstract form. It also defines the shape of the playing field and sets the rules of the game for the economic system, personal wealth, permissible acquisitive conduct, the

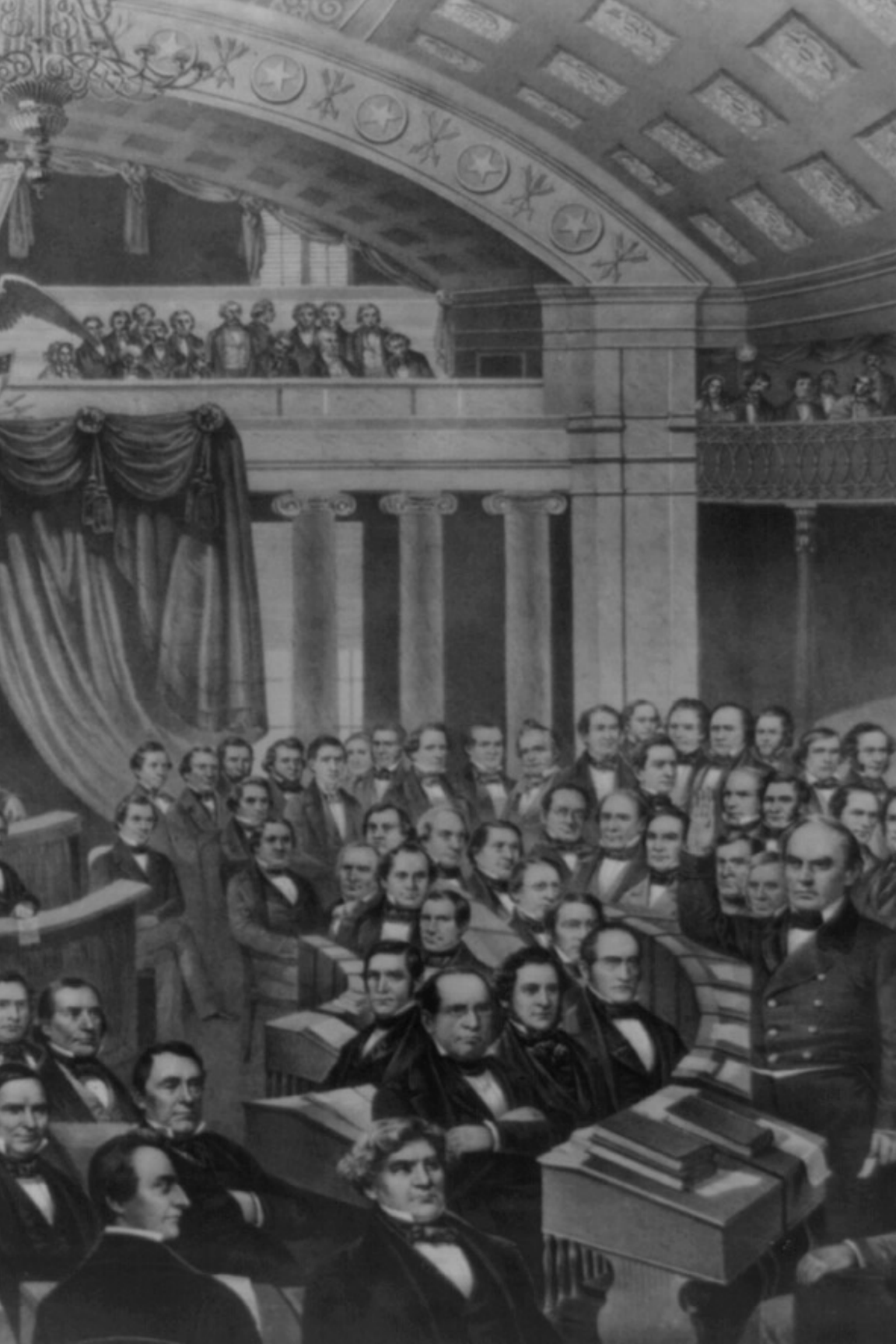
distribution of natural resources, and the products of human enterprise, and for deciding who reaps the consequences of good fortune. The fact is that representative "free" governments, enfranchised by and enfranchising the exercise of popular free will, tend to embrace responsible economic freedoms. Such governments do this by establishing market-based economic policies, which, over time, have consistently been shown to expand wealth ("make the pie bigger"), improve citizens' overall material welfare, and increase the size of the middle class. This, of course, leads to political moderation and relative governmental stability.

Thus, an advantage of governments that embrace free will and freedom is that, on a scale of zero to 100, political positions tend to cluster around the middle and are not polarized at the extreme far ends of the scale. This happens because the general commitment to the concept of freedom and the realization of its benefits are usually stronger than group or individual preference for a particular outcome on any narrow issue. But, although the extremes are softened, political differences in a free society can be sharp and noisy and occasionally can produce extreme or ill-considered results. While they exist, such results are usually self-correcting. The pendulum swings back.

The bottom line is this: In a free society, despite political differences, there is broad agreement that the most supportable and humane government is the one that has the least degree of restraint on the exercise of free will and is consistent with assuring the opportunity for members of society, individually and collectively, to enjoy the responsible expression of free will.

Sometimes, outside forces attempt to control or oppress a government that is based on the collective exercise of free will in a society that has critical mass as a "nation" or a "country."

We call the absence of such external dominance "liberty," the outward expression of freedom.



V. Democracy

Democracy arose from men's thinking that if they are equal in any respect, they are equal absolutely.

