

A LIBERTARIAN DICTIONARY
Explaining a Philosophical Theory

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“...it is my ambition to say in ten sentences what others say in a book
—what everyone else does *not* say in a book.”

Friedrich Nietzsche
Twilight of the Idols, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man”, 51

Short preface: read this first to avoid confusion

Libertarianism is the social ideology that holds that interpersonal liberty should be universally observed. In particular, anarchy or at least minarchy should replace large states: the foremost violators of liberty. This is a dictionary of libertarian theory and argument. Like other subject dictionaries, it is not a dictionary of definitions; in fact, it is a popular misconception that even normal word dictionaries define words in any essential or stipulative way (they merely record usage). In this subject dictionary, the listed word, phrase, or expression is sometimes simply assumed to be adequately understood so that discussion of any relevant libertarian issues can immediately begin. However, there is sometimes clarification of the sense in which a word is being discussed, especially if there are various senses of the word that are best distinguished and maybe not all are relevant, or if there is some common confusion or ignorance about a word. There is even mention of etymology where this seems relevant or simply interesting.

Despite its title, this is a sort of dictionary of politics; or, rather, anti-politics. But it does not attempt to give all the basic background information for each entry. Standard dictionaries and encyclopaedias of politics already fulfil that role. Nor does this work attempt to give equal weight to all libertarian anti-statist views. It is, as the subtitle indicates, more of a particular philosophical theory of libertarianism in an alphabetical format for the purpose of ensuring relative comprehensiveness and ease of reference. Therefore, entries have been chosen insofar as they help to comprise such a theory. And even the entries chosen often involve glossing over or ignoring many precise distinctions, arguments, or issues in order to present relevant parts of the theoretical paradigm in a concise enough form. Doubtless this will fail to satisfy those readers for whom some such distinctions, arguments, or issues are perceived as being the vital ones. But that cannot be helped. The intended readership is anyone with an interest in social and political matters. Specialist knowledge is not presupposed; however, in order to reduce repetition throughout, the reader might sometimes need to pursue the cross references for elucidation or amplification. That said, some ideas are repeated in various entries just because they are important and might otherwise be missed, given that a dictionary is rarely read from one end to the other.

The collective entries include an explanation of libertarian anarchy: the theory that all state activity is an unnecessary evil; the greatest moral evil and source of destruction that blights human life. Libertarian property rights are preferable in every area of life: giving everyone more liberty and better outcomes as well. Many questions and objections might immediately spring to mind for those people who take politics for granted: enquire within. Entries combining such collective breadth and individual brevity are hardly intended to be the last word on any of the matters discussed. Some of them might, however, be sufficient to stimulate further thought and study. One cannot always live up to Nietzsche's ambition—as quoted on the title page—but it appears to be a useful aim in this context. Many of these things need to be said, and it would be impracticable to write a book or even a scholarly article on each one. It is not necessary to agree with everything in order to agree with anything. There will be many ideas that non-libertarians will accept and many that libertarians will reject. The whole thing has been written and revised over many years. Omissions, inconsistencies, and errors undoubtedly remain. It is an unfinishable project in the sense that it is not possible to achieve even a temporary reflective equilibrium over such a large and diverse area (or often even over particular entries, many of which are both highly idiosyncratic and tentative). But it is necessary to stop at some point.

Entries on people have been avoided, as these are not needed for the anarcho-libertarian theory and for reasons of space. There are a handful of notable military conflicts where some account of a libertarian approach to these events seems necessary to complete the outline of the general theory. It is not practical to include external references for all of the entries, but there are occasional ones. To facilitate the flow of the text, cross references are marked by small superscript asterisks immediately before relevant words, expressions, and phrases plus obvious variants of these words, including those with negating prefixes (rather than a prolix, pedantic, and parenthetical repetition of them exactly as they appear in entry titles). Mostly these asterisks only appear in each entry on the first example, but they are sometimes repeated in longer entries.

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A

abortion and infanticide Abortion and infanticide are in themselves *libertarian for two independent reasons, as well as being *utilitarian.

