

A Foundation for Political Change (20170119)

Alonzo Fyfe

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
A.	The Situation	1
B.	The Symbolism of H.R. 2262.....	2
C.	The Rebellion.....	3
II.	Philosophical Foundation	4
A.	(Dis)Regard for Historical Ideas.....	5
B.	Libertarianism.....	6
C.	Natural Moral Law Libertarianism.....	7
D.	Utilitarian Libertarianism.....	12
1.	The Slippery Slope of the Transfer State	13
2.	The Wealth Effect	13
3.	Money and Politics.....	15
4.	Two Types of Government Regulation.....	18
E.	Summary.....	21
III.	Principles.....	22
A.	Nonviolence	22
1.	Peace as Good in Itself.....	22
2.	The Practical Side of Nonviolence	23
B.	Against Bigotry	24
1.	Never Attack a Named Group	25
2.	How to Criticize an Idea	27
3.	What About the Nazi?	28
4.	What About the Bigot?	29
5.	Corporate-Feudal Overlords	29
C.	Honesty and Intellectual Responsibility	29

1. The Liar as Parasite.....	29
2. Intellectual Recklessness.....	31
D. Trade	33
IV. Procedures.....	36
A. The Basic Strategy	37
B. Political Parties.....	37
C. Third Parties	39
D. Specifics	40
V. Conclusion.....	41

Abstract: We are creating a system that is, in some important respects, much like the feudal system of the middle ages. Property is held substantially in the hands of a few small families who pass it down from generation to generation, where the bulk of humanity faces no good option to but serve the interests of one of these feudal masters to survive. One significant difference is that, instead of vast estates of land, we are now seeing huge corporate-feudal estates; estates defined in terms of stock holdings in collections of companies. But the basic relationship between master and servant is quite familiar. In this paper, I examine the popular foundation for this system. Though these belief systems come from the writings of the philosopher John Lock and Adam Smith, those who promote this type of corporate feudalism doctor those original views to make them into something more useful. I demonstrate some of the problems with this foundation and suggest an alternative, where the value of institutions is determined by their capacity to serve good interests, regardless of who's they are. I argue for replacing the existing system of corporate feudalism with one that respects the good interests of all people. In suggesting this change, I also examine some principles that are essential for building a quality civilization. This includes non-violence unless one is denied a peaceful way of participating in the selection of leaders, non-discrimination, honesty, intellectual responsibility, and a freedom to trade. With these principles in mind, I suggest that people learn to ignore political parties and enter whatever group that, as a matter of fact, will be selecting the leaders in any government district and get to work influencing who that group will select.

A Foundation for Revolution

By Alonzo Fyfe

I. Introduction

A. The Situation

We are creating a world – and, in fact, a solar system – in which a small number of families own everything there is to own. The rest of us are to be their serfs and servants. To whatever degree we can please The Owners, we are given some comforts – though as few as The Owners can get away with. Those who are not useful are to be discarded – thrown away.

We are seduced into being passive servants, unwilling to protest or rebel and even eager to turn against any other fellow servants who protest. As a part of this seduction and manipulation, we are told that a natural moral law dictates that this be the case. If we protest, we are going against all that is right and good that is built into the fabric of the universe. Certainly, we do not wish to do that, so we will fight to preserve this situation where a few families own nearly everything, where those owners cast favors on those who are the most useful servants, and who discard the rest.

Eventually, they end up discarding all of us except a few favored pets, because we all become less useful as we get older.

To have worth in this universe one must either be one of the few owners, or be somebody that pleases one of the few owners. Nobody else – nothing else – matters. The Owners put a lot of effort into convincing us that this is the case.

If one is to be a master of a feudal estate populated by literally millions to billions of serfs, consider how much better it would be to be a master of serfs who passively accept their roll in that society. Those who are useful accept that it is their duty to be useful. Those who are useful are taught to believe that those who do not please The Owners deserve to be discarded. They are the enemy. After all, the masters tell them, “You will find yourself among them if you do not please us.” For The Owners, it is hard to imagine a better situation to be in – which is why they invest so much into establishing and maintaining such a system.

The Owners that I speak of are the leaders of corporate-feudal empires. These are much like the feudal holdings of the Middle Ages – large tracts of land where the lords and masters live in luxury in castles while serfs till the land, tend to the animals, cook their meals, clean their chamber pots, and provide their entertainment.

The only significant difference we see now is that, instead of a huge amount of land, the estates in question are large corporate empires. They are the companies in which The Owners own stock. This, of course, does include land, and the serfs who are bound to the land because the workers are given no real option – no real freedom – to leave. There is, of course, a nominal freedom. “Leave if you want. You will give up your income, your medical care, any method of saving for your old age. But you can leave.” But, in fact, the worker is bound to their spot on the

assembly line, to their computer console, to their station as tightly as the serfs of the middle ages.

We are made to believe that it is only right and good and proper that this be the case – that our purpose for living is to find a role for ourselves as a servant devoted to the contentment of one of these owners. Useful servants will be taken care of for as long as one of The Owners finds us useful, and not a moment longer.

B. The Symbolism of H.R. 2262

A symbolic representation of this is H.R. 2262 - U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act.

In discussing this, the reader can be forgiven for thinking that this is a meaningless, trivial law that is no real significance. It is simply not important. It certainly was not worth a lot of news coverage. However, this is exactly how The Owners come to own the world and make the rest of us their servants – where our choice is to either serve or starve.

H.R. 2262, which Obama signed into law on November 11, 2015, effectively gives The Owners – those few families who already own half of the earth, 100% ownership of the rest of the solar system. They now own – for all practical purposes – Mars, the Moon, and every planet, moon, asteroid, and comet in the solar system. These are now in their pocket. Only those who have the money to reach them will own them, and only The Owners have the money to reach them, so only The Owners will own them.

This paper is not about H.R. 2262 or The Ownership of the solar system. It is about a social system that consists of a few families who are The Owners, where the rest of us must either please them so that we will be given what we need to survive and care for our families, or be discarded.

We could have used space differently. Instead of giving ownership of all of space to the wealthiest families on Earth, we could have set up a system to use space to help the poorest people on Earth. We still need the wealthiest people to develop those resources, but we could have done so in a way that provided aid for the poorest of the poor.

One option would be to have the wealthiest families bid for and buy property rights to objects in space that they sought to use. If The Owners thought that owning and mining an asteroid would be profitable, they could offer to buy it from an organization that had been created for this purpose. That organization could have used the money it made by selling space resources to provide resources to the poorest of the poor – food, medical care, education, infrastructure improvements. However, instead of passing a law like this, we literally give everything in the solar system to the wealthiest people on earth to use as they please, without a drop of aid or compensation to anybody else.

The idea, of course, being that the wealthy people will need servants and serfs to work their new estates, and so the rest of us will obtain more opportunities to be their servants and serfs. That is where we belong. That is our proper place in this world. Those who refuse to be useful servants – or those who cannot be because of health, age, lack of education or skills, or just not being the type of person that The Owners want as servants and serfs – are discarded.

It is easy to think of H.R. 2262 as unimportant, but it is symbolic. It is a perfect example of the way The Owners use government to make themselves wealthier – to give themselves ownership of, in this case, the whole solar system – and reduce the rest of us to a state that we must be useful servants and serfs if we are to have any value at all.

There is no natural moral law that dictates giving The Ownership of the solar system to a few wealthy families rather than using the wealth to help the poorest people on earth – though the wealthiest people on earth certainly have reason to cause us to believe that they have such a right. There are just the political, social, and economic manipulations of those who can afford political and economic manipulations, which the wealthiest people on earth use to give themselves ownership of the whole solar system.

This is, as I said, a symbol, because political, social, and economic manipulations like this are also what they are using to give themselves ownership of half of the earth – a share that is continuing to grow – reducing the rest of us more and more to the status of servants or “the discarded”.

C. The Rebellion

This is a call for rebellion against those who would be serfs and servants and “the discarded” against The Owners – the manipulators of political, social, and economic systems to make themselves owners of the earth and the rest of the solar system and the rest of us their serfs and slaves.

The Owners have a significant control of the world – using their wealth to control what the rest of us see and hear – and, thus, to control what we believe. They use this wealth to promote ideas that, when we internalize them, make us into the docile serfs and servants they desire, who take it as our duty to serve and who find self-worth only in service to their interests. They also use this wealth to turn us against “the discarded” – those who they do not find useful – so that no person would not choose such a life, and those forced into it by circumstances can be conveniently ignored until they die quietly.

Among the manipulations that The Owners use we find the following:

- (1) Disempowering the workers, so that workers are reduced to a state of serfdom, disrespecting their status as human beings – with distinct human lives to live and better things to do with their time in the world than to spend it in service to somebody else's interests.
- (2) Inflicting harms on others – effectively treating others as mere things – and putting money in their own pocket and expanding their ownership of everything without regard to the costs and harms they inflict on others as they do so. Of particular relevance here is the creation of negative externalities – pollution and other effects that harm the life, health, and property of others, as if that life, health, and property of others are, for all practical purposes, the property of The Owners to dispose of (or destroy) as they please.
- (3) The use of lies and deceptions in order to manipulate the public into acting in ways that sacrifice the interests and well-being of those who have been lied to, for the sake of advancing the interests of those who do the lying. And aggravating these wrongs by

advancing a science of effective deception – known as "marketing" - where methods of manipulating others are tested and improved upon over time.

- (4) Establishing and maintaining political institutions that put a thin cloak of legitimacy on political practices that substantially amount to theft. This involves using a political process that only those with deep pockets can use effectively in order to push through legislation, regulation, and interpretations that promote the interests of The Owners and reduce the power and liberty of the servants and the discarded.
- (5) Establishing inheritable feudal kingdoms – corporate oligarchies – and designing the governments and laws of civil society to pass their estates down to their noble heirs – putting the icing on the cake when it comes to creating a modern corporate version of medieval feudal fiefdoms.

As was stated in the American Declaration of Independence, people enter into civil society as free and equal individuals for the sake of protecting their life, health, liberty, and property. People do not establish civil society for the purpose of giving ownership of all that exists to a few families and either becoming the serfs and servants for The Owners or becoming one of “the discarded” – left out because The Owners do not find our existence worthwhile to them.

The purpose of this paper is to oppose that system by launching an attack against its philosophical foundation – against the principles that we are too frequently told create a moral demand that we contribute to establishing such a community.

II. Philosophical Foundation

Tom Ripley: Well, whatever you do, however terrible, however hurtful, it all makes sense, doesn't it, in your head? You never meet anybody who thinks they're a bad person. (The Talented Mr. Ripley, 1999)

It is customary to paint those with whom one disagrees as villains who know full well the evil that they do, but who do not care. In fact, this is almost entirely wrong. They have, instead, constructed a story in their own head that makes their actions legitimate – perhaps even heroic. Understanding their story is necessary to understanding their actions. The errors in the story expose the wrongness of their actions.

I wish to start with the story that makes The Owners seem to be heroes, worthy – not of our condemnation, but of our praise and admiration. Their ownership of all that exists is simply the consequences of their own greatness, and the rewards that are owed to them for the benefits they have brought to humanity. Even here, if we make the ideas look foolish at the start, then we can trust that we do not understand them and are being dishonest in what we are attributing to them.

I want to put some emphasis here. I can imagine people reading through the paragraph above and not pausing for a second to reconsider their practice of misattributing views to members of groups they dislike. This is a time to pause, reconsider those practices, and resolve to change them.

So, how can The Owners view themselves as acting in a morally permissible way, even seeing themselves as saints and heroes as they take ownership of all that exists, accept some of us as their servants, and discard the rest?

A. (Dis)Regard for Historical Ideas

One common – and significantly flawed – practice that people engage in to see themselves as heroes while inflicting harm on and creating suffering for others is to take some old text, harvest a few bits that one can interpret in a way that paints oneself as morally virtuous, ignore the rest, and conclude that this settled the issue of one’s moral perfection.

It is often a mistake to try to understand somebody in terms of the fine details of some established philosophy. Only a handful of people have the time and the inclination to think so deeply about such matters. Rather, they take a set of slogans that sound good and sew them together into a form that they find useful. People most often apply this method to scripture, but there are those who treat secular philosophers – John Locke, Ayn Rand, Frederick Nietzsche – also as divine prophets, whose “great wisdom” is found in a small fragment of their writings that the worshipper finds useful and agreeable.