—Aristotle

In republican governments, men are all equal; equal they are also in despotic governments: in the former, because they are everything; in the latter, because they are nothing.

—Montesquieu

Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word, equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

—Winston Churchill

Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.

—Reinhold Niebuhr

Democracy is based upon the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.

—Harry Emerson Fosdick

When people put their ballots in the boxes, they are, by that act, inoculated against the feeling that the government is not theirs. They then accept, in some measure, that its errors are their errors, its aberrations their aberrations, that any revolt will be against them. It's a remarkably shrewd and rather conservative idea.

—John Kenneth Galbraith

Unless democracy is to commit suicide by consenting to its own destruction, it will have to find some formidable answer to those who come to it saying: "I demand from you in the name of your principles the rights which I shall deny to you later in the name of my principles."

—Walter Lippmann

In a democracy, everybody has a right to be represented, including the jerks.

—Chris Patten

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Democracy is the governmental order that has proved to be the best guarantor of responsible freedom. Indeed, democracy enables the political expression of freedom. It allows us to collectively and freely choose to give up some of our freedom to a government that, in turn, assures freedom's continued existence.

At its best, democracy strives to achieve the maximum amount of freedom for the individual to exercise personal will. By collective choice expressed in political decisions, democracy holds the individual accountable to society for the responsible exercise of free will. Said another way, democratic governance establishes a rule of law that establishes limits on individual exercise of free will that could impinge on others' freedoms.

These laws provide rules that keep the playing field open and level, clarify responsibility, and mandate accountability. This, in turn, creates an environment in which individuals can be most free.

Through an electoral process, democracy not only enables the freedom that can lead to self-realization, it also enfranchises leaders who, under the best of circumstances, inspire individuals to reach both for the best within themselves and for a better balance between collective welfare and individual freedom. Such inspiration is an ultimate consequence and expression of human will.

Earlier, we discussed the idea that will is the essence of humanity and that freedom allows us to make choices that reflect this defining attribute of our being. Democracy is not perfect, but it is the form of government most consistent with this view of humanity. It is derived from the basic concepts of natural law that respect and embrace mankind's free will and that are derived from the universal and intrinsic value of human beings. These principles are enshrined in our founding documents.[6]

Over centuries, utopian social and political concepts have been tried, but all have failed because, in the final analysis, they are not based on freedom but on control by one person or a select group. This elite vanguard defines what that utopia is to be and enforces behavior to achieve it. In so doing, it confines the exercise of will to a predetermined vision that cannot be achieved without excessive authoritarian control, which eventually leads to resentment and rejection or results in stagnation and vulnerability as progress from the dynamic initiative embedded in free will is smothered.

In other words, utopian concepts fail because they inevitably centralize power and try to change human nature. Democracy, in contrast,

6 The concept of natural law, a foundation for the United States Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights, is a moral and legal theory that affirms the worth of all human beings and, because it is rooted in human nature and rationality, is considered to exist outside and independent of the laws of any state. Natural law theorists include the Stoics, Thomas Aquinas, Hugo Grotius, Immanuel Kant, and John Locke.

works because it broadens the distribution of power and embraces human nature rather than trying to change it.

Our modern concept of democracy is that of a limited representative government that is accountable to the governed. It is, therefore, based on freely given consent. Moreover, it includes governmental institutions that enable it to operate effectively to achieve its defined ends, including freedoms described in a foregoing section. The balance between license for the individual to express free will (rights) and the collective needs of society (responsibilities) is achieved in this explicit democratic process.

In democracy, the good news is that:

- the basic principles of freedom are viewed as relatively immutable and are frequently embodied in either a written or unwritten "constitution;"

- differences are, in the main, expressed within a climate of respect for the advantages of perpetuating freedom overall;

- the regular process of going back to people to renegotiate the political franchise—the accountability embedded in the electoral process—generally maintains a balance where everyone has an opportunity to win—i.e., to enjoy the fruits of the exercise of their free will, their humanity;

- there is a general consensus that laws produced by governmental institutions based on the exercise of popular free will should be respected; and

- this consensus results in general support for "the rule of law," which operates predictably throughout society rather than arbitrarily based on favoritism, personal advantage, or whim.