1) The unborn human being is not a *person in the intellectual-attainment sense—because not yet capable of *critical-theorising—that is necessary to give normal human beings their higher *moral value. It is a potential person, but then so are any sperm and ovum that could in principle be conjoined; or even any food that could eventually be converted into a person. If it is not inherently immoral to kill a non-person, as non-human *animals are, then it is not inherently immoral to kill an unborn human. Neither is it inherently immoral to kill an infant not yet a person, although there might be bad social side-effects of one kind or another (such as greatly upsetting some people who might also resort to violence). It is probably best to draw a line for infanticide erring on the side of non-personhood; maybe sometime in the first year or so after birth and always well before adequate speech, or other phenomena, indicates personhood. The agreement of any parents or guardians would usually be necessary and sufficient, as they have *property *rights in the non-person.

A *reductio-ad-absurdum* criticism might be that by this standard an unconscious or comatose human is only a potential person, and so morally on a par with an unborn human as regards killing him. However, as long as consciousness can be recovered, it seems more cogent to see this as an existing person whose consciousness is temporarily interrupted, and so full rights remain.

2) Even if an unborn human were a person in the intellectual sense, it would not be infringing his *liberty, or rights, to withdraw the non-contractual support of the womb so that he dies. This is to discontinue giving a gift. A criticism might be that, at least if it is a person, there is a (quasi-)*contract between the mother and the unborn human to bring him to term. However, there is no kind of offer or acceptance of that offer (or any *quid pro quo*), which contracts require. There is only support started and then stopped (*see* *act-omission doctrine). It does add to the confusion that abortions often take the form of destroying the unborn human *in utero* rather than removing it intact, but both methods are in effect only discontinuing support. And to cease to support an infant so that he dies—without suffering, at least—is a similar situation. (But *see* *age of consent; *circumcision, infibulation, etc. of children.)

As for utility, or human *welfare, initiating *coercion on women to continue to support or give away unwanted unborns or infants cannot plausibly increase overall welfare; either for women or offspring generally. Consenting women and wanted offspring are typically better off than unconsenting women and unwanted offspring; even if other people are willing to offer support to both latter groups.

Consider a related matter. A man who has had consensual sexual relations with a woman does not thereby gain any libertarian rights or duties concerning any resulting unborn or infant human, or concerning the woman, merely because he is the biological father. Similarly, the woman gains no libertarian rights or duties concerning the man.

However, if some people don't like any of these intrinsic libertarian positions, then they can choose to enter contracts (such as marriage) or live in *private-property areas where matters are arranged as they prefer in legally binding ways.

academic freedom The general idea of this is that academics should not be limited in what they can teach, research, or publish with respect to their scholarly pursuits. This seems to be entirely defensible as regards any *state intervention into academia, which would not exist at all if *liberty were to be respected. However, the private *universities themselves might have some relevant and legitimate *contractual claims. For instance, a particular university may have some founding mission statement about its purposes (intellectual, undoubtedly, but quite possibly also moral, religious, etc.) that its academic employees have, presumably, bound themselves not to flout. A Catholic university should not have to tolerate anti-Catholic teaching and publications from one of its professors just because he has, say, decided to leave that *religion.

academics Most academics live off other people's taxes (instead of making, net, contributions to tax funds) within a state-imposed, monopoly-system of universities and degrees. Many of them would not be academics, and their academic posts would not even exist, without coercive interference by the state. Hence, they cannot be disinterested in matters of educational or political policy. It is hardly surprising that most of them have a strong bias towards state-control. They tend to exhibit politically-correct (PC) or even woke views to a far higher degree than can be found among most of the tax-paying population. This is particularly so in the humanities and social sciences, where academics are very often ideologues doing little more than pursuing their hobbies and political propaganda at the expense of tax-victims. With some PC or woke ideological academics, a consequence of their courses can be that their students graduate with less knowledge (in the sense of important true theories believed) than is available to common sense. The process of academic peer-review for publications within the very uniform, monopolised system promotes an intellectually unhealthy orthodoxy (or, at least, narrow window of acceptable discourse) that discourages bold conjecture and competition in every subject.