Consider how difficult it is to find somebody who disagrees with the Constitution of the United States. Regardless of the positions one holds on matters of policy, they interpret the Constitution as permitting what they like and prohibiting only what their political opponents like. This alone proves how rare it is for somebody to get their attitudes *from* the Constitution. Instead, they assign their attitudes to the Constitution, the same way that others assign their attitudes to scripture or to God, and others assign their attitudes to their favorite secular philosopher.

We can say the same thing about those who claim that they get their attitudes *from* scripture or *from* some historical philosopher. More often than not, they have found some passages they can interpret in a way they find pleasing and, from there, they assign their attitudes to the scripture or the philosopher.

Consequently, if our interest is in understanding the attitudes of somebody who cites some historic text or writer, it would be a mistake to go into the intricate details of what that text or writer says. We will find our answer in a few slogans that come from these sources, which the people we seek to understand treat with reverence, though they have little understanding of its context or the author’s true intention.

At the same time, it would almost always be a mistake to bring the ideas of some historic writer or tradition into the present – and into the future – unaltered. This would require that we discard or disregard anything we have learned since fallible humans created the original work.

Imagine what the medical profession would be like if we were to use the assumption that Hippocrates (or those ancient Greeks writing in his name) had written the definitive treatise on medicine. Imagine if we were telling our medical students, "Everything there is to know about illnesses and injuries and how to treat them was written down by Hippocrates."

Such an attitude would be fatal to a great many people, and spread a great deal of suffering among many more. Even if we consider Hippocrates to be a genius of his age and are filled with

admiration for his accomplishments, it would be a mistake to design our hospitals and medical practices under the assumption that everything he wrote about medicine was true and that all truths in medicine could be found in his writing.

It is quite foolish to take any previous text as scripture – to take it to be perfect and free from error. To do so is to take their prejudice and ignorance and carve it in stone – to deny the benefits of any future improvement in knowledge and understanding.

If we were to imagine a group of people who decided that Hippocrates is the final authority in medicine, we can divide them into three camps.

One camp would believe that everything that Hippocrates wrote is literally true. When they insisted that the current practice of medicine follow the writings of Hippocrates to the letter, they would be responsible for a great deal of avoidable death and suffering.

Another camp would likely tell us that Hippocrates was writing metaphorically. He still wrote everything that was true about medicine, but we would have to interpret those writings. “In these passages, Hippocrates wrote metaphorically about genetic illness. In those passages over there, even though it does not look like it, he was talking about germ theory. Of course, any time somebody claims that Hippocrates did not contain the final truth in all medical matters, his defenders would protest, “You can’t take those passages literally. They were meant to be taken as metaphor for, for example, vaccinating children or radiation treatment for cancer.”

The third camp, like the second camp, reads into the text things that are not there. However, this group does not seek to find ‘truths’ discovered in the time since the original writing to read into it. Instead, they seek to interpret the original text in ways that promote new and novel fictions – fictions that are useful to the interpreters and the groups they represent. This would be comparable to a snake-oil salesman claiming to have found the recipe for his snake oil in the ancient text.

Just as we have no reason to take Hippocrates as the final word in medicine, we have no reason to take scripture as the final word in morality or John Locke as the final word in political philosophy. Nor do we have reason to believe that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as having settled all important political issues. After all, the Constitution, when it was written, embraced slavery. In looking back on these documents, we have reason to ask what they got right and what they got wrong – and to ask what we could do to improve upon them.

With these two facts in mind – the combined habit of cherry-picking historic documents and treating one’s cherry-picked fragments as unquestionable truth from some historic authority – I would like to look at the rationalizations that The Owners use to help themselves feel good about taking ownership of everything, reducing most of the rest of us to servitude, and discarding the rest.

B. Libertarianism

Now, let us go into the philosophy that allows The Owners to feel good about themselves as they take ownership of all that exists, accept some of us as their servants, and discard the rest of us.

We find that justification in a loose body of ideas that hover close to an ideology popularly known as 'libertarianism'. This is not only the philosophy that such people use to help themselves feel good about the wrongs that they do, it is the philosophy they put substantial effort into teaching the rest of us so that we will passively accept our role as servants or, even, our status among 'the discarded'.

The task of criticizing this philosophy is made difficult by the fact that The Owners have adopted a set of beliefs that allow them to play a game of "whack-a-mole" against any critics.

The way this game works is that The Owners and their spokespeople will begin by asserting that the principles which ultimately justify their ownership of all that exists make up a natural moral law written into the fabric of the universe. They support this idea by cherry-picking a few useful quotes and ideas from the seventeenth century philosopher John Locke and, primarily, his *Second Treatise on Civil Government*.

When the Lockean concept of property comes under criticism, The Owners and their defenders will switch to a utilitarian defense, explaining that allowing forced distribution of wealth will lead poverty, starvation, stagnation, and death. At this point, it is the overall social benefit – rather than some natural moral law – that justifies the rules of acquisition. For this part of their defense they cite the eighteenth-century scholar Adam Smith and *The Wealth of Nations*.

When critics attack this defense by pointing out some potential utilitarian benefits of wealth transfer and areas where the private property system will fail to promote overall utility, they switch back to the Lockean defense. And when critics renew their criticism of the Lockean philosophy, they switch back to the utilitarian defense.

Criticize the natural moral law defense, and the libertarian switches to the utilitarian defense. Criticize the utilitarian defense, and the libertarian switches to the natural moral law defense. It is an endless dance. This allows The Owners to turn away from any criticism and continue to see themselves as moral saints and heroes regardless of what critics might say against either of the two lines of argument they use to defend their attitudes.

I wish to confront both defenses.

C. Natural Moral Law Libertarianism

I will start my criticism by confronting the 'natural moral law' defense found chiefly in the writings of John Locke.

The natural law argument begins by claiming that you are the owner of your own body and your own life. You have an inalienable right to these things. If you take some of your life – your labor – and you attach it to something in a state of nature – something unowned – you retain your right to that part which is your life (your labor). If somebody should take those apples then, for whatever part of your life you labored (e.g., you spent one hour harvesting apples), for that time you have been made a slave working for the benefit of the person who you're your property. Slavery, of course, is an intrinsic evil. It is something that is always wrong. Therefore, it is always wrong for somebody to take your apples – you rightfully acquired property – without your consent.

This part comes from Locke. What some think follows from these premises goes as follows:

We can find all of this in Locke. However, we are often told that this has further implications – implications that are not found in Locke. This is the ‘snake oil’ model of using historic texts that I spoke of above. It involves taking ideas that are useful to the ‘snake oil’ salesman and attaching them to something that the people respect. In employing this technique, we are told that what follows are “the principles on which this country was founded” such that, to reject these ideas is to commit the moral sin of disrespecting what it means to be an American. It is a useful way to get people to purchase something – in this case, a set of ideas – that ultimately turn them into servants for the interests of others.

The story continues: If a small number of families can mix their labor with a substantial majority of that which exists in nature then, that small number of families can become the owners of nearly everything. The rest of us cannot even eat or drink except insofar as those who own nearly everything provide us with the essentials of survival. Many only find in themselves a reason to do so to those who provide them with something that they value. These become the servant class. Those who do not have something to give the owners that the owners value become “the discarded”. For them to take anything from the owners without consent is to ‘enslave’ the owners – which is immoral, so they are obligated instead to sit and die quietly – assuming that they even have a place to sit and die quietly.

I have objected to treating ancient text as incapable of error. However, I think that it is useful to note that this is missing a significant part of Locke’s philosophy. Though we are told otherwise, these are not the principles upon which this country was founded. It is a snake-oil version of a philosophy that explicitly rejects what we are being told that all good Americans must accept.

In fact, Locke began his argument by claiming that, at the start, all property begins as the common property of all of humanity. Taking anything out of the state of nature (by mixing one’s labor with it) is only legitimate to the point that the taker “leaves as much and as good in common for others”. In other words, in taking property out of the state of nature, the person who takes it – the person who claims it as his property – cannot leave anybody else worse off.

Nobody could think he had been harmed by someone else’s taking a long drink of water, if there was the whole river of the same water left for him to quench his thirst; and the ownership issues concerning land and water, where there is enough of both, are exactly the same.¹

Note the phrase, “...where there is enough of both.” What if there is not enough? In these cases, the person who has made his property out of what is found in nature has, in fact, harmed others. This, he is not morally permitted to do just on his own. He must offer some form of compensation to those made worse off – something to compensate them for the harm done. Failure to do so is to establish a state of war between those who take things out of the state of

¹ Locke, John, *Second Treatise of Government*, Section 33, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7370>, Retrieved 12/16/2016.

nature and those he has harmed. Avoiding this state of war requires obtaining a form of consent from those who would otherwise be made worse off.

Writing in his own time, he thought that there was still a great deal of property left as good and as much for others – if not in Europe, then in the newly discovered lands in America.

And the same measure may be allowed still without prejudice to any body, as full as the world seems . . . let him plant in some inland, vacant places of America, we shall find that the possessions he could make himself, upon the measures we have given, would not be very large, nor, even to this day, prejudice the rest of mankind, or give them reason to complain, or think themselves injured by this man's incroachment,²

The rights of property that the small number of families use to claim ownership count for nothing if there is not some empty piece of land somewhere where a person can find enough to eat and enough to drink for himself and his family.

So, as a few families claim ownership of all that exists in the world, telling the rest of us that we can only have what we need to survive if we agree to be useful servants, the rest of us have a right to ask – or, more accurately, to demand - "Where is that which is as much and as good left in common from others – the whole rivers of water and food for the taking we should be able to find in nature? And if it all be taken, then where is our compensation for this loss?"

Yet, if we look a little deeper, we find reason to reject the whole natural law argument. It reports the existence of entities in the real world – natural rights and duties – that do not exist in fact. What we have in its place are interests, and interests determine the value of all things – including the value of interests themselves.

Consider the following case:

An airplane carrying 400 passengers crash-lands in the desert. The pilot puts the plane down next to an oasis, where a wealthy recluse has built a home. For whatever reason you want to imagine, it will take a month or more to rescue the passengers.

The house has a number of pools and fountains – literally millions of gallons of water. However, the tells the passengers of the crash that they can have no water – that they may not even set foot on his property.

The libertarian interpretation of the "natural moral law" states that the passengers have an obligation to sit outside of the property line and die of thirst, rather than get the water they need to survive. The parent with the young child is to be condemned as evil – as being a slave-owner – if that parent should step across the line for a cup of water for the child – because doing so will deprive the wealthy owner of his property and, thereby, enslave him.

² Locke, John, *Second Treatise of Government*, Section 36, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7370>, Retrieved 12/16/2016.

At this point, I want to ask a question. What is it that gives the water its value?

The water has value because it helps to satisfy one of the mother's strongest interests or desires – her interest in the well-being of her children. It also has value because in her own interest in her continued existence.

What is the value of the rule that prohibits her from stepping onto the property and getting some water for her children?

If we are going to find any value in the rule, then we are going to have to find it in one or more set of interests. In common circumstances, we have an interest in allowing individuals to have control and ownership of some set of property that they can then use to maintain their lives and those of the people who depend on them. We can give the farmer a plot of land on which to grow food, but this does no good if somebody else can walk onto his property at will and take as much of it as he pleases. We have reasons to establish restrictions on who may take the property of another and how much they can take. But the rules we have the most and strongest reason to adopt are those that serve the most and strongest interests.

Finally, I want to ask: What is the value of the property owner's selfishness and cruelty? Interests not only determine the value of the water and the value of society's rules, but the value of interests themselves. Interests can be evaluated according to their tendency to fulfill or thwart other interests. Water has value because of its usefulness in fulfilling other interests, and poison would have negative value in virtue of its tendency to thwart other interests. Similarly, generosity has value because of its capacity to fulfill other desires, and cruel selfishness has negative value because of its tendency to thwart other interests.

On this measure, a parent's interest in the welfare of her children seems to be a very valuable interest. It is an interest that provided most of us with benefits when we were children, and provide benefits to the people we care about. It provides benefits to the children of today.

On the other hand, we would be hard pressed to come up with a reason to respect the interests of the owner of the water whose selfishness will bring harm to all the survivors of the crash – but for no good reason. In its place, we have reason to promote interests in helping and promoting the well-being of others.

Now, when we look at the value of rules in terms of the interests that they serve, we can also look at those interests to determine if they are worth serving. Rules that serve interests that have a great deal of value are rules that have a great deal of value, whereas rules that serve interests we have reason to condemn are rules that we have reason to condemn.