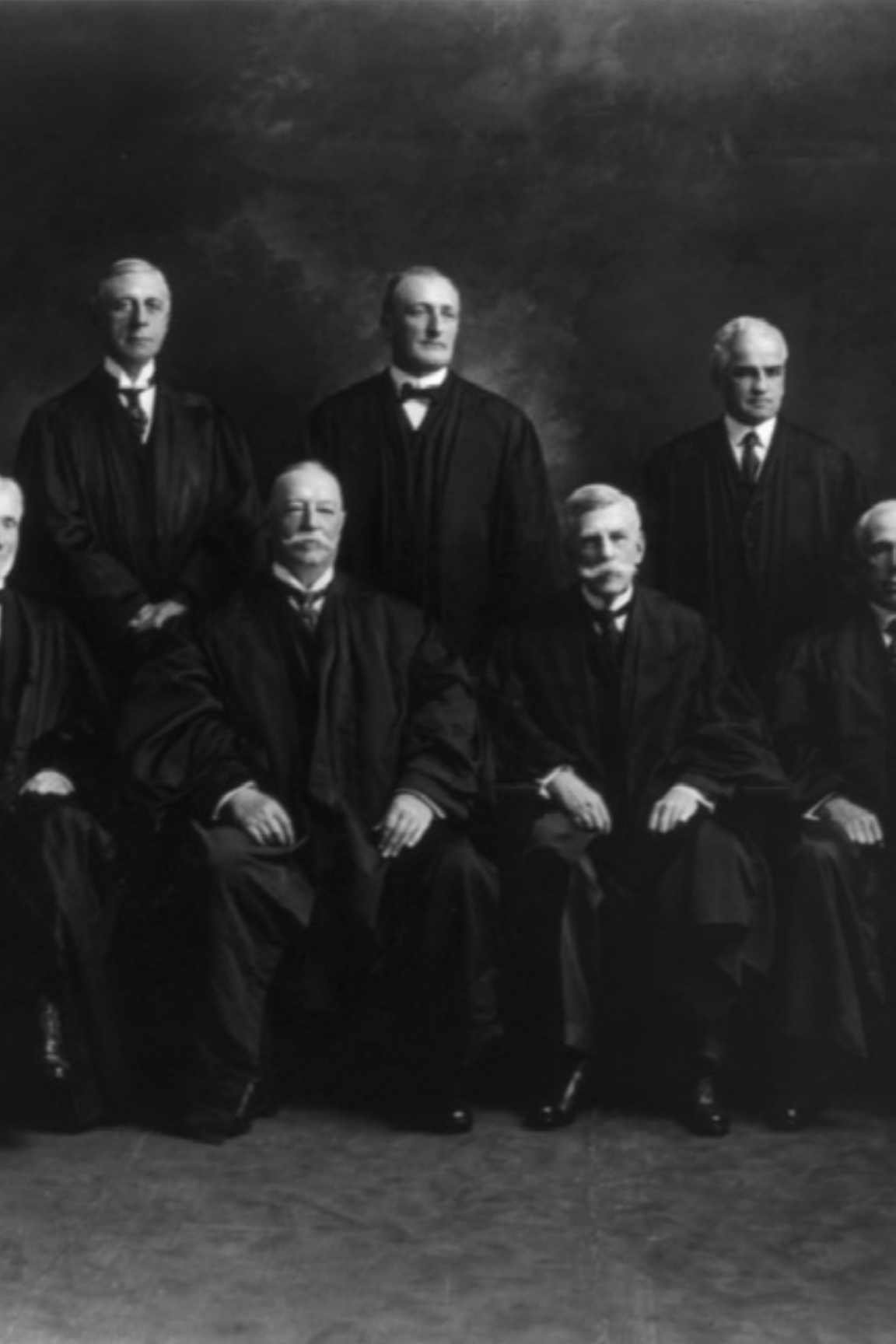
As much as we may value democracy, it is not a goal or an end but a means to the end freedom to responsibly exercise our will. What makes us value democracy is not so much the process of electoral choice but the outcome of it, the freedom it enables. We accept the inconvenience of the electoral process and tolerate the messiness of the government it produces because we like the outcome.

Why do free societies produce better outcomes for the human condition? In my view, they work effectively simply because they are based on the collective results of the individual exercise of free will. That they work better in comparison to other forms of societal organization is testament to the efficacy of, reliance on, and respect for free will as the essence of human make-up.

Democracy can be hijacked. Given the current milieu of broad-based international regard for democratic governance, totalitarian governments go to great lengths to orchestrate controlled voting processes that they use to claim legitimacy for a preferred outcome. Examples from our recent past include elections in totalitarian Germany and the

USSR. To the extent to which such baseless claims work in the court of world opinion, they do so because we confuse the process of voting with, or we choose to ignore, the objective of freedom.

Without an end goal of freedom, voting is a charade. Voting itself is not democracy. Voting is a way to provide accountability to a system that is designed to assure freedom, the opportunity for the continued expression of our humanity.



VI. The Rule of Law

There are no exceptions to the rule that everybody likes to be an exception to the rule.

—Charles Osgood

Society is well governed when its people obey the magistrates, and the magistrates obey the law.

—Solon

Law should be like death, which spares no one.

—Montesquieu

Freedom of men under government is to have a standing rule to live by, common to every one of that society, and made by the legislative power vested in it; a liberty to follow my own will in all things, when the rule prescribes not, and not to be subject to the inconstant, unknown, arbitrary will of another man.

—John Locke

However irksome an enactment may be, the citizen of the United States complies with it . . . because it originates in his own authority.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap. Let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges. Let it be written in primers, in spelling books, and in almanacs. Let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in the courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation.

—Abraham Lincoln

Good laws make it easier to do right and harder to do wrong.

—William Gladstone

The business of the law is to make sense of the confusion of what we call human life—to reduce it to order but at the same time to give it possibility, scope, even dignity.

—Archibald Macleish

No civilization would ever have been possible without a framework of stability, to provide the wherein for the flux of change. Foremost among the stabilizing factors, more enduring than customs, manners and traditions, are the legal systems that regulate our life in the world and our daily affairs with each other.

— Hannah Arendt

Constitutions should consist only of general provisions; the reason is that they must necessarily be permanent, and that they cannot calculate for the possible change of things.

—Alexander Hamilton

In the government of this commonwealth, the legislative department shall never exercise the executive and judicial powers, or either of them; the executive shall never exercise the legislative and judicial powers, or either of them; the judicial shall never exercise the legislative and executive powers, or either of them: to the end it may be a government of laws and not of men.

—John Adams, in the Massachusetts Constitution

Previously, we asserted that democracies embrace "a general consensus that laws produced by governmental institutions based on the exercise of popular free will should be respected; and this consensus results in general support for 'the rule of law.'" The key words here are "popular free will."