State academics are, by and large, not highly paid. Nevertheless, they are usually overpaid in terms of supply and demand and economic efficiency: for the lack of free-market allocation means that the wrong academics are being paid to teach the wrong subjects to the wrong students. With a free market, academia seems likely to shrink as people reject the plethora of dubious qualifications that the state has tax-subsidised. Should libertarians take academic jobs now anyway? Maybe; see hypocrisy.

action An agent is a conscious being capable of action. Broadly conceived, an action is any kind of behaviour—such as running, but also reading, or even merely thinking—that results from the will of some being; not necessarily a person. The movement or activity must be consciously, although not necessarily self-consciously, chosen (a twitch or autonomic movement does not count); but even the immediate consequences might be unintended or unforeseen. All animals with central nervous systems would appear to be agents to some degree. Agents that are persons are praiseworthy or blameworthy—and possibly liable for restitution—in proportion as their actions and their consequences were intended, or at least foreseeable by any normal person.

The following seem to be useful fictions, or at least verbal contractions, rather than literally true: 1) the consequences of one's movements can count as parts of one's action (we describe X's action as killing Y although X's only immediate action was, say, to place a bomb that exploded at some later time—possibly even after X's own death—thereby killing Y), and 2) collective entities or institutions such as corporations and states are treated as agents (because rights, liabilities, etc., cannot always be, and need not be, traceable to specific genuine agents within an organisation).

See economic man; freedom of the will; individualism; law; tort; weakness of will.

act-omission doctrine It is a matter of debate in moral philosophy, whether there is a real moral distinction between acting and failing to act when the outcome is the same. For instance, is there a moral difference between pushing someone into a river with the outcome that he drowns and failing to throw someone a lifebelt with the outcome that he drowns? The act-omission doctrine is simply that there is a significant moral difference. Consequentialism is often (but superficially) interpreted as rejecting the distinction; in which case failing to act is seen as just as immoral.

There is a logical problem with the thesis that failure to help other people is immoral rather than neutral, or innocent. This is because, conversely, failure to inflict harm on other people must then be positively moral rather than neutral. However, it is generally easier to harm people than to help them. Therefore, we fail to do more harm (e.g., pushing ten other people into the river) than we fail to help (e.g., saving the one drowning person). Consequently, we are both moral and immoral if we simply do nothing; but more moral than immoral. This paradox is avoided by allowing that there is moral neutrality, or innocence.

Libertarians are often sympathetic to this distinction, and can see it as always permissible not to act in the sense that one is merely not getting involved. However, physical action and inaction cannot seem to capture the central idea. One can, for instance, fail to act and thereby break a contract, which cannot in itself be libertarian. In whatever way the physical distinction is worded, it seems to fall foul of some such criticism. There is, nevertheless, a causal and moral distinction that is often detectable in many such examples: that between withholding a benefit and initiating an imposed cost (inflicting harm). Interpersonal liberty can even be theorised as the "absence of initiated imposed costs". This is a more abstract distinction than the physical act-omission one, though, and so more open to debatable interpretation.

addiction and dependence A first thing to note is that addictions and dependences are not illnesses (although it is fashionable to excuse them for being so): there is no disease of which they are the symptoms. If people have self-perceived problems with such things—e.g., involving recreational *drugs—then there are often a variety of methods for reducing or eliminating the problems, including *contracting into obligations and penalties. But many people who have addictions or dependences do not wish to change them. As long as they are not thereby *aggressing against other people or their *property, then they have a *libertarian *right to engage in any associated activities. However, it is equally libertarian for people to ban any type of related activities on their own *private property.

Do people who are strongly addicted lose *free will and thereby *moral responsibility? No: there are only extreme incentives and that does not remove free will. And most acquired addictions are a continuing choice in the sense that they could be stopped, at least eventually and possibly in stages, by not repeating the activities that give rise to them. Not to hold people liable for full *restitution for whatever theft or damage they do because of their addictions, is to excuse their behaviour at the expense of the people on whom they *initiate impositions. It also creates a *moral hazard. In any case, people are usually held liable when they only do accidental damage. So free-will and moral responsibility are not necessary for liability. *See* *akrasia.