Generally, rules that prohibit one person from taking another person's property at will serve a great many interests – including people's interest in providing for and caring for those that they care about. In many every-day circumstances, this is a very good rule. We have reason to promote in people an aversion to taking the property of others without their consent – an

interest in refraining from these types of actions – insofar as, to the degree that we are surrounded by people who have such an aversion, our property and our means for taking care of ourselves and those we care about is better secured.

Similarly, we have reasons to promote an aversion to lying, aversions to breaking promises, an interest in repaying debts, as well as aversions to vandalism, assault, and murder. These interests have a great deal of value in that, insofar as we are surrounded by people who have these interests, to that degree we can count on them to tell us the truth, keep their promises, repay their debts, and refrain from vandalism, theft, assault, and murder.

The thesis that the right to property is ultimately grounded on interests – and on good interests at that – gains more support when we look at the details of the rule as it is applied in the real world. For example, when a person mixes his life with property in a state of nature, exactly what does he contain control of? We could say that the very first person to plant the very first crop seed on the earth has acquired right to the ownership of the whole earth. He has mixed his labor with the earth and for anybody else to come along and take any part of it would be to make him a slave – to take his labor and make it their own. If not the whole earth, then how much? If he fences in a section of land so that he may graze cattle upon it, how much may he fence?

The fact is, when we evaluate different answers we are going to be asking about the interests served by one answer rather than another, and asking about the value of those interests and whether they are worth serving.

Henry Sidgwick presented the following problematic case:

For instance, it would surely be a paradoxical deduction from the principle of Freedom to maintain that an individual had a right to exclude others from pasturing sheep on any part of the land over which his hunting expeditions could extend. But if so can it be clear that a shepherd has such a right against one who wishes to till the land, or that one who is using the surface has a right to exclude a would-be miner?³

Here, as above, the important point to recognize is that we are not answering these questions by appeal to a natural moral law. Instead, what we are asking about the reasons people have for adopting one rule rather than another. In asking this question, we are asking about the interests that the rule would serve, and the value of those interests.

On this measure, we have more and stronger reason to prefer a set of rules that would compel the owner to give up some small amount of his surplus water to the survivors of the airplane crash, and permits them to take it if it is not given over voluntarily.

³ Sidgwick, Henry, *Methods of Ethics*, Book III, Chapter V, Section 4, <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/sidgwick/me/me.b03.c05.s04.html>, Retrieved 12/16/2016

However, once we set this natural moral right aside in favor of principles that serve the good interests of those who adopt them, another type of libertarian comes forth to tell us that adopting libertarian principles will best serve those interests. It is a mistake to think that a set of rules that allows the mother to take water where there is a great surplus and uses it to care for her children would actually produce the most good. In fact, it would produce so much harm, we are compelled to require that the mother watch her children die of thirst – and that she choose death herself over violating one of these rules.

D. Utilitarian Libertarianism

If all that exists as reasons for intentional action are the interests of individuals, libertarians then try to tell us that adopting and promoting libertarian principles is the best way to see those interests realized.

Whereas those who adopt the natural rights libertarian theory tend to (mis)attribute their view to John Locke, utilitarian libertarians tend to credit this view to Adam Smith. In *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, Smith invented the field of economics. Here, we find much less worship of the author's original text than we find in the natural moral law theory. What we are really talking about here is contemporary free-market economics.

The free market economist argues that, under a state of freedom, an "invisible hand" (to borrow Adam Smith's phrase) causes people to act in ways that tend to benefit humanity. Innovators are constantly looking for ways to provide people with goods at a lower price. This is because they get to pocket the profits of their innovation. A love of personal gain motivates them, yet they produce more overall good than the most benevolent philanthropist.

When we allow taking as a way of acquiring wealth, less and less effort goes into production while more effort goes into taking from others. As the actual production of wealth decreases (because people are tired of producing wealth that simply gets taken), people end up fighting over less and less. Eventually, we create a society – like a communist state – where everybody is fighting each other over just a few scraps of wealth that people produce.

If we wish to avoid this fate, then we are told that we must prohibit any transfers of wealth. This will allow us to enjoy the benefits of Adam Smith's "invisible hand" whereby people pursuing their own private interests end up producing increasing amounts of goods and services more efficiently that they can then sell. We are ignoring for the time being that they only have a reason to innovate in producing goods and services to those who have money, and have almost no incentive to innovate in ways to provide the necessities of survival to those who have no money to spend.

By arguing that the mother has a moral right to take some water for her children, since her interests in the welfare of her children are better than the property owner's selfish interests and callous disregard for the fate of others, must be condemned as being dangerous. I am setting up a state where everybody takes and nobody produces. Though the act may seem to provide an overall benefit in this one hypothetical case, the principles on which it is built, if widely accepted, will result in everybody suffering equal poverty.

1. The Slippery Slope of the Transfer State

As with slippery slope objections generally, we must question whether the slope is as slippery as the utilitarian libertarian claims.

For example, we could examine the principle of “no killing”, and then amend this to include an exception: “No killing except to defend one’s own life or the life of some other innocent person.” Somebody could argue that we must not allow this exception since it will start us down the slippery slope. People will see all sorts of excuses for killing. They are at risk of defining ‘innocent’ and ‘assault’ as suits their purposes. Eventually, we will end up with a community in which murder is rampant. To prevent society from descending down this slippery slope we must prohibit all killing without exception.

Similarly, a person can claim that we must prohibit all lying because, if any lying is permitted then society will begin down a slippery slope to the point where lying is commonplace and no person can ever trust the word of another person.

Telling a child about Santa, organizing a surprise birthday party, or saving a dying elderly parent in her last hours of life from the grief that her son had been killed in an automobile accident that morning, would all be morally condemned. We would also have to condemn the person who lied to the Nazi soldiers about the fact that she was hiding a family of Jews in her attic or to the enraged boyfriend that the girl he wants to murder has gone to her sister’s house on 7th Street.

The problem with the slippery slope argument is that we are not talking about abandoning the prohibition on taking the property of another entirely. It is still to be governed by principles – principles that look at the value of the interests served by an exception to the rule. The claim that the interests of a mother in the well-being of her child is more important than the interests of a cruel and selfish hermit does not imply that anybody may take the property of another whenever they please. The assertion that we cannot tell the difference between a parent getting life-saving water for child from a person whose fountains and pools are filled with water on the one hand, and a government that rounds up people and strips them of all valuables to enrich the dictator and his friends on the other, is difficult to defend.

It is as difficult to defend as the claim that we cannot tell the difference between a person who lies, for example, to get gullible retirees to turn over their life savings and the person who lies to protect some Jews from some Nazi soldiers. It is as difficult to defend as the idea that we cannot tell the difference between a person who breaks a promise (e.g., to meet a friend for lunch) “because I didn’t feel like keeping it” and a person who breaks a promise to tend to the victims of an accident she witnesses on her way to the rendezvous. And it is difficult to defend the claim that we cannot tell the difference between taking property from those who have a great deal to provide others with the necessities for a basic quality of life and mere selfish plundering.

2. The Wealth Effect

Another problem with the utilitarian libertarian defense of the libertarian rules of property is that those who defend it often ignore the wealth effect.

They tend to say that the market always distributes things to those who value it most. If we want to discover the most valuable use for something, we simply let people bid for it. If the price goes up, then those who do not want the good as badly are those who decide to spend their money on something else instead. The bidder willing to pay the most is the person who places the most value on that which she purchased.

This would be true if everybody started off with the same amount of money. However, it is not true when the people bidding for a product have different amounts of wealth to draw upon, this is not true.

Consider a case, after a hurricane or some other natural disaster where water is in short supply, of a person who wishes to sell a bottle of water. There are two bidders. The first is a poor parent whose sick child is dehydrated, who only has \$20 to spend. The other bidder is a multi-millionaire who wishes to use the water to give a pet poodle a shampoo.

For the wealthy dog owner, a bid of \$21 – sufficient to exceed what the poor parent is even able to pay – is an insignificant and trivial price – while a smaller amount that the other can pay (\$20, in this case) is everything that person has.

The way to test whether the good or service is going to the person who values it most is to ask what each person would pay if they both had the same amount of wealth to draw upon. It seems quite reasonable to expect that the parent with the dehydrated child would have little if any hesitation in outbidding the wealthy dog owner if the only difference between them rested in the strengths of their interests or desires. However, when the differences include differences in wealth, those people with a lot of wealth find it easy to bid goods and services away even from those who need them to survive.

For example, when some people acquire wealth they tend to purchase more meat. It takes several pounds of grain to produce one pound of meat. Consequently, those who switch their diet from grain to meat end up pushing up the cost of grain. For the wealthy to have a more pleasurable taste experience, those who are poor are forced to give up eating – or to give up the basic goods that they would have acquired with the money they now have to spend on grain at the higher price.

Similarly, we now have an example where people bid up the price of food grains so that they can use it to produce fuel for cars. To believe the utilitarian libertarian who argues that, when the wealthy buy something, it goes to its most highly valued use is to argue that the wealthy value driving to the theater more than the poor value feeding their children. In fact, we discover that the wealthy are not only bidding food off the tables of those who are starving for to provide for their own entertainment, they are enlisting the government to subsidize this expense.

The claim that the free market will direct resources to those who value them most, in an economy where a small number of families control a significant portion of the wealth is simply false. Those with a great deal of wealth have the economic power to literally bid the food out of

the stores - forcing poor people to pay even more just to survive, and only if they have more to pay.

Another way in which the wealth effect harms those who are worse off is in the area of innovation. To put the case bluntly, there is no economic reason to find innovations that aid those who cannot pay for it. People who innovate know that what they really need to be an economic success is to create something that they can sell to people who have money to spend. The very wealthy have the most money to spend, so the wise innovator looks for ways to produce something that very wealthy people want. In contrast, there is no money to be made inventing something useful for the very poor – they have no way to pay for it. Consequently, they are left in a state of poverty.

If we do want goods and services to go to those who would value them the most – which the utilitarian libertarian, insofar as he is a utilitarian and supports libertarianism on the basis of its utility - then we need to take steps to prevent the wealthy from bidding those goods and services away from the poor to waste on fulfilling relatively trivial and insignificant interests – and to direct resources away from the fulfillment of trivial interests and towards the fulfillment of the more significant interests of the very poor.

3. Money and Politics

The Utilitarian Libertarian is not wrong everywhere.

Progressives who argue for government transfers of wealth to help those in need – or people generally – often end up doing far more harm than good. Often, they open conduits through rich the very wealthy such the wealth out of the pockets of the poor and middle class for their own benefit. They do this by engineering the bureaucracy in such a way that what is proposed as a way of helping the poor and middle class actually harms them and sacrifices their interests in the service of providing benefits to the very wealthy.

If a policy takes a small amount of wealth out of the pockets of many people, and deposits it into the bank accounts of a few of the wealthy people, this generates unequal incentives to getting that policy adopted. It is known in some circles as a “law of concentrated benefits and diffused costs”.

Consider, for example, a policy that takes an average of \$1.00 out of the pocket of each American each year and puts it into a corporate bank account. For example, the government puts a tariff on imports that drives up the price of the commodity being protected to the point that Americans end up spending \$1.00 per year more (on average) for this good. This wealth goes into the pockets of the companies that are in the protected industry. In other words, each American loses \$1.00 out of their bank account, and a set of companies pocket an extra \$300 million per year.

If you are on the side that has a potential to make \$300 million per year for the indefinite future, you have reason to invest a great deal of money into getting that law passed. However, the 300 million people who will lose \$1.00 per year has almost no reason to get involved. If we assume that their time is worth even as little as \$5.00 per hour, they have reason to spend no more than 12 minutes on this issue and, only then, if they are guaranteed success.

The companies that stand to make \$300 million per month in added income can start to work on getting their policy passed by hiring public relations firms to come up with a campaign that will help get the law passed. The public relations firm can begin by brainstorming on arguments that have a chance of influencing decision makers (or the public), then testing their ideas with a series of focus groups and surveys. The idea is to come up with a set of claims, the value of which depends solely on their effectiveness – the degree to which they are true or false being important only as far as they influence effectiveness).