In a democracy, laws are established through the action of representatives who have been chosen by citizens independently exercising their free will in an elective process. Laws so created are presumed to be legitimate and just, even though they may circumscribe free will, because the procedure for their establishment is rooted in free will—the collective "will of the people."

Because they are proxies to whom the will of the people has been delegated, and because in a democracy there is no legitimate source for law other than the free will of electors, those who make, administer, and interpret the law cannot rise above it. Rather, they are subject to it, bound to adhere to it, and cannot exercise authority except in accordance with it. They are agents who cannot exceed the power delegated to them. They have legitimacy to act only pursuant to that delegation—to carry it out and not exceed it.

This, then, is the rule of law—that governmental authority can only be exercised in accordance with core principles that have been adopted through an established procedure. The rule of law is, thus, a safeguard against arbitrary application of power. It subjects all citizens to its jurisdiction without regard to social stature, wealth, power, religion, and the like. Thereby, the rule of law establishes a legal equality in which all individuals have the same rights.

In addition to universality, the rule of law generally embraces related concepts deemed essential to the protection of individual freedom. These include:

- No *ex post facto* laws—laws do not apply retroactively to actions taken before the law is established;

- Presumption of innocence—all individuals are presumed innocent until proven otherwise;

- No double jeopardy—all individuals may only be tried and punished once for any specific crime;

- *Habeas Corpus*—an arrested person has the right to be informed of the crimes he or she is accused of and to request that his or her custody be reviewed by a competent judicial authority; persons unlawfully imprisoned must be freed.

Because it is universal, pre-existing, and written, legislation established in accord with the rule of law provides a high degree of predictability. Just as important, it clarifies responsibilities and obligations and describes behavior that cannot be taken without risk of pre-ordained adverse consequences.

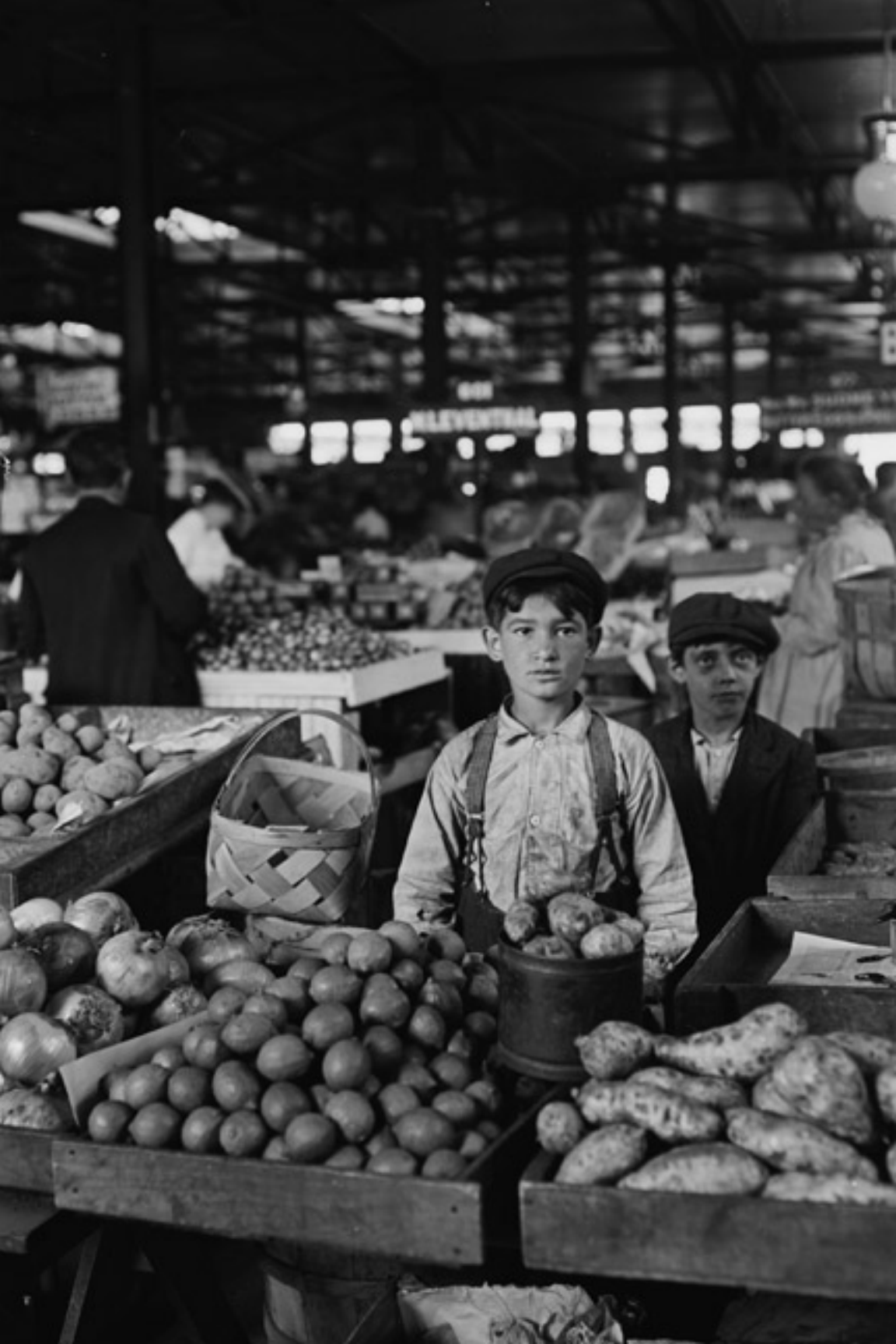
The rule of law, thus, helps establish an orderly society perceived to be fair because it applies universally and prospectively. It operates for the benefit of individuals separately and collectively.