adoption This is one of the many areas of private life interfered with by the *state in the name of *society; in this case supposedly in the interests of the *child first and foremost. Left to *natural law, adoption would be *legitimate as long as no universal *laws were broken, including those protecting children (*see* *circumcision, infibulation, etc., of children). Thus, we might expect somewhat more diversity among the various adoption agencies and their rules than occurs under *procrustean and, these days, often *politically-correct state-*legislation. At the same time, however, mainstream *morality with respect to what is thought right and proper concerning adoptions may well affect *profitability (to the extent that it is a business) and *charitable donations (to the extent that it is supported by gifts of *money and *labour). Therefore, it is likely that adoption practices would be under these constraints; although they might well vary with the moral and *religious policies or purposes of the particular agencies and their patrons. But within this constrained diversity there is bound to be real *competition that can only help to improve standards of practice, etc., in a way that is impossible under state rule and funding.

advertising This is mainly a process of attracting attention to a product that people might wish to purchase or use. Advertising is always informative, at least in the sense of informing potential customers of a product's, continuing, existence: it is not true that advertising is *only* about *competing for market share. Advertising is often also entertaining and occasionally even *educational. Advertisers do us a service by telling us how we might better prefer allocating our time and, usually, *money. Products that fail to give *utility are not likely to persist in the *market to be able to be advertised. No *fraudulent advertising is *libertarian.

What of some of the more-popular criticisms of advertising?

1) Can people be “brainwashed” by advertising? If “brainwashing” means that one has an idea implanted upon which one acts without self-conscious choice, then it is not clear that such a thing ever exists—let alone in advertising. Even subliminal advertisements are mere suggestions that cannot override *free will. In any case, if brainwashing were possible then such advertising would be fraudulent: because beyond even tacit *consent, and therefore actionable in *law.

2) Can advertising create “false *needs”? It can certainly stimulate specific product desires that would not otherwise exist. These cannot thereby become needs in any serious biological sense. Are they “false wants”, at least? These wants are fabricated or stimulated but that does not show that they are “false” in the sense that we would be better off without them. If we think that they might make us worse off (say, because we are trying to save money), then we can usually simply avoid or ignore advertisements. It is our choice.

3) Often it might appear to an observer that it is not *rational” (i.e., prudent) to choose some more-expensive, status-giving product when there is no great physical difference between it and some cheaper, less-advertised, generic substitute. This overlooks the fact that the image and status that is created around a product is part of what the buyer is purchasing. There is nothing inherently imprudent, or immoral, about that.

4) What of advertisements aimed at “exploiting” children? Children are not really a special case with this issue. They also benefit from learning what is available, and learning that they cannot have everything they want. If children were not to have access to advertising aimed at them, then they would probably still see the products in shops and hear about them from their friends.

All that being said, people will sometimes make foolish purchases of advertised items and undervalue unadvertised but well-known alternatives; such as all the free or cheap activities that they know they could be enjoying instead. But they have a libertarian right to do so, and any paternalistic attempt to prevent them by coercion or tax-financed propaganda—instead of, say, by charitable advertising—is likely to engender inefficiency and corruption that does damage far in excess of the personal errors that the paternalism is intended to correct. Consumers are freer and far safer when learning by choosing at their own expense out of what is advertised—or by observing others doing this—rather than having various special interest groups, however ostensibly moral their motives, coercively manipulate advertising.

affirmative action See reverse discrimination.

age of consent This expression is commonly used for the age at which a person has a lawful right to agree to “sexual relations”; usually defined broadly under current legislation. Libertarianism is normally, and rightly, interpreted as advocating full liberty only for *compos mentis* adults. Significantly brain-impaired people and children require paternalistic protection; both from other people and from themselves. An “age of consent” is one such protection for children. There can be no precisely correct age. A test of individual maturity might be less arbitrary, but more costly to administer and more risky.