Once these professional manipulators figure out which stories will work (which is quite different from figuring out which stories are true), they go to work getting the stories to the public. Any firm worth its salt can quickly come up with a list of bloggers, reporters, commentators, and other opinion leaders likely to repeat and endorse the claims that they make (regardless of truth) and begin the task of mobilizing them. They write the press releases, make the phone calls, prepare the white papers, arrange the conferences, and make appointments to have lunch with those who will spread the word that the manipulators want spread. These days, it also includes the manufacture in internet memes and twitter slogans – the type that will be shared and retweeted – that generate just the attitude the professional deceivers want people to have.

Those who want to take \$1.00 out of each person's pocket and put it in their own also have an incentive to get legislation passed that will have this effect

Most people – you and I included – have no idea what happens with the small amendments that get attached to each bill that goes through the legislature – or even about most of the bills that go through the legislature. I would bet that very few people reading these words would have even heard of the asteroid mining bill, even though it effectively gave ownership of everything not on earth to the few wealthiest families on earth.

The \$300 million they will be receiving if they succeed in getting such legislation passed means that it would be profitable for them to hire lobbyists and others and give them a permanent job of watching and attempting to influence relevant legislation. They hire attorneys to do the research and write the laws as they want the laws to read. They hand these finished products to the legislators ready to submit.

Many government regulations do not come into existence as laws. Instead, regulatory agencies are empowered to create new regulations or to employ some measure of discretion in interpreting and applying the rules that they are responsible for. This provides the business with another way to route a dollar or two out of each of our pockets into their own – by bringing about a favorable interpretation of the rules. This means hiring experts in the regulatory system that governs their company.

The company seeking to direct a few dollars from each person into their accounts also have the means and the motive to challenge the regulations themselves. They can file lawsuits, attend hearings, and create white papers all with the intent of persuading whoever hears a dispute to make a decision favorable to the company. At the same time, there is nobody at these hearings or raising a voice in these disputes representing the people who will lose a dollar or two out of their pockets each month. This is because it remains the case that it is not worth the time and

effort for those who lose a dollar or two to even become aware of this dispute and how much it will impact them.

They can often obtain a significant benefit in obtaining favorable interpretations of existing regulations and in guiding the practice of the regulatory agency generally by hiring some of the employees – particularly the senior level employees – of that agency. Those employees can provide the company with insight as to how things get done and the personal attitudes and ideas of those who will be making some of the decisions. The people they hire – being friends with those who still work for the agency – can exercise some measure of influence over those decisions. Here, as is the case above, neither you nor anybody you know will ever actually be aware of these events to protest them. The people – seeking to make their lives easier – have good reason to ignore those who are ignoring them and for giving those with the money and the power what they ask for.

Of course, those that they hire have reason to seek the good opinion of the companies they are supposed to be regulating long before they leave their post and begin looking for work in the private market.

When we repeat this process over any number of companies – each taking a nickel, a dime, or a dollar or two out of the pockets of several people and putting it in their own, the costs to the average citizen adds up significantly. However, it is never the case that it is worthwhile to challenge any one amendment, regulation, or interpretation. Each of a thousand bureaucratic decisions that funnel money out of their accounts into the pockets of a business only represents a small fraction of what each customer is losing. No individual amendment, regulation, or interpretation can be profitably challenged. Yet, the result of a thousand of these little economic nicks and cuts is to leave each customer – and the poorer and middle class customers more than any others – worse off than they would have otherwise been.

Furthermore, it is the purpose of these amendments, regulations, and interpretations to concentrate wealth – to take a little bit of money out of each of our pockets and to put it in the pockets of somebody who is making millions of dollars. We each lose \$1.00, and the millionaire gains \$300 million. We each lose \$1000 in a thousand amendments, regulations, and interpretations like those described above, and a few hundred millionaires split \$300 billion in additional profits.

None of this is consistent with capitalism. From Adam Smith to the present day, free market economists recognize that these are violations of the principles of capitalism. They are examples where individuals use government power to manipulate and distort free markets to their own advantage – and the detriment of everybody else, particularly of those who do not have the resources to monitor every move the government makes.

There is no rule in capitalism that justifies wealthy people using the government to manipulate the market in such a way as to channel hundreds of billions of dollars from the pockets of the poor and middle class who cannot afford to lobby the government and put it into the pockets of a very wealthy few who have the means and the motive to do so. The people who support these maneuvers do not support the free market. If they claim to support the free market – this

is simply another part of the deception and manipulation they are engaged in to channel money from your bank account into the bank accounts of millionaires.

Any time anybody tries to establish a complex set of regulations – whether for prescription drugs or energy production or employee safety or any of a thousand other potential reasons for government regulation – they set up the mechanisms through which a company can take a nickel, a dime, or a dollar or two out of each person’s pocket and put it in their own accounts.

It is naïve, at best, to think that a government regulatory agency that you or I never heard of, that has the capacity to make our lives a little more expensive and funnel that money into the accounts of some corporation, has not been twisted and distorted to do exactly that. The harms that are done to people in this way are among the things that the utilitarian libertarians are right about. These are, at the same time, among the costs and harms that progressives tend to ignore – that, in some cases, the professional deceivers manipulate them into ignoring – because it helps to protect the power of the companies to make the poor and middle class poorer and the extremely wealthy wealthier.

This is not to say that all regulations are bad because, if we were to understand regulations properly, we would see even such things as the prohibition on vandalism, theft, assault, and murder are “regulations” in a sense. In fact, even though regulations that fit the descriptions mentioned above are the bad regulations that should be removed, calls for a reduction in government regulation seldom if ever target those that profit companies at the expense of the middle class and poor. The regulations that the corporations want removed are those that prevent them from poisoning or otherwise harming people when it is profitable for them to do so.

4. Two Types of Government Regulation

From what I have written above, a reader might draw the conclusion that I am defending the libertarian position that all government regulation is a bad thing and “the government is best that governs least.” However, this would not be accurate.

It is a mistake to think that the free market system that many conservatives claim to champion is a regulation-free system. The free market has its own set of regulations. It prohibits force and fraud, and it has complex definitions not only to determine not only what is to count as force or fraud, but what to do when it is discovered. On the one side, we have a regulation governing what a company can put into the air and what the penalties will be if it is caught polluting in violation of the rules. On the other side, we have the free market prohibition on using the property of another person without their consent and what the penalties will be if it is caught doing so.

Consider the complex law of contracts. When companies get into a dispute over what the terms of a contract are, whether they have been violated, and what the remedy will be if a violation is judged to have taken place, these rules and customs are as complex as any environmental regulation.

Prohibitions on such things as vandalism and the destruction of the property of others, fraud, theft, assault, and murder are, in every sense of the word, regulations on human activities. They define things that people may not do and punishments that will be inflicted on those who

do them. To be totally opposed to regulation is to be opposed to prohibitions on vandalism, theft, fraud, assault, rape, and murder. Insofar as a libertarian supports these prohibitions, the libertarian is not saying that all regulation is bad but, instead, is making a statement about which regulations we should have.

The real dispute is not over whether businesses are to be regulated or unregulated. The real dispute is over which regulations will be enforced – whether these are the regulations of a capitalist system or some other.

It is quite often the case that when the owners of these corporate-feudal estates argue for reducing regulations, they are typically arguing for a legal permission to do things that capitalism would prohibit. They argue for a legal permission to harm the life, health, liberty, and property of others whenever it is done in the pursuit of profits.

If a consequence of their business activity is that people are poisoned or injured by the use of the company's product, that their property is destroyed, that the corporation misrepresents their product and deceives the customer into purchasing something the informed customer would not have purchased, the corporate-feudal masters want to produce these results without paying any sort of penalty or compensation. When they do this, they are not arguing in favor of a capitalist system. They are arguing for abandoning capitalism and establishing a type of corporate-feudal economic system in its place.

These corporate-feudal masters are not actually promoting capitalism. They have learned that, by giving their corporate-feudal rules the name 'capitalism' they can get people to buy it and, through the artifice of this deception, get people to agree to sacrificing the rights that capitalism would have them keep.

Capitalism holds to the principle of "If you break it, you buy it." People whose actions harm others are responsible for the costs that they inflict on others. The reckless driver owes compensation to those who are harmed by his activities. The reckless camper who starts a fire owes compensation to those who lose their homes in the fire. The corporate-feudal lords, in this case, reject this capitalist principle in favor of one that says that if the harm inflicted on others is a corporate-feudal lord, then those harmed must suffer the costs without compensation.

Furthermore, allowing those who inflict the harms on the lives, health, liberty, and property of others to pocket more money – to own a larger portion of the Earth and all of its wealth – provides no benefit to society as a whole.

In fact, capitalist principles suggest that where corporate-feudal lords cause harm to others when engaged in the pursuit of profits, they will tend to engage in activities that do more harm than good. Why not? Giving them the legal permission to harm others without paying any costs is no different, in economic terms, than giving them a credit card and allowing them to buy things with somebody else's money. Free market economics say that, where this is done, people will tend to make purchases that have a net negative social value. The way to prevent them from doing this is to 'internalize' all of the costs – to make sure that those who create the costs pay the costs.

One does not need a PhD in economics to realize that there is a significant problem with requiring that a company obtain unforced and fully informed consent from every individual before it engages in an activity that could cause harm. A society that adopted this requirement explicitly – that became fully capitalist in this sense – would certainly crumble. However, capitalism, as I argued above, gets its justification from its practical effects – when it produces practical effects – and is not harmed by introducing practical solutions to practical problems.

Earlier, I argued that our rules do not follow a natural moral law, but are judged by their ability to promote good interests. This is another example. Here, once again, we are not going to look for rules that follow a non-existent natural moral law (such as requiring unanimous consent). We are going to look for rules that do the best job of serving good interests.

The practical solution to the need to have consent from those potentially harmed is to have the company negotiate with a body that represents the people who would be harmed. However, even in this case, the prohibitions on coercion and deception apply. If we were to discover that the corporate-feudal lords are seeking a legal permission to make false or misleading claims or to use coercion in these negotiations, then we would be discovering another case in which corporate-feudal lords are seeking an immunity from the prohibition against harming the life, health, liberty, and property of others when engaged in the pursuit of profit.

Have a member of the middle and lower classes take even so much as a dollar belonging to somebody else, spray-paint or otherwise vandalize so much as a brick wall, or strike a person in anger or frustration, and they risk imprisonment and a criminal record that will do continuing harm through their whole lives. We use these tools, in part, to deter people from performing such actions for the overall good of society.

Yet, corporate-feudal masters are constantly seeking permission to inflict far greater harms to the lives, health, liberty, and property of others with impunity. They seek to engage in practices that, though profitable to them, have the power to destroy whole cities, kill thousands if not millions of people, put countless others at risk illness or injury, and harm their property without paying a dime to those who are harmed.

When they are punished, the penalty is usually some fine carefully crafted to do no significant harm to the company – because the company must continue to exist and do business much as it has done before. These corporate-feudal masters take these rather insignificant fines as merely "the cost of doing business" – as a thief or rapist would if their penalties were carefully designed to prevent them from significantly interfering with their lives.

A system that creates these two classes of people governed by two different sets of laws – a lower-class whose lives are strictly regulated and who must act as servants to the upper class, and an upper class that is granted political immunity from the restrictions that inflict harms that are orders and magnitudes greater than what the lower classes may not inflict – is not properly called "capitalism". It is called "feudalism". And where the estates that these feudal lords control are no longer large tracts of land worked by farmers and herders, but instead have become global corporate empires worked by secretaries, computer programmers, and manufacturing laborers, it makes sense to refer to them as corporate-feudal estates.

In short, we have reason to distinguish two types of regulations. There is the type that I spoke of in the previous section where special interest groups use government power to funnel pennies, dimes, and dollars from each of our accounts and puts them in the pockets of the very wealthy, and there are those that seek to prevent people from profiting by activity that harms the lives, health, and property of others without compensation.

When the corporate-feudal masters object to regulations, they are typically referring to regulations of the second type – the prohibitions on harming the lives, health, and property of others. When it comes to regulations that draw money out of the accounts of the lower and middle class and into their huge accounts, they become vocal defenders of those regulations.

E. Summary

I spoke at the start of a revolution. It is a revolution against the corporate-feudal masters who seek to own everything that exists and treat the rest of us as servants. It is a revolution in favor of a system that respects the equality – that renders none of us masters, and none of us servants.

We should not be surprised that the corporate-feudal masters prefer a set of rules that funnel money out of all our accounts into their pockets, while giving them a political permission to harm the lives, health, and property of others whenever it is profitable to do so. We should also not be surprised to discover that they have found ways to use their vast wealth to engineer just such a system.