Because laws may be ambiguous, because novel or unanticipated circumstances may arise, and because laws are carried out by imperfect people, their definition and implementation must continually be subject to interpretation and adaptation. Thus, mechanisms must be established to monitor and contain the power and action of officials within acceptable standards. At least in our democracy, there are checks and balances between the branches of government that supplement the rule of law, expose self-dealing, and restrain governmental authority's effect on core principles.

The alternative to the rule of law is the rule of arbitrary and unchecked political power. In this regard, it is important to distinguish rule *of* law from rule *by* law. Non-representative or authoritarian governments often establish laws by which they enforce their will and direct behavior,

but such rules tend to be subject to arbitrary whims of the persons in charge. "The law is whatever I say it is" not only is perceived as unfair and illegitimate, but it does not provide individuals with the certainty needed to plan and conduct their lives with assurance. Economic progress and human satisfaction are stifled.

To the extent a body of law does not establish boundaries for acceptable action that apply with equity to all participants, societies are comparatively less just and less humane. This impairs the benefit of the effective use of free will to the individual, and it inhibits collective societal welfare that would otherwise flower from the aggregation of responsible individual initiative.



VII. Economic Freedom

The Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself.

—Benjamin Franklin

Agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and navigation, the four pillars of our prosperity, are then most thriving when left most free to individual enterprise.

—Thomas Jefferson

The principle of self-interest rightly understood is not a lofty one, but it is clear and sure. It does not aim at mighty objects, but it attains without excessive exertion all those at which it aims. As it lies within the reach of all capacities, everyone can without difficulty learn and retain it. By its admirable conformity to human weaknesses it easily obtains great dominion; nor is that dominion precarious, since the principle checks one personal interest by another, and uses, to direct the passions, the very same instrument that excites them.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

The problem of social organization is how to set up an arrangement under which greed will do the least harm. Capitalism is that kind of a system.

—Milton Friedman

The great dialectic in our time is not, as anciently and by some still supposed, between capital and labor; it is between economic enterprise and the state.

—John Kenneth Galbraith

A major source of objection to a free economy is precisely that it gives people what they want instead of what a particular group thinks they ought to want. Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself.

—Milton Friedman

Political attempts to control free market prices typically result in the unaffordable becoming the unavailable.

—Anonymous

The market came with the dawn of civilization and it is not an invention of capitalism. If it leads to improving the well-being of the people there is no contradiction with socialism.

—Mikhail Gorbachev

Capitalism inevitably and, by virtue of the very logic of the civilization it creates, educates and subsidizes a vested interest in social unrest . . . The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers, goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalism creates . . . (this) incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism

— Joseph Schumpeter

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The concepts of free will and freedom that make democracy work are the same ones that make market based economic systems work. Market economies—so called "free markets"—are the embodiment of free will. They unleash the forces of choice and initiative embedded in the human will. This self-determined intentionality leads to creativity and innovation in the utilization of resources; the organization of human, intellectual, and financial capital; and the efficient interchange of ideas and products. As a result of these dynamics, mankind's material well-being and store of knowledge expand.

Most democracies develop market-based economic systems. Democracies do not gravitate toward centrally planned economic structures because they are inconsistent with the freedom and the commitment to human nature embedded in democratic political orders.

There is now a broad consensus that market based economies produce better economic results than centrally directed command economies. In fact, it appears that, over the long run, there is a direct correlation between the degree of economic freedom and the degree of societal welfare.

Market based economies are generally random and unstructured—in short, they are unorganized. Why do they work so effectively? Why doesn't central planning, with its emphasis on collective and intelligent determination of resource allocation and output, work as well? Why does the wisdom of the market beat the best intentions of central direction?

In market based economic structures, people are generally free to choose what to do with their time and money. It is this freedom that empowers the individual exercise of human will, and it is the legitimate exercise of free will, on the part of both consumers and producers, that provides for a "spontaneous coordination" that leads to the efficient utilization of resources and to the array of choices available in the marketplace. Individuals take risks that create goods for general use, choices for market participants, and rewards for the risk takers. Prices and the free decisions based on them determine the allocation and availability of

resources and products. Successes pop up and become stepping-stones for further advancement. While economic freedom includes the freedom to fail, failures fall by the wayside and create lessons for the attentive. Competition from others' free economic activity forces productivity and change that, however painful for some in the short run, enhance overall societal welfare.

In a planned economy, a central bureaucracy makes the decisions that structure and direct the economy. Instead of individual initiative and the flexible, quick, and spontaneous coordination of the marketplace, the central agency develops rigid multi-year plans that allocate resources, determine the types and quantities of goods to be produced, and set wages and prices. This requires that the bureaucracy have compulsive power and all-encompassing historical and real-time information across extensive geography, a daunting challenge.

Just as important, economic improvement over time requires initiative and innovation, and these always involve risk. But in a centrally planned command economy, the risk-reward ratio is decidedly negative. Because of the central agency's reach and power, the consequences of missteps have the potential to be colossal, and, thus, the risks are enormous. At the same time, the bureaucratic "managers" have little possibility of direct personal economic benefit from taking risk, while failure jeopardizes not only the welfare of the entire society but their own jobs and political security as well as that of the governing elites. Not much is in it for the decision makers, except risk.