See age of criminal responsibility; age of majority; children; circumcision, infibulation, etc., of children; consent.

age of criminal responsibility The age at which a person is fully liable for any crimes he commits. There seems no sound reason that this should differ significantly and without explanation from the age of majority or the age of consent; whatever they should be in any, possibly individual person’s, case. It appears a practical inconsistency and unjust to declare that someone is mature enough for libertarian adult responsibilities (such as paying full restitution for torts and crimes) but not mature enough for similar adult rights (i.e., rights not to suffer initiated impositions), and *vice versa*. To the extent that a child has not reached a sufficient age, or maturity, then any restitutorial liability would presumptively pass to any parents or guardians.

age of majority What should determine whether someone is mature enough for adult rights and responsibilities for, most, legal purposes? An approximate libertarian answer is a projected-maturity criterion: what is it likely that the, possibly untypical, person would agree was acceptable when he becomes clearly mature? This standard should rule out the rights and responsibilities that most adults would find unacceptable for themselves below a certain age. Details might vary, though, with individuals and different social customs. Difficult cases might sometimes require adjudication.

See age of criminal responsibility; circumcision, infibulation, etc. of children; consent.

agent See action.

aggression See non-aggression principle.

agriculture That agriculture is a special case of production is a popular idea, especially among farmers. Everyone needs food. From this true assumption false conclusions are then, invalidly, drawn: 1) all wealth is, therefore, somehow derivative of, or parasitic on, food-production; 2) a nation-state is dangerously vulnerable to other nation-states in the event of sanctions or war if it is not largely autarkic with respect to food; and so, 3) there ought to be tax subsidies for agriculture and controls on agricultural exports or imports.

1) The idea that food is *economically special is sometimes known as the “physiocratic fallacy” (satirically expressed as, “all wealth comes from turnips”). It is true that food is special as regards human *needs, but it does not follow that food has a special status as being “real” *wealth. Any product that meets a *demand is as real a contribution to wealth as any other, as far as its *consumers are concerned. And all products are consumed up to the point where the marginal benefit derived from each is equal. To use aggressive *coercion to reallocate production or *consumption from any one line to another would reduce real wealth: *utility.

*Economics has passed through several stages of mistakenly identifying “real” production or wealth in this way. After the physiocratic fallacy was the idea that there is an “economic base” to be found in manufacturing heavy, especially *capital, goods and that other goods are somehow less significant. All physical goods were then given priority over “mere” services. In reality, these products are all equally real sources of wealth. However, agriculture is an ever-declining proportion, because we cannot simply eat more in the same proportion as the economy grows—although some people make heroic attempts to do so. There is no reason that a *country (more accurately, a geographical region) would not be at its most productive by producing nothing but, say, plastic novelties, if that is where its *comparative advantage happens to be.

2) What of the *national defence point? It is, in fact, a relatively simple matter to increase food-production rapidly should it become necessary, as was observed during two *world wars; and imports from some other countries might still be possible. In any case, war against a nuclear power might not last long. More important, though, *free trade undermines the economic reasons for sanctions and war.

Thus, 3) the consequences of tax-subsidies for agriculture and controls on agricultural exports or imports are nothing but *waste and *corruption. The greater the state-intervention the worse this is and, because of the *political influence of vested interests, the harder it is to correct. The *Common Agricultural Policy of the *European Union produces egregious waste year after year.

aid, foreign *State transfers of *money and products, typically from *economically more-developed *countries to *less-developed countries. As P. T. Bauer (1915-2002) famously observed, “Aid is the process by which poor people in rich countries subsidise rich people in poor countries”. The money is *tax-*extorted; thereby doing some damage at home. It is sometimes used to send uneconomic products bought in the country of origin. The money and products often help, whether intentionally or not, to prop up a more-than-averagely-vicious *regime or to prolong a military conflict. A culture of *dependency is created with the rich *political beneficiaries having a sinister interest in keeping their *subjects in *need so that more aid will be forthcoming. An aid industry in the donor country may share this sinister interest.

The only practical, long-term solution to *national underdevelopment and emergencies is a *laissez-faire *economy and *free trade with the rest of the world. That these do partly exist is almost entirely the cause of vast economic improvements in the poorest countries in recent decades. Less-developed countries particularly need transnational corporations, but without any *privileges, to *exploit their cheap *labour and *resources. None of this is to deny the usefulness of some *charities, especially for absent essentials (such as clean water and sanitation; given the political unacceptability of businesses providing these things) and emergencies (such as *famines, floods, and plagues). Such absence of essentials and presence of emergencies are often exacerbated or even created by the aid-supported indigenous regimes, notably by their mismanagement of the *politicised *infrastructure.