They have engineered this, in part, by promoting a set of ideas that claim that such a system is a part of a natural moral law – that those principles are the principles upon which modern society is built and the only principles worth defending and living by. These claims are mistaken. There is no such natural moral law. There is, instead, the interests of different persons – and some interests are better than others. The callous selfishness of the corporate-feudal masters is not an interest that people generally have any reason to promote or defend.

They have further engineered this, in part, by a rhetorical campaign that takes this corporate-feudal philosophy and puts it in a package marked ‘capitalism’ – which promises to make everybody wealthy. Capitalism provides benefits because it rejects the use of government to take wealth from the pockets of those who have little and put it in the pockets of the corporate-feudal masters. It also provides benefits by prohibiting people from harming the life, health, and property of others without their consent. Yet, the system that these feudal masters call ‘capitalism’ is one that sucks a great deal of wealth out of the pockets of the poor and middle class to give to the wealthy, and grants a political permission to the corporate-feudal masters to harm the life, health, and property of others they deem lesser than themselves. What they practice is, in fact, something quite different from capitalism.

The revolution that I have spoken of is a revolution against this corporate-feudal state of affairs. It is a revolution that reverses this state of affairs. It is one that allows the poor and middle class to keep what wealth they have and allow the rich to take it – not by government force – but by offering goods and services worth buying, and one that regulates or compensates the poor and middle class for harms done to their life, health, and property. It is one that recognizes that

those who claim ownership of everything are not leaving as much and as good in common for others, and those others are entitled to something as good in its place.

Such a revolution, of course, aims to replace something bad with something good – or at least something better. In the next section, I look at some of the elements of this ‘something better’.

III. Principles

Before discussing the "how" of revolution, I want to spend a few moments discussing the "what" of revolution.

The ultimate objective is to create a "better" society. This, of course, brings up all sorts of questions about what "better" is. People disagree – and these disagreements are often a source of conflict, even bloody conflict. However, I think that there are some principles that can be defended by reason and where – not only is it the case that they are unlikely to lead to violence – they can be used to distinguish those who prefer violence and injustice to those who wish for a peaceful and just society.

A. Nonviolence

As long as methods are available whereby people have the power to effect a change in their current systems of government without violence (so long as violence is not used against them), there can be no justification for the use of violence in the establishment of these ends.

1. *Peace as Good in Itself*

Any use of violence sets off a system of retribution and response that quickly escalates to the point that the whole of society is soaked in blood and destruction. Person A performs an action that, in the mind of Person B is a violation of his rights. For the sake of which, he obtains retribution against Person A. Whereby, Person A, who will often believe that the action that precipitated this response was within his right and, even if not, is likely to think that the response is too great and goes beyond justice, makes plans to retaliate against Person B, bringing with him whatever friends and associates he can muster. This will be taken by Person B to be the denial of the justice he originally sought, who will claim that justice demands that he respond “in kind” and muster his friends to execute what they take justice to demand – which will, almost certainly, be thought to be a further affront to justice by Person A and his friends.

The result is an escalation of violence – as we have seen in some unfortunate parts of the world – with grievances extending back hundreds of years, with no end in sight. Each side thinks (and not without cause) that the other has treated them unjustly and that there can be no peace until justice is served. Since both sides have been treated unjustly, and both sides refuse to seek peace until justice is served, the result is that there can be no peace, but mutual and perpetual hatred and violence.

The question then becomes, “At what point do we put an end to this cycle of violence?” Shall we declare that it will end after 5 cycles? After 50? After 500 years? If one decides on a number, it will necessarily be an arbitrary number with no reason to select the option before it or after it – other than the fact that the option before will mean less violence, and the option after will mean more. This suggests that there is only one rational place for the cycle of violence

and retaliation to end, and that is, "Here. Now. With us." Or, in the case where the cycle has not yet begun, to refuse to be the one who begins it, and to refuse to be the one whose demand for justice condemns it to becoming permanent once it has begun.

In fact, I find it to be incoherent for people to protest the harms done to innocent people by harming innocent people. The violence done to those who have no party in the dispute – the creation of new victims to add to the list of existing victims – and, indeed, for those wronged to devote themselves to destroying each other's property – is irrational at best. If one is involved in a protest to establish justice, it would seem to be the case that the first order of business should be to act justly.

I would like to repeat that these rules apply to where a non-violent alternative exists. At least in a democracy, a non-violent alternative exists – and I will be discussing this option in more detail later. The most serious barrier to bringing about proper reforms are a blind obedience to traditions and customs designed to put one in a state of servitude to those who pay to establish those traditions and customs.

On this, I shall have more to say later. First, though, more needs to be said on another matter of justice.

2. The Practical Side of Nonviolence

Another consideration that should enter one's mind with respect to violence is whether the victim of this violence is a potential ally. I cannot think of a political movement that has too many friends – too many people working with them towards a common goal and mutual benefit – such that they can afford to drive others into the arms of their opposition.

Consider the effects that an act of violence has on the victim – on the person whose interests or property has been harmed – and on anybody over whom the victim has a persuasive voice. The perpetrator of violence has said to that person, and through that person to others, "We care nothing about your interests or well-being. We do not care about your harm or benefit." As soon as the other side steps up to say, "We are here to protect you, your property, your interests, and your well-being", the perpetrators of violence prove themselves to be doing more to benefit their enemies than their allies.

More to the point, the perpetrators of violence leaves the movement open to two kinds of counter-assault.

First, it must never be forgotten that the enemy in this case has a great deal of wealth and access to the media. They will certainly use these assets to promote public hostility against the rebellion (and, thereby, protect their corporate feudal fiefdom). It is to do nothing but to hand these corporate overlords a most valuable gift to show that one's movement is one that aims to destroy and sacrifice the interests of innocent people, as opposed to protect and promote those interests.

Second, one should expect that there are some seeking to protect their corporate feudal fiefdoms who, in their interest to discredit any political movement against their interests, will hire agitators to send members among the revolutionaries with an aim to commit atrocities that can then be blamed on the revolutionary movement – thereby discrediting it. Where the

corporate feudal overlords do not personally take part in this, they have a number of sympathizers among the people who may take it upon themselves to do so.

Consequently, if there are members of the group who are willing to engage in acts of violence against innocent people, they are either unwitting and foolish assistants of the corporate overlords or knowing and intentionally aiding them by discrediting the movement against them.

A final maneuver to watch up for would be for those seeking to discredit the revolution and to protect the corporate feudal fiefdoms to take to social media and other communications networks to argue for these acts of violence – to "justify" them – and thus encourage the members of the revolution to do that which is ultimately to their discredit. When one sees in the communications among those who are participants in the revolution an argument for violence against innocent people, it would not be unreasonable to expect that the argument at least began with somebody – perhaps somebody to whom the corporate overlords paid money – whose purpose is to prompt members of the revolution into performing actions that will discredit the revolution, and thereby protect the corporate fiefdoms.

These considerations argue not only for a rule against the use of violence – a rule that is offered as a mere and polite suggestion – but instead for an enforced rule. It calls for assigning individuals specifically and explicitly to the task of preventing violence and for identifying and exposing those who cause violence. There is little that can so clearly communicate to the general public that, "Our interest is with the common people – those who are the fellow victims of the corporate overlords – in protecting their interests and well-being and those who will do them harm," then a willingness to identify and see to the punishment of even fellow members who violently attack the interests of innocent people.

One should think of the military commander willing to arrest and punish soldiers caught in acts of pilfering, rape, and other acts of violence against civilians. This is the model of those whose attitude is that of protecting and promoting the interests of common individuals against overlords who are, in fact, their common enemy.

There are, of course, conditions where violent resistance is justified – conditions under which it is necessary. These are conditions under which no other option is available. A despot in control of an army that allows his people no say in their form of government and is eager to use violence against any who refuses his commands leaves them no option but to respond with violence in return. The slaves of the antebellum South would have been in their rights to respond to slavery with violence, as are any people who are not consulted as to the form of rule they are to live under. But that is not the situation that we are currently in, and thus it is not a legitimate response.

B. Against Bigotry

A common and very useful tactic in politics is to begin by dividing the world into "us" and "them", to claim that "them" are responsible for all of "our" problems, to promote an anger toward and hatred of "them", and to harness that energy for a political movement.

In the 2016 election, both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump used this formula effectively – rallying crowds of enthusiastic supporters. For Trump, "them" were Mexicans and Muslims.

Sanders identified "millionaires and billionaires" as "them". In both cases, the candidate ran on the message, "Put me in office – give me political power – and I will deal with "them".

Human psychology is such that people are attracted to a message of "us" versus "them". This document itself would likely be significantly more popular if I were to identify a "them" to attack – without question or qualification – and thus tap into that same part of human psychology.

It is effective.

It is that which made Hitler possible, which gave us the 30 Years War and the English Civil War. It is what preserves violence in the Middle East and which provides such an effective obstacle to civility between political parties in the United States. Feed this type of "us" versus "them" thinking and we can create a global civil war – as violent and destructive as the American civil war but on a world-wide scale with atomic, chemical, and biological weapons.

However, if we are going to have a revolution, one of the things we should be revolting against are practices that have such destructive consequences. Consequently, this template for revolution not only will refuse to endorse "us" versus "them" rhetoric of this type – it will condemn its use.

It will be a revolution against bigotry itself.

When I speak of "bigotry" I should be understood to be referring to the practice of making derogatory overgeneralizations across groups – be they blacks, atheists, Muslims, Christians, the 1%, billionaires, progressives, liberals, conservatives, fundamentalists, Republicans, Democrats, corporations, and the like.

1. Never Attack a Named Group

To avoid bigotry, I follow a particular principle in my writing (with a few exceptions . . . because I am human . . . and I sometimes slip up). That rule is:

Never attack a named group.

In my writings, here and elsewhere, I will never state that the target of my criticisms is Muslims, Conservatives, Trump supporters, Republicans, Democrats, Progressives, the Tea Party, Atheists, progressives, Christians, "The Left", "The Right". The terms "millionaires", "billionaires", and "the 1%" are also terms for named groups – and to attack them as such is to favor fiction over truth and injustice over justice.

So you will not find me targeting any such group in these writings. I am interested in targeting those who do that which is wrong, and only those who do that which is wrong, because they do that which is wrong.

Whenever people make an attack against a named group, they inevitably take a group of people who are innocent of whatever is the actual charge of their criticism and imply that they are guilty of the charge – or that at best that there is no reason to think of them as innocent – and to promote a hatred and condemnation of those people for no reason other than that they share the title.

Furthermore, and at the same time, it takes people who are not members of the same group, but who are guilty of the same wrongdoing, and leaves them free of any condemnation because they do not wear the title of those who the speaker is attacking.

Consequently, when Republicans are charged with being “anti-science”, this is at the same time (1) a false and unjust accusation made against many pro-science Republicans, and (2) unfairly and unjustly lets many anti-science individuals off the hook who have not identified as Republicans. It is, in short, to name the wrong target.

If what one wants to condemn are those who are “anti-science” the charge can be more accurately and justly made by simply specifying that the accusation is being made against “those who are anti-science” and to provide examples of anti-science thinking itself. In this way, one's criticism applies only to those who are guilty. It makes no false (and unjust) derogatory attributions to Republicans who are not anti-science, and includes in its list of targets any non-Republicans who also happen to be anti-science. In other words, it is a way of speaking that challenges, rather than supports and endorses, derogatory overgeneralizations.

If one wants to defend the right to freedom of speech, then the challenge is to be made against those who object to freedom of speech – without regard to the religion, race, political party affiliation, or the like of those who oppose freedom of speech. The subject under discussion is freedom of speech itself. When the critic targets a named group then the subject is no longer freedom of speech, it becomes an unjust assault on all members of the named group.

Attacking a named group as if everybody in that group is guilty of the wrongs that are the object of criticism will actually harm the very cause that one is trying to defend. By attacking the group, one blocks the members of that group from changing. One has identified the object of the criticism with the group, which will be taken as attacking the group. This will cause the group members to rally around each other for mutual protection and support, and internalize the very principle one wants them to reject.

On the other hand, by separating the belief or attitude one seeks to criticize from the identity of the group, one leaves it open for the members of the group to reject that attitude and to adopt the new one, allowing them to reject what is being criticized without rejecting their identity.