Consequently, risks are avoided. Initiative in the central agency is stifled, resulting in less choice and fewer opportunities for individuals. Individual initiative is stifled not only by the absence of incentives but also by compulsion from central directives. These disincentives result in economic stagnation and lower levels of productivity. Prices set for political reasons misdirect resources. People begin to believe and act on the perception that, "I pretend to work, and you pretend to pay me." The results are comparatively low levels of societal welfare, bland sameness and dependence on a ponderous system rather than on people's free will.

The risk-reward ratio is skewed the other way in free markets. Given the freedom inherent in the marketplace, individuals can exercise free will to act in their self-interest. Rewards to the self-interest of the entrepreneurial risk taker can be enormous. At the same time, because of the multiplicity of individual decision makers and market participants, the eggs are not in one basket; while failure can hurt the individual risk taker, the societal consequences are relatively isolated and contained. The opportunity for self-benefit encourages individuals to exercise free will, accept risk, and take initiatives that, in the aggregate, propel society forward.

Essential to the functioning of markets is freedom to make choices about use of scarce resources, to set prices that recognize cost, and to profit from employment of labor and capital. This becomes the "unseen hand" in Adam Smith's free marketplace that works not only in a short-term transactional sense. More broadly, instead of just drifting along with reliance and dependence on a system or central decision maker, people in a free economic environment see others benefiting from the results of their independent actions. As the awareness of benefits from initiative and self-direction spread, the ripples from the aggregation of these perceptions accumulate. The upshot is that they increasingly stimulate more initiative and progressively energize the economic vitality of the overall society.

Market based systems recognize that using free will in the pursuit of self-interest is intrinsic; they do not try to change human nature. Instead, they harness self-interest, and the interplay of free will in the marketplace produces societal benefit.

Some people are uncomfortable about markets because they feel markets' self-serving characters do not embody or promote man's "better instincts." But if market activity produces broad, positive outcomes, as economic theory and history prove, so what? If exercise of free will within a market system adds up to better overall outcomes, despite disparities in wealth distribution, incomes, and so on, the results are good, even though the motivation may be selfish. And government, when franchised

by popular will, can play a constructive role by reining in self-interest that becomes destructive.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The positive economic consequences of a shift in direction toward freer capitalistic markets are on display today in Ireland, Central Europe, India, and China. The best argument in support of market based systems is that they work, while idealistic economic systems may work for a while but inevitably fail to achieve their promised success.

Market based systems have their own problems. First, they are often perceived to be unfair because some individuals prosper more than others. While "all men are created equal" in a political sense, they have differing levels of intelligence, ability, determination, tolerance for risk, and awareness of opportunity. Some people are just luckier than others Not everyone begins at the same starting line. Consequently, there are economic winners and losers, and there is not equality of outcomes. This can create envy, animosity, and resentment.

Such unhappiness tends to be tolerated because the blend of political and economic freedom is broadly appealing. While not always rationalized, there is a perception that the overall market system works to produce widespread benefits. Even though they may not be "well off," individuals perceive that they have the chance to do something about it by choosing to seek their own destinies.

Moreover, because they have political power, the economically disadvantaged and others who are concerned about societal welfare and economic "fairness," use the political system to soften the sharp edges of disparity in economic opportunity, market power, and outcome as an economic safety net. While there is a limit to the degree of economic inequality that can be tolerated, such political adjustments generally maintain acceptance of the economic system, even under such tremendous strain as experienced during the "Great Depression."

It should be noted that centrally planned economies are in theory usually designed to provide equality of outcomes. The problem is that without the economic energy provided by the aggregate vitality of hu-

man will in a free market system, the outcome of centrally planned economies is equality for most at a low, and often miserable, level, with preferential opportunities and outcomes for the political elites who direct the economy. Those in control may have the odds stacked against them in operating the economy, but while they are in the driver's seat, they are effective at taking care of themselves. This, of course, leads to a different type of inequality. Instead of the meritocracy of the market, there is "politocracy" of the bureaucracy.

A second important problem with free markets has to do with the effects of the "Creative Destruction" that competition and innovation produce. While adaptation and growth in democratic free market societies are keys to economic progress and allow for the reallocation of capital and human resources to more creative and productive uses, they can cause severe hardship for those directly affected by the change. Moreover, the reality or the perception of threat from economic restructuring can be large enough to cause a general anxiety that results in a political shift in governmental power toward economic security at the sacrifice of economic liberty.

This drive for economic security is expressed in laws that provide job protection, work rules, industry favoritism, competitive barriers, trade restraints, government pensions, and the like. When these preferences for economic security become excessive and ingrained in the culture, a downward spiral ensues in which that society becomes more vulnerable to competitive inroads from without, which makes it increasingly difficult to achieve either economic progress or the desired insulation from change. Said another way, to the extent a culture sacrifices economic freedom for economic security, it is more likely in the long run to have neither.