One might reasonably suspect that foreign aid primarily exists to make thoughtless *politicians feel good about themselves at the expense of their subject populations, at whose expense they also live.

AIDS It is logically possible (a very low bar) that Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused exclusively by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) rather than, also, another unknown virus (if viruses even exist: see “terrain theory”) or, also, compromising the immune system with multiple sexual partners or certain *drugs. See, for instance, *Inventing the AIDS Virus* (2007) and other books by Peter Duesberg (1936-). *Tax-*extorted money has been pushed into investigating the HIV-theory to the virtual exclusion of all others. Even to suggest other theories has been, and is, *politically and *professionally risky. Solely *free market and *charitable research would have been both more *moral and more likely to *tolerate *competing theories of the exact nature of the problem. Also, a *politically-correct attitude towards male *homosexuality has resulted in *government *propaganda obfuscating the statistical risk factors by *country and by precise possible causes. The *state-advertised lie that “AIDS is everyone’s problem” has caused many young people in the Western world to understand that the state is, for most of them, crying “Wolf!”: they usually don’t know any heterosexuals or non-needle-sharers with AIDS. Such *politicised biasing of the research and obscuring of the *facts is far more likely to have done, and continue to do, more harm than good. For an analogous case see *BSE.

air Is the air on our planet completely unowned or, at most, *common property? If it is unowned or common property, is this not a serious exception to the possibility of full *private-property *anarchy? And is *state-protection of this invaluable resource not essential?

The air system (all the things required to produce it and maintain it) is not unowned. The human species has always used it for breathing without *initiating impositions on each other. It has thereby eventually become common property (although it was *libertarian to protect everyone’s use of it before the institution of *property evolved). But that does not mean that it is not privately owned. Extra-terrestrial species do not also own it. Thus, the human species can be said to have private ownership in common of the Earth’s air system.

If someone damages the natural system of air production or *pollutes its quality, then they initiate impositions on any individuals they adversely affect. It will be part of libertarian *law that such things are not allowed. We can sue them individually or *collectively, in a class action, to desist and for full *restitution. This could be done through private courts and enforcement agencies. As good air is for the *common good, and as *contingency fees for suing are possible, there seems no reason to suppose that private companies would be able recklessly to damage the air supply. However, some local *pollution rights might be purchased from the local air-users, or negligible amounts of air-pollution might be *tolerated as a lesser initiated imposition than banning, say, all cars and aeroplanes or some entire industry (as long as any due compensation is paid to any victims).

See *public goods.

akrasia From the Greek for “no [self] power”. Usually translated as “weakness of will”. But this is in the sense of acting (or attempting to act) against one’s own better—prudential or *moral—judgement. It is not in the sense that one is generally lacking in willpower, determination, or resolution. According to Socrates, in Plato’s *Protagoras*, it is not possible to judge some action to be the best and yet choose not to do it. In essence, because that would be inconsistent. As Socrates puts it at one point, “‘No one’, he declared, ‘who either knows or believes that there is another possible course of action, better than the one he is following, will ever continue on his present course’” (*Protagoras*, 358b–c).

Apparent cases of akrasia can often be explained away in two main ways. 1. One’s stated opinion about what is best is not what one really *believes (although one might even be confused enough to believe that one believes it when one does not—even while being a philosopher). And, 2. at the moment of the relevant action one changes one’s normal beliefs because of extreme emotion, intoxication, confusion, etc. It does seem to be **a priori* necessary that at the moment of performing, or attempting to perform, an action one thinks that to be the best thing to do at that time in those perceived circumstances. That one might immediately regret the action, or not wish to defend it, or even insist that it was due to one’s own akrasia, etc., does not seem to undermine the cogency of the logical point.

There are various relevances to liberty and libertarianism. Perhaps two stand out. 1. Arguments for *coercive *paternalism that claim to be based on what even the coerced person believes to be the best for himself. 2. Arguments about moral and *legal culpability that offer some