If one equates conservatives with racists, then one promotes racism among conservatives by making it a part of their identity and making it very costly for them to reject racism. Plus, it lets racists off the hook who are not, in fact, conservatives, because their racism is simply being ignored.

If one equates Muslims with terrorists, one might as well be telling all Muslims to become terrorists – or, at least, to embrace it – by making it a part of their identity.

If, instead, one condemns racism, but not conservatives, one gives conservatives a reason to disavow racism. Plus, you target racists who belong to any other group as well. You make racism itself the target of your attack, rather than some group.

As I said, I have followed this rule in all of my writings. I think it is an extremely important rule. I would like to see it followed much more broadly.

It is wrong, on this account, to identify "conservatives" with "racists", "Mexicans" with "rapists", "Muslims" with "terrorists".

However, it is not wrong in this sense to say that a racist is a racist, that a rapist is a rapist, or that a terrorist is a terrorist. There is nothing wrong with identifying a group of people as wrongdoers when this is the defining characteristic of the group that one is attacking. Liars, thieves, tyrants, and con-men of all stripes may legitimately be attacked as liars, thieves, tyrants, and con-men.

It is a defining characteristic of a racist that they make derogatory generalizations about a racial group and treat them unjustly on the basis of racial characteristics. To assert that a racist has done this, and to assert that it is wrong to do so – that people who do so deserve condemnation – is not to make a "bigoted" statement against racists. It is to identify the racist by that which defines them – and is no more a form of bigotry than calling a dog a mammal or a mosquito a parasite.

2. How to Criticize an Idea

One of the areas where this line gets blurred is where an individual takes it upon himself to define for the world what a certain group of people believe. In order to free oneself of a charge of criticizing a group – of making derogatory and bigoted generalizations about a group – a common defense is to claim that one is "criticizing an idea" - and criticizing an idea cannot be wrong.

It is useful to remember that the "anti-semitism" was invented by people who sought to employ this tactic. Facing criticism that their attitudes towards Jews were bigoted and, therefore, wrong, many of those who were critical of the Jews sought to identify their attitudes as criticisms of an idea, rather than bigotry against a people. The "idea" they sought to criticize they called "semitism", and the term they adopted for their own position as being critical of this idea was "anti-semitism" - the criticism of semitism.

In fact, it was criticism of a people under a new name – marketed and branded differently in order to make the product more appealing to the public. The marketing campaign – the claim that "we are criticizing an idea and not a people" proved quite successful – much to the detriment of the people who were, in fact, targeted under this new name.

Criticizing an idea is certainly a legitimate activity. However, there are rules that distinguish when one is actually criticizing an idea from when one is promoting a bigoted attitude towards a group of people under the veil of criticizing an idea.

First, to criticize an idea is to criticize a defining characteristic of an ideology. That is to say, to count as criticizing an idea, one must be criticizing something which, if anybody were to give up that which is being criticized, they would no longer be holding the view that one is criticizing.

For example, if a person wishes to criticize act utilitarianism, it would be legitimate to criticize the claim that the right act is the act that maximizes utility. If one wishes to criticize atheists, it would be legitimate to criticize the claim that the proposition that there is at least one god is

certainly or almost certainly false. These terms define the people who belong to the named group. Any individual who rejects the idea that the right act is the act that maximizes utility is not an act utilitarian, and any individual who holds that the proposition that there is at least one god has a reasonable chance of being true is an agnostic, as distinguished from being an atheist.

Let us take one of the common examples in use today – the claim that one is criticizing Islam or, what might be called "anti-Islamic" to equate with the term "anti-Semitic" as discussed above. To count as an actual criticism of Islam one must be criticizing something that a person cannot reject and still be known as a Muslim. If, instead, one is making a criticism, and can acknowledge that there is or can be a percentage of people to whom the criticism does not apply, then to continue to claim that one is offering a criticism of Islam is to make derogatory (bigoted) generalizations about a group of people.

If one says, at the same time, "This is a criticism of Islam even though there are many Muslims who reject this", this is like saying, "Jim is a bachelor and his wife's name is Susan." It is an internally incoherent way of speaking. It may be a popular incoherent way of speaking – but only among people who like to make bigoted (derogatory overgeneralized) statements about a group of people and give it an appearance of legitimacy.

3. What About the Nazi?

In presenting this principle, one of the things I am often asked is, "What about the Nazis? Am I not permitted to condemn the Nazis by name?"

This question ties in with the most common mistaken criticism of this doctrine. The critic takes the objection to attacking a named group as a claim that named groups have a moral permission to act as they wish without criticism. The critic then attacks this absurd implication, which is found only in their imagination, and is nowhere to be found in the doctrine I have put forth here.

When I speak against racial or religious prejudice, without naming Nazis specifically, I am not saying that they are exempt from this criticism. Instead, the criticism automatically applies to everybody who holds to a doctrine of racial or religious prejudice, regardless of what group they identify with, whether they consider themselves a Nazi, a Republican, a Democrat, a Christian, an atheist, or whatever. The criticism applies to everybody regardless of their group affiliation.

However, one of the unfortunate side effects of targeting a named group, even in this type of case, is that it allows bigots who are not members of that group to say, at least to themselves if not to others, "I am not a Nazi, so his criticism is not applicable to me." I do not wish to leave people that way out.

So, there is nothing to lose, and much to gain, by following this rule. There is nothing to lose because the Nazi bigot is still captured in any objections I make against racial or religious bigotry. There is much to gain because people cannot dismiss my criticism on the grounds that, "Hey, I'm not a Nazi, so he's not talking about me."

4. *What About the Bigot?*

There are certain groups that I raise no objection to naming. There is no objection to be made in condemning bigots for bigotry, just as there is no criticism to be made for condemning liars for lying, condemning thieves for theft, condemning child abusers for abusing children, condemning vandals for vandalism, or condemning murderers for murder.

The difference in these cases is that the object of criticism is the defining characteristic of those being criticized. It is possible to be a Muslim without being a terrorist, but it is not possible to be a terrorist without being a terrorist. There are no derogatory overgeneralizations in calling people what they are.

5. *Corporate-Feudal Overlords*

For the sake of this rebellion, I identify the targets of this rebellion – the people who are the proper targets of this rebellion, who should be brought down because of the unjust and unjustified harms they inflict on others, by the name "corporate feudal overlords".

They are not "billionaires" or "the top 1%" - because there are many billionaires and many people in the top 1% who are not trying to establish themselves as corporate feudal overlords. Many of them are, but in this rebellion we are not going to lump the innocent in with the guilty and treat all as "them" who are the common enemies of "us" - deserving of our hatred and condemnation.

To be guilty in this respect one has to have substantial economic holdings, but then he or she must also seek to use their political and economic power in ways harmful to others – seeking political exemptions from the prohibitions against harming the life, liberty, and property of others the way that a plantation owner or feudal lord could ignore the life, liberty, and property of their slaves and serfs.

It is a name that identifies wrongdoers by their wrongdoing, and not by some accidental characteristic that innocent people may also share.

C. *Honesty and Intellectual Responsibility*

1. *The Liar as Parasite*

A liar is a kind of parasite.

Consider, if you will, the fungus *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*. This fungus effects the brain of the ant. Under the influence of the fungus, the ant will begin to climb. At some point, the ant will then bite down on whatever it can and will hold itself there as the fungus kills the ant. The fungus will then grow and release its spores. Those spores will rain down and infect any other ants that happen to be below it.

Liars do substantially the same thing.

The goal of the liar is to infect the brain of its victim with a false belief. Under the influence of this viral belief, the liar's victim will then choose to do something that, we may assume, she

would not have done if she had known the truth. In other words, the liar's victim acts in a way that does not serve his or her own interest but, instead, serves the interest of the liar.

Understood this way, a liar is anybody who, through a communicative act, attempts to infect another person with a false belief that will have the victim believing that she is advancing her own interests when, in fact, she is advancing the interests of the parasite that has infected her.

The term applies to tobacco company executives who sought to create false beliefs about the relationship between smoking and cancer and between smoking and addiction. He is causing the victim to act on the idea that she is obtaining a healthy pleasure when, in fact, she is sacrificing her life for the financial benefit of the tobacco company executive. The smoker is like the virus-infected ant.

It is not a sufficient defense to argue that the victim could have sought out the relevant information. The morality of the action is determined by looking at what the liar sought to do. The thief who finds an unlocked door cannot claim that his act is not theft because the owner could have locked the door. The liar is not a liar because the victim could have discovered that the person was lying. The liar is a liar in virtue of the fact of attempting to infect the victim with a false belief. Consider the person who has an affair. He lies about where he was last night. The fact that his spouse can make some phone calls and discover that he was lying does not allow him to claim that, therefore, he did not lie. Such a move is nonsense.

Liars are parasites who seek to infect the brains of their victims to alter their behavior in ways that benefit the liar, the way the zombie fungus infects the brains of the ant to get the ant to behave in ways that benefit the fungus.

The issue of climate change is filled to the brim with liars.

They will make a set of factual claims and claim that these give us good reason to reject the proposition that human greenhouse gas emissions will harm people in the future – that it is killing people today. There are a great many people today who would not intentionally perform actions that will kill other people and destroy their property – that would rather give up the activity than kill other people.

However, the climate change liar seeks to infect the victim with a false belief that they can engage in activity that releases greenhouse gasses without killing other people and destroying their property. Thus, the victims infected with these mental parasites engage in these acts, release greenhouse gasses, kill other people and destroy their property, and feed cash into the bank accounts of the parasites that infected them with these false beliefs.

In some cases, we can say that a person did not lie, even though he infected others with a false belief (that benefits the one who did so) because he believed what he said. A person who says what he believes is not a liar.

2. *Intellectual Recklessness*

Closely related to the moral crime of lying is that of epistemic negligence – adopting a belief based on poor evidence.

We see one example in epistemic negligence in the global warming denier who claims that scientists in the 1970s believed that we were entering a new ice age and point to news articles from the 1970s supporting this claim. However, (a) news magazines are not peer-reviewed scientific articles and are known to tend towards sensationalism, and (b) if the fact that scientists once believed something that they do not believe today is enough to discredit a theory then there is no such thing as a credible theory in science. If this argument was sound, we would reject the bacteria theory of certain diseases because scientists once blamed illness on an imbalance in the “humors”. We would reject atomic theory because scientists once believed that atoms had no parts. We would reject the claims of astronomy since scientists once believed that everything in space orbited the earth.

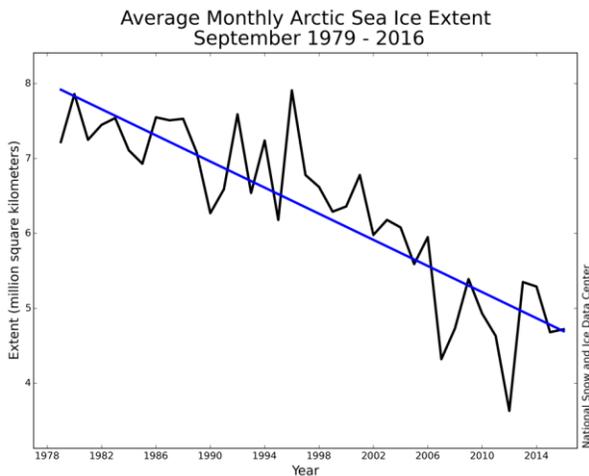
It is the very essence of science that it is continuing to find new evidence and using it to correct its beliefs. As such, scientists constantly improve their ability to explain and predict what is happening. There is no field of human understanding that does a better job of predicting the future. If scientists are predicting that human greenhouse gas emissions will cause problems in the future, and some non-scientist claims that they are wrong, the wise gambler would bet on the scientist.

This, then, is a poor reason to believe that human greenhouse emissions are not dangerous. Even if a person does deny global warming based on this type of evidence, he is being epistemically reckless, and that itself is a moral crime as bad as lying.

By analogy, consider the moral character of the drunk driver. The drunk driver does not want to slaughter a family that is driving to the family reunion. He is not seeking to cause destruction. But he does exhibit a lack of concern over the destruction he might bring about anyway. He is reckless. Yet, recklessness is a moral crime. We have good reason to condemn – even to punish – the reckless person who slaughters an innocent family while trying to get home. We have good reason to demand that people be careful when they are doing things that can harm other people (e.g., us) – and to condemn and even to punish those who are not careful.