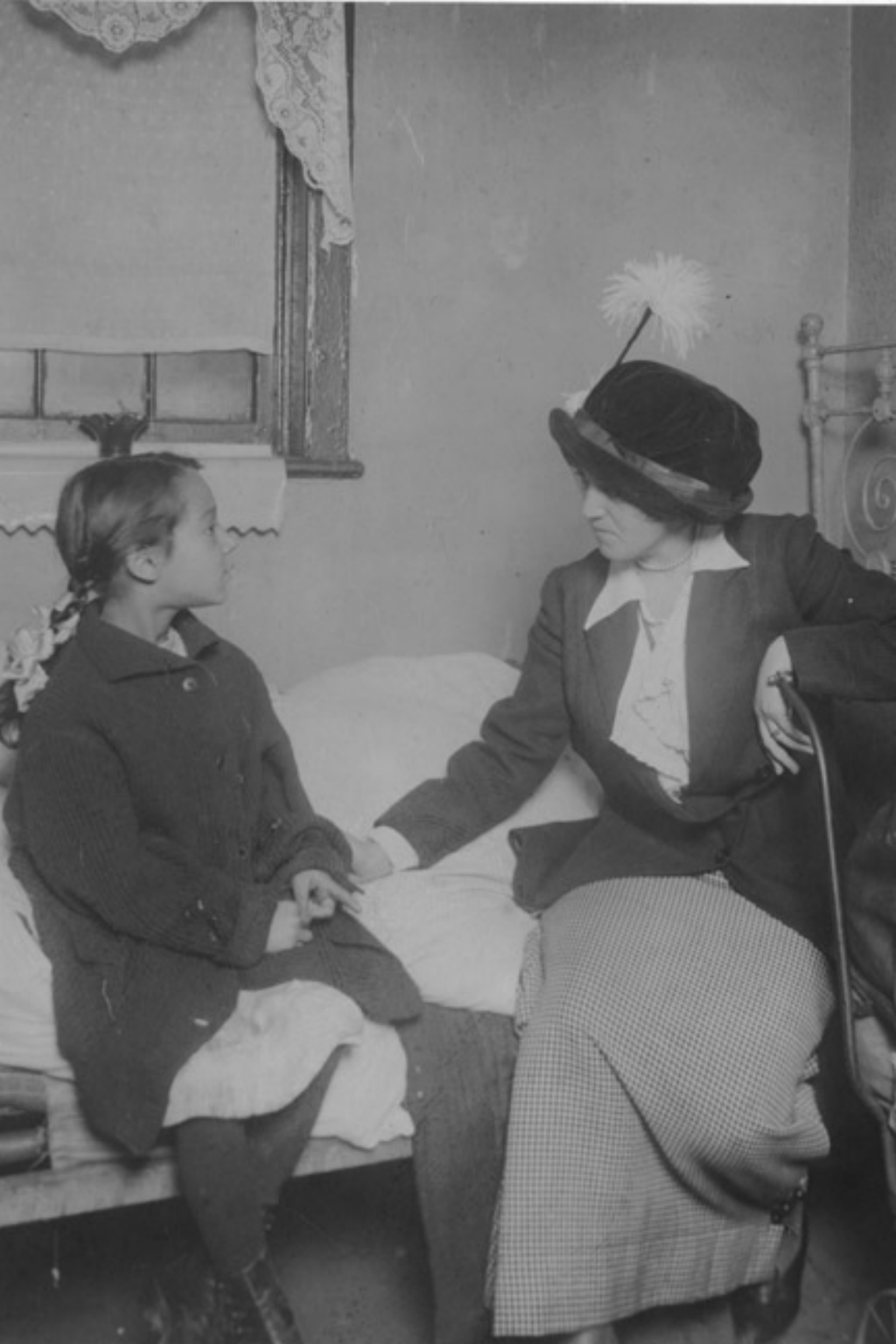
The search for a balance between the desires for economic security that provides comfort and for economic freedom that provides vitality and growth is a continuing challenge for democratic governments. The comparison between "Old Europe," with its reluctance to modify entrenched welfare state economic policies, and the emerging capital-

ist economies of China, India, and other developing nations is relevant here. The key for democratic societies is to make sure, in a globalized and competitive world, that the cost for growth in economic security is kept within bounds that the increase in society's productivity, wealth, and competitive position can afford. Mankind's inherent desire for liberty to express will freely in economic activities is the best long run guarantor that a reasonable balance can be achieved and maintained, but the issue is ever present.

A third big problem with totally free markets has to do with the accumulation of entrenched economic power. Those who succeed by acting in their own self-interest (which is implicit in a market system) sometimes use their economic success in ways that protect their interests by denying the opportunity for success to others. Market position can be used by economic "winners" to deny access to the market to newcomers and to act in abusive, self-benefiting ways that hurt less advantaged participants. This undermines the type of spontaneous coordination that provides for the efficiency of market-based systems and undermines their legitimacy.

But this is not irremediable, and it underscores the compatibility of democratic political orders with market-based economies. Overreaching on the part of economic winners results in political pressures to check their behavior. New laws are enacted and the economic players then operate within those legal guidelines. In other words, a new set of mutual adjustments occurs to restore the legitimacy of the system and to resurrect the dynamism of the market.

Democratic market based economic systems are progressive and dynamic, but they are not perfect. Sometimes the needed adjustments do not occur. Sometimes the political appeal of security checks economic vitality. However, because market systems empower free will embedded in human nature, they survive as engines of progress and produce better economic outcomes than idealistic systems imposed to eliminate all such imperfections.



VIII. Volunteerism and the Spirit of Sharing

It is the responsibility of every human being to aspire to do something worthwhile, to make the world a better place than the one we found. Life is a gift, and if we agree to accept it, we must contribute in return . . . It is every man's obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it.

—Albert Einstein

Americans are fond of explaining almost all the actions of their lives by the principle of self-interest rightly understood; they show with complacency how an enlightened regard for themselves constantly prompts them to assist one another and inclines them willingly to sacrifice a portion of their time and property to the welfare of the state.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if that drop was not in the ocean, I think the ocean would be less because of that missing drop. I do not agree with the big way of doing things.

—Mother Teresa

If you haven't got charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble.

–Bob Hope

What is the use of living if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone? We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.