The person who recklessly spreads a falsehood is, in many ways, much worse than the drunk driver. It is unlikely that the drunk driver will slaughter more than one family or a small group of people. People who are reckless with beliefs about public policy, on the other hand, have the capacity to slaughter thousands – even millions – of people. They can destroy whole cities or whole communities. In fact, they could end all life on earth. The moral outrage that we have for the drunk driver who puts an innocent family at risk of slaughter, we should have many times over for those who are intellectually reckless when it comes to political matters.

In another example where we find people who deserve far more condemnation than that which we give to the drunk driver is found in people who used the fact that the Arctic sea ice extent in 2013 was 60% larger than the arctic sea ice in 2012 to cast doubt on global warming. Regardless of what one believes about global warming itself, the claim that this change from 2013 over 2012 discredits global warming is, itself, reckless at best, and, in some cases, a part of a campaign of deliberate deception. Unless the person making it is a grade school dropout, that person can readily see that the argument is invalid.



A graph from the National Snow and Ice Data Center⁴ shows the extent of Arctic sea ice in September from 1979 to 2016. In it, one can see the significant increase in 2013 compared to 2012. However, it also shows clearly that this fact does not, in fact, prove that there is no overall downward trend in the size of the arctic ice sheet. Yet, social media is still filled with people using this fact to plant a false belief in others – to plan epistemic zombie lice – about the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. These are liars. These are people intentionally sewing epistemic zombie

lice in the brains of others to cause them to do things that they would not otherwise do if they knew the truth.

Another example involves an internet meme that I encountered that aims to promote hostility towards globalization by arguing that American workers are poorer now than they were in 1970 to “today” (without an indication of what “today” is) to raise objections to globalization.



An examination inflation-adjusted average hourly earnings⁵ shows that the early 1970s was a relative maximum – a time when wage rates were unusually high. This is a standard tactic that liars use – they compare things to a relative maximum, pretending that the relative maximum is an average or norm. It is substantially the same trick used in the previous example to try to discredit global warming. It is also significant to note that all

the reduction since the 1970s took place in or before 1995, and since 1995 inflation-adjusted hourly wages has been on the rise. Yet, the liar does not tell us this – the liar tries to get us to

⁴ <http://nsidc.org/arcticseaicenews/2016/10/rapid-ice-growth-follows-the-seasonal-minimum-rapid-drop-in-antarctic-extent/>

⁵ <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2015/04/17/by-one-measure-wages-for-most-u-s-workers-peaked-in-1972/>

believe that the causes of this reduction are recent, to manipulate people into attacking policies they may not attack if they were accurately informed.

President Donald Trump is particularly effective at planting this type of zombie fungus in the brains of others so that he can cause them to behave in ways that benefit him.

A report from Public Policy Polling⁶ revealed that “40% of Trump voters insist that he won the national popular vote.” He did not. This is “zombie fungus” planted in the brains of Trump supporters to cause them to deny the fact that far more voters preferred to have had Clinton be the next President. Trump wants to pretend – wants his supporters to believe – that he has more support than he actually has.

Trump once said, “Nobody knows if climate change is real.”⁷ This is false – we do know that it is real. Any other belief supported by half as much quality evidence would certainly count as knowledge. However, even if we accept Trump's claim, it leads at best to a charge of wonton disregard for life.

Imagine somebody picking up a gun, saying “nobody knows if this gun is loaded”, pointing it at your child's head, and pulling the trigger. To perform such an act is to commit the moral crime of reckless endangerment. Typically, we recognize such a person to be a threat to the lives and well-being of innocent people and demand that they be arrested and imprisoned before they kill somebody.

In this rebellion, liars and the intellectually reckless are to be condemned. Liars are to be treated as parasites who seek to infect the minds of others to get them to act in ways that unwittingly promote the interests of the liar. The intellectually reckless – the people who simply and blindly pass along false or unfounded claims as if they are fact while making no attempt to check out its validity – should be thought of as much like the bus driver who recklessly endangers the lives of others on the same road.

D. Trade

On the subject of a wonton disregard for the well-being of others, on the subject of trade, I hear a lot of talk that I can only interpret as saying that it is morally better to raise one worker's daily wage from \$80 to \$90 than to raise the wages of 100 workers from \$2 per day to \$10 per day. These arguments come from people in developed countries who protest “exporting jobs” to countries where workers make significantly less.

People who make this argument assert that “exporting jobs” is the reason why workers in developing countries are still making about as much as they were making 20 years ago. Instead

⁶ http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/2015/PPP_Release_National_120916.pdf

⁷ Washington Post, “Trump says ‘nobody really knows’ if climate change is real”, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2016/12/11/trump-says-nobody-really-knows-if-climate-change-is-real/?utm_term=.aa455a494b99, retrieved 01/18/2017.

of having their wages go up, what we have had instead is a situation where the number of people in the world living in extreme poverty has gone from 1.85 billion people out of a global population of 5.2 billion in 1990, to 750 million out of 7.5 billion today.⁸

Some argue that this reduction in global poverty is a travesty of justice. To restore justice, we must take the jobs away from the global poor and give them to the global upper middle class, raising the salaries of those already making nearly \$100 per day.⁹

We must – or so the argument seems to go – restore the world to a state where over a third of the population lives on the far side of starvation with no clean water or basic medical care, so that middle class workers in developing countries can get a pay raise.

There are two problems with this position.

The first, of course, is its basic moral absurdity. We should be seeing the reduction in global suffering represented by the statistics mentioned above as the greatest accomplishment of the past 30 years. It is the furthest thing possible from an economic and moral injustice that must be stopped.

The second is that it is a mistake for the workers in developing countries to see the global poor as an enemy to be subdued rather than a potential ally against those who are perpetuate economic and moral injustice.

Trade does not impoverish people. Trade creates wealth. If you want to be better off, you need to find people that you can trade with and – for all practical purposes – “export” some of one’s work onto others.

Consider this:

If it a good idea to build a wall around the United States and to become economically self-sufficient – to build everything within the United States and keep all the jobs here and trade with nobody, then the following should also be a good idea:

We should build a wall around each state and prohibit any state from trading with any other state – and prevent people from crossing borders to find work in other states. Let each state manufacture its own cars, air conditioners, medical equipment, movies, iPhones, doctors, engineers, internet search engines, computers, food, clothing, and furniture. Each state would have a great many of jobs that need doing – more than enough to keep everybody in the state busy. And that would bring prosperity . . . right?

But, then, if that is such a good idea – we can create even more prosperity if we put a wall around each county within a state. Let each county do all its manufacturing locally – every car, airplane, piece of office furniture, every bushel of wheat – all produced in one’s local community. This will increase the wealth of each county even further – giving its people a great many jobs.

⁸ World Bank, “Poverty Overview”, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>, Retrieved 01/18/2017.

⁹ Social Security, “Average National Wage Index,” <https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/AWI.html>, Retrieved 01/18/2017.

Indeed, if restricting trade is such a boon to prosperity – if that is the road to wealth and luxury – we should require each household. Let each family be responsible for manufacturing each and every thing it uses – its food and clothing, its kitchen utensils, its stoves and ovens, its medical equipment, its home, its furniture, and everything they need to survive. We can rest assured that everybody in the family will have a lot of work to do and this . . . according to the argument under consideration . . . will make them wealthy beyond their wildest dreams.

Obviously, this is absurd – but this absurdity shows the absurdity behind the claim that we need to prevent trade to create prosperity.

Preventing trade creates poverty.

A family in the situation where they are manufacturing everything themselves is made wealthier, not poorer, when they open trade with other families. The family “exports” the job of growing its own food and making its own clothes onto other families. They “lose” jobs – they “lose” the need to do the work in creating their own food and clothing. However, this frees them up to do other things – things they value doing more.

The family “exports” to other families the construction of their home and the furniture that goes into the home. They “export” to other families the task of learning medicine and taking care of those who are sick or injured. They “export” to other families the task of manufacturing an automobile and the task of manufacturing the gasoline that goes into the vehicle. Every time a family spends money they are, effectively, “exporting” work to other families.

More importantly, the only way that a family can make money is by accepting work that other families are exporting. If you draw a salary, then there is a group of people who are “exporting” work. To condemn the exportation of work is to condemn the very practice of creating jobs – because the creation of a job is the creation of a relationship in which work is “exported” to others who agree to do the work for a wage.

Another way of looking at the same facts is to ask where you think you would be better off – teleported to a world where everybody lives in squalor, or teleported into a world where everybody has lives well? If you were to show up in a world of squalor, you would be on your own – with no way to get the things you need but to manufacture it yourself. However, if you were to show up in a world of plenty, you show up in a world in which people have the means to buy things from you. This gives you the opportunity to trade and, by engaging in trade, to get the things you want much more efficiently than by manufacturing it yourself.

This does not deny that economic injustices are taking place. This does not deny that there is a set of families who are promoting a set of institutions and practices that give them increasing ownership of the world and a legal permission to treat most of us as serfs – who are taken care of only as far as we are useful and discarded if we are not. But the enemy, in this case, are not those who must choose between living in squalor or living off a low wage. The enemy are the members of these families who are using their wealth and power to secure an ever-increasing ownership of the world such that the rest of us must choose between being corporate serfdom or starvation.

While people in the global 75% to 90% have undergone a sacrifice – at least in terms of foregone increases in their wealth, the people in the top 10% are gaining ownership of more of the world – establishing increasingly larger corporate-feudal estates handed down from generation to generation like the feudal estates of the middle ages.

These corporate-feudal masters have reason to be pleased that their would-be serfs and servants are fighting amongst each other – seeing each other as enemies and putting their political efforts into harming each other. As long as we fight each other, the corporate-feudal lords can focus on further expanding their corporate-feudal estates free from interference. In fact, they have reason to encourage us to see each other as enemies – using their public-relations budgets and resources to fuel the idea that the global poor are the enemies of the middle class. Just as they have reason to promote the idea, we have reason to resist it.

The fact that the global poor are finding jobs and can afford food and basic medical care is not an economic calamity that must be stopped. The calamity is found in the fact that the burden has fallen on those in the 75% to 90% range, while certain members of the top 10% have used this to build larger and larger corporate-feudal estates. It is in the fact that they have used their economic and political power to promote a political system whereby corporate-feudal lords can ignore moral prohibitions on harming the life, health, liberty, and property of others in building their estates. It is found in the fact that, to build their estates, they use their power to manipulate the government to pull wealth from the poor and middle class and concentrate that wealth in their own accounts.

IV. Procedures

I have argued for a political revolution.

This is a revolution to take economic and political power away from corporate-feudal masters who are using it to build corporate-feudal estates where they serve as nobility and the rest of us are either their serfs or are discarded.

They are creating an economic system where they own nearly everything that exists and the rest of us must pay them just to exist. We must serve their interests just to have access to food, shelter, medical care, and the necessities of life. Those who do not or cannot serve their interests are to be disposed of.

They are creating a system where corporate-feudal masters have a political liberty to harm the life, health, and property of others without consent or compensation, but where others are punished extremely harshly for doing far less harm to far fewer people.

They are creating a system where they use the power of the government to suck the wealth out of the accounts of their servants in small amounts and concentrate that confiscated wealth in a few accounts – those that they own.

If we are going to rebel against these abuses and usurpations, how are we going to do it?

A. The Basic Strategy

If there is no way to protect oneself from abuses of political and economic power except through violence, then a violent rebellion may be necessary.

However, some of us live in a state where democratic principles make it possible to have a non-violent revolution. This is not true of everybody, but it is true of some.

However, even in a democratic system, corporate-feudal masters can manipulate the systems and cultural norms in such a way as to render voters substantially impotent – unable to threaten their noble sovereignty. We find some of these norms in our current system.

The first step in this system would be to overthrow those norms.

B. Political Parties

An important set of cultural norms are those that are centered around political parties.

The party system is an extremely effective way to keep a substantial percentage of the population politically impotent. Dump them into a political party that has no influence in a district, and they will stay there complaining about the state of things, yet at the same time making choices that leave them entirely incapable of bringing about any change. Better yet, they are given an illusion of participation – an illusion that they are doing something – when, in fact, they are not.

The norms that make a substantial percentage of the population politically impotent involves a tribal loyalty to a minority party. – a political party that has practically no chance of winning an election in that district. This not only applies to those who support third parties. It also applies to those in a second party in a “safe” political district belonging to a different party. Both groups of people make themselves politically impotent – incapable of bringing about change – as they complain about the state of things and insist that they need changing.

The problem that one needs to overcome is that of party loyalty. The problem comes from taking, for example, 35% of a district that will be won by the 65% who support a different party and making it the case that one will have no voice in deciding who will be elected. Imagine that 35% from the minority joining the winning party and, in alliance with 20% of that winning party putting on the ballot a candidate that, though still representing that winning party, also more closely represents the views of all voters rather than just 65%.

Note that when a candidate needs to only win the majority of 65% of the population – and only a majority of that percentage that decides to get involved – the candidate can win by appealing to a very small portion of the overall population.

Consequently, by making oneself and like-minded individuals politically impotent, one makes it easier for extreme factions to control the other party and win representation. The extreme faction only needs to overcome 65% of the voters and, among them, only that percentage that gets involved in the primary. When members of the minority party join, they can stop the extremists by putting their weight behind more moderate and rational candidates capable of seeing that “the other side” has some good ideas.

Consider how much better off the country would be today if – in areas deemed “safely” Republican, those who consider themselves Democrats and Independents had joined the Republican primary to keep radical Tea Party candidates off the ballot and, instead, supported Republican candidates who were less dogmatic and open-minded. Instead of suffering through eight years of insanely polarized government, we would have benefitted from 8 years of at least more rational and responsible government.

What one should do is cast off those social norms, get together with others having the same interests in changing things and the same values, and join whatever political entity that has the de facto power to select candidates in that area, regardless of party.

For example, if you live in a safe ‘Republican’ district, you should join the Republican Party and resolve to be actively involved in working to help that party nominate the best overall candidate possible. If one lives in a ‘safe’ Democratic district, one should be working in the Democratic Party to get it to nominate the best candidate possible. Whatever your personal political views are, you should make yourself a member of that group that is, in fact, selecting the political representatives for that district and, there, you can have a voice in which leaders are selected.

This is certainly the strategy that the corporate-feudal masters adopt. They look at the people who have the actual ability to select the winning candidate within any district for any given election, and direct their money and their resources to that point. If it is a safe Republican district, then they look for the Republican candidate that supports the interests of that corporate-feudal estate. If it is a safe Democratic district, then they look for the Democratic candidate that would be best for their corporate-feudal estate. If any third party had a real chance of winning an election, then they will look around for a candidate within that party that would best support the interests of that corporate-feudal estate.

The only thing really getting in the way of implementing such a plan a sentiment. A person, living in a district that is considered “safe” for a party whose general views she does not share, “feels” that it would be wrong to register as a member of that party and become active in that party.

This is a sentiment that we have no reason to promote. In fact, given the amount of harm that this sentiment creates, it is a sentiment that we have reason to discourage and even to condemn. It is a sentiment that renders a portion of the population politically impotent, promotes candidates that represent only a portion of the population, and creates a system that allows extremists to contaminate the political process more easily. We can continue to promote and live by this sentiment and live with the problems that it generates, or we can work to eliminate it and replace it with a more useful sentiment.

The better sentiment states that, as a member of a democratic society, one has a right to active participation in whatever body will, in fact, be selecting the next representative for one’s district, and ensure that those picking the actual representative pick the best candidate possible. One has no moral obligation to sit in the sidelines and make impotent and easily ignored gestures.

Those people who have exploited this sentiment to render their political opponents politically impotent have every reason to protest. But they have no right to protest. Their reasons to want you to behave foolishly is not a reason for you to behave foolishly.

Let me repeat: The basic strategy is this: (1) Get together with fellow revolutionaries, (2) discover who will actually be choosing the candidate that will become the next representative of the political district you are concerned about, (3) join that group, and (4) work towards selecting the best candidate.

One of the side effects of this plan that some may complain about is that it will harm what it means to be a “Democrat” or a “Republican”. If “Democrats” are joining the Republican party in safe Republican districts to help select a more representative Republican candidate and defeat extremist Republicans, then one will not be able to infer a person’s political views from their party affiliation.

Why is this a bad thing?

This will, indeed, be one of the implications of this strategy. However, I do not see it as something we have any reason to avoid. In fact, I see these potential effects as another argument in favor of implementing this strategy. The two-party system does us very little good and is hardly an institution that we have any reason to support and preserve. Harming the two-party system in this way – by having all politically active and interested people joining the same party that will be selecting the ultimate winner of the elections in that district – should be taken as harming something that is, itself, anti-democratic and a source of destructive tribal conflicts.

C. Third Parties

With every election held in the United States – and particularly with Presidential elections – there is a “discussion” about whether to abandon the two traditional big parties and to support a third party instead. Both major parties are equally corrupt. They are both in the pocket of the corporate-feudal masters who are using them to increase their ownership of the world and to increase the degree that the rest have no choice but to be servants in one of the corporate-feudal estates. The answer, we are told, is to support a third party that the corporate-feudal lords do not own.

This is a mistake.

It is, effectively, giving more absolute authority to the corporate-feudal masters.

If I were a corporate-feudal master myself, or if I were running a public relations outfit that seeks to make money by serving the interests of corporate-feudal masters, I would propose filling social media with arguments that would entice people to join impotent parties. This would leave the corporate-feudal masters with an even tighter control of those parties that actually select political representatives. This is what I, the corporate-feudal master, would be aiming for.

The only way in which the third party can have any actual influence on policy and legislation is to collect enough support to outvote its leading competitors. Listening to the words of those who support third parties, their argument seems to be that, “Once people hear about our

movement and see the wisdom of our ways, they will see how great and wonderful we are and flock to our banner and that is how we will win the elections.”

To the degree that this is what the supporters of a third party are thinking, to that degree they have lost touch with reality. A simple observation of the real world will reveal a population of widely different opinions. That “they all will see our great wisdom and come flocking to our banner” will only happen in a piece of badly written fiction.

If this third party remains ideologically pure, it will remain a mere fragment of the voting population, and a politically impotent fragment because it has thrown away its ability to be the deciding set of votes in selecting a viable candidate.

If, instead, it reaches out to others who do not fully agree with their view and attempts to pull them into an alliance, then it must compromise its ideology. It must give up the purity of its platform and contaminate it with positions it rejected in its pure form. It must, in other words, become one of the lesser evils its members complained against. Given these options, it is irrational to quit such an alliance and form an impotent third party that merely grants greater political control to those other factions.

Some speak as if there is some sort of moral prohibition against supporting a candidate who does not share one’s views – or a moral obligation to support a candidate that most represents one’s views, regardless of the candidate’s chances of winning.

At a basic level, this is nonsense.

The only potential candidate which shares all of one’s views is oneself. If you vote for anybody other than yourself, you are opting to select a candidate with whom you disagree on some issues. If morality requires selecting the candidate that best represents one’s views, then morality would require that each person write in their own name. Otherwise, in the real and practical world, “voting for a candidate who, to some degree, does not share my views” is not an intrinsic evil – it is a necessary fact.

The moral obligation is not to vote for the candidate who best represents one’s views. It is to use one’s vote to do the most good in the world. That requires taking into consideration who can win and, of them, which should be given political power.

D. Specifics

If I have managed to convince you to join whatever party will select the next candidate for whatever office you are concerned with – and to work within the party primary to help the party select the best candidate – the next question is, “What do I do when I get there?”

What you need to do is to form an alliance among the best of those who have the power to select the next candidate to overpower the worst of those trying to select the next candidate. This means working with people who you do not fully agree with – people who are going to insist on policies you do not think would be the best policies to adopt – but who you trust are at least willing to listen to reason and are not demanding things that are highly destructive or unjust. You will need to find the best candidate that a suitably large percentage of the best people will support and devote your efforts into getting that candidate selected.

Consider an example where 40% of the population that has rendered itself politically impotent by loyalty to a minor party that has no chance of winning decides, instead, to join the major party and help to select that party's candidate. They will then need to pull about 20% of the major party's members into an alliance to select the next candidate. Note that this is far better than having the winning candidate appeal only to a majority of the remaining 60 percent – where the 40% have rendered themselves impotent.

This is an idealized case that I am using for illustrative purposes. On a more practical level, your objective would be to collect as many people as possible, join the party that will, in fact, be selecting the next representative in your region, and trying to promote the better candidate within that party, one that represents a larger portion of the population.

Political involvement takes a great deal of time and resources. Not everybody can afford to get involved in this way, and not everybody should get involved in this way. There are good reasons to be a party loyalist. One does not have time to sort through the candidates and discover their views on everything, so one selects what one judges to be a reasonably reliable proxy to tell them who to vote for.

Revolutionaries can use this same tactic. It may only be a handful of people who actually enter the political process and become involved. However, their power rests in the number of people they can get to select them to tell them who to vote for. There may be five people joining the local county's political party, but they can have 250 people who also register for the party who tell these five, "Simply tell us who to vote for and that is who I will vote for." These five enter the candidate selection process with 255 votes.

The question they need to answer is, "Where do we put those 255 votes so that they do the most good?"

V. Conclusion

A category that is missing from this presentation is the category of "policies".

However, I hold that policy suggestions should come from experts, not amateurs who know little more about an issue than that which can be gathered from a few internet memes, videos, and partisan articles.

It is a foolish and arrogant voter who looks for a candidate who agrees with all of his ill-formed, ignorant opinion on issues he has not had the time to study. A wise voter judges a candidate on her ability to identify experts on the field, listen to their advice, and draw the best conclusions from the available evidence. Those conclusions might not agree with my poorly informed opinion or those of my political clique, but that does not matter. In the same way that I trust the diagnosis of a trained physician to that of my mother on matters of health, I trust the decisions of trained experts in a field or that of my Facebook friends when it comes to matters of policy.

I would only be comfortable offering advice on issues that I have had an opportunity to study in sufficient detail to claim that I understand the issue. One topic that I understand is that of global climate change – so if we wanted to discuss a policy on that, I believe I could offer some

input. However, I am not sufficiently well informed to offer advice on a large number of issues including public education, drug laws, gun laws, criminal justice reform, health care reform, guaranteed public income, the best strategy to use against ISIS, how to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, or the future of social security.

Having said that, a person does not need to be an expert on a subject (other than logic) to know that a bad argument is a bad argument or a false premise is a false premise. It does not require a PhD in climate science to note that an increase in the mass of arctic ice the year after a record low does not disprove the thesis that the arctic ice sheet is shrinking. It also does not take a PhD in climate scientist to know that the claim that those who have a PhD in climate science do not know that human activity is warming the earth is false (any more than it requires an MD degree to know that the doctor knows that a person has diabetes).

Consequently, a person does not need to have such expertise to be able to point out that an argument is invalid or a statement is false. One can still contribute to discussions out of their field in this way. One simply needs to keep in mind that, "I am not criticizing you because of the conclusion that you defend – which I am not qualified to judge. I am criticizing you for your epistemic negligence in using a clearly false premise or invalid argument. It does not matter whether the conclusion you believe is true or false. Your premise is false, or your argument is invalid, and you are using this false premise or invalid argument to manipulate the beliefs of others. If you have good arguments, I suggest that you stick to those."

I also think that I am competent enough in the field to make comments on fundamental moral philosophical justification of certain claims. The claims that are used to defend a set of policies granting a few families ownership of all that exists, making some of us their servants and discarding the rest, are flawed. Things get their value from their ability to serve interests. Interests get their value from their ability to serve other interests. Morality evaluates rules and policies on their ability to serve good interests. The selfish interests of those few families trying to own everything that exists and turning the rest of us into their slaves are not good interests.

This method of evaluation tells us the value of a principle of non-violence where peaceful methods for bringing about change exist, the value of honesty, the value of two types of regulations (those that transfer wealth from the poor and middle class to the rich and those that grant the rich political permission to kill, maim, or otherwise harm other people or their property with impunity), and the value of trade.

Furthermore, the way to bring about change is to the group that will be selecting the actual winner of the next election, join that group, and ensure that they pick the best candidate. It is foolish to allow destructive social norms to interfere with such a plan.

I used is H.R. 2262 - U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act – as an example. One can easily see this as a trivial bill that is of little significance. However, that is how the process works. By advancing laws and amendments, pushing for regulatory clarifications and interpretations that the rest of the world cannot be bothered with but which benefits them greatly, the corporate-feudal lords establish a system where they own nearly everything and, in a sense, everybody – since those who own everything has the power to give whatever dictates

pleases them to those who need food, shelter, and medical care that one can get only at their discretion.

It is time to consider a different system.