—Winston Churchill

A person wrapped up in himself makes a small package.

—Harry Emerson Fosdick

Service is the rent we pay for being. It is the very purpose of life, and not something that you do in your spare time.

—Marion Wright Edelman

I do not know what your destiny will be, but the one thing I know; the only ones among you who will really be happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.

—Albert Schweitzer

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Here is a paradox:

Americans are considered to be the most self-centered, self-interested, materialistic people in the world.

Americans are the most generous people in the world and the most likely to willingly give money, time, and energy to voluntary causes.

How can this be so? How can self-interest be reconciled with selflessness?

The answer is freedom. Americans enjoy, by and large, more freedom than is found in any other society. Uncommon freedom, the same wellspring that encourages self-interest, gives rise to uncommon community sense and generosity. Both self-interest and generosity result from

freedom's liberation of the will that is the essence of humanity. As people realize that their security needs can be fulfilled, other aspects of human nature emerge. Self-interest leads to survival and economic well-being. Selflessness leads to satisfaction of the spirit and realization of our humanity. We learn that the pursuit of happiness cannot be fulfilled without sharing.

In a societal context, freedom cannot endure for long without broad acceptance of the responsibilities that are implicit in it. However slowly we may individually come to that acceptance, it is embedded in American culture and leads to voluntary action that recognizes the necessity of, and the rewards that may result from, contributing to something bigger than ourselves. The spirit of people choosing freely to do positive things ripples through, accumulates, and becomes embedded in culture in the same way that visibility of entrepreneurial success breeds economic vitality.[7]

Some would make another case for the relationship between self-interest and generosity. They would argue that serving our own interest leads to feelings of guilt that must be assuaged by doing something good. In other words, they see a cause and effect relationship—self-interest leads to guilt that leads to generosity. The implication is that there is something unwholesome about the self-interest that is an essential part of our nature.

Still others assert that voluntary service and generosity are simply vehicles for satisfying self-interest. In this view, we go about acquiring good feelings about ourselves from the same motivation and toward the same ends that relate to our economic satisfaction. It is in our self-interest to feel that we are "good" and to have others regard us favorably. In this construct, there is no such thing as "pure" selfless motivation. Taking this to extremes, it is in our self-interest to "cover our bets" on the hereafter

7 America's strong free-church tradition, assured in our founding documents and an influential part of our heritage, undoubtedly has aided the development of America's culture of voluntary action and giving of time and money to various causes.

by earning credits from sharing, generosity, and helping others—in other words, the ultimate motive behind the behavior of good Samaritans is self-serving—doing things that buy a ticket to heaven.

While there is some truth in both of these arguments, as generalities they are cynical and short-change the quality of humanity; the reality of unselfish virtue in humankind is evident in such simple things as parents' love and self-sacrifice for their children. A better case can be made that the root cause of both self-interest and selflessness is the same. They are both parts of human nature, and when human will is liberated by freedom, they become mutually reinforcing. The analogy is one of a tree with strong roots and two branches, both branches feeding from and contributing to the vitality of the overall entity.

Finally, respect for humanity compels us to reject the view that individuals will do positive things only if they feel compelled to do so. Compulsion leads to resentment. Freedom leads to responsibility. By and large, if you put trust in human will embedded in a culture of freedom, a predominance of people by their own volition will choose not only to be good, but to do good.

IX. Individualism and Collectivism

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Embedded in these thoughts about human will, freedom, and their consequences is the premise that the individual is rational and has intrinsic, essential worth that ultimately leads to truth, knowledge, and individualism as the primary building blocks for social organization and progress. Individualism recognizes human independence, self-reliance, liberty, and the exercise of individual goals and desires not only as ends in themselves but as means to achieve positive and broad societal benefits. Collectivist views begin from a different, holistic premise and subordinate the importance and influence of the individual on societal goals.

To the extent one accepts the premise that collectivism, or authoritarianism for that matter, can produce better forms of social organization, free will and freedom become comparatively less relevant or counterproductive. They must be constrained, controlled, or in some dimensions eliminated, either to comport with someone's or some group's concep-

tion of the collective good or to satisfy an authority that is the ultimate repository of free will.

Of course, in the real world, and with some noteworthy exceptions, neither individualism nor collectivism is an absolute. Rather, they define polarities at the extreme ends of a scale, and the reality is that different forms of social organization are not so clearly polarized. Societies that tend toward individualism tend to place a higher priority on individual satisfaction but still have collective features, while societies more inclined toward collectivism recognize that people are individuals with differing goals and abilities. The difference is the degree of emphasis placed on the perceived needs of and balance in society in comparison to satisfaction and expression of individual choice and free will.

Perhaps a good way to differentiate the two concepts is to say that individualistic societies tend to place more emphases on the state existing to serve the wants and needs of the individual, while collectivist states tend toward seeing the individual existing to serve the needs and harmony of the broader society. The American experience is perhaps unique in the value it has always placed on the individual, while European and Asian societies tend to tilt more toward the collective view. In this regard, it is interesting to note the economic progress evident in formerly collective societies, such as China, that have begun to adopt free enterprise capitalist policies that are by definition individualistic.

Leaving aside individual satisfaction, which in itself is a desirable goal, the question is which bias in society is more likely to produce a sustained and continuing advance in the satisfaction of individual and societal wants and needs. Human history suggests that primary reliance on the free expression of individual human will, with all of the apparent untidiness and imperfection that entails, leads to superior collective outcomes and is by far the better starting point for creating societal welfare and improvement in the human condition.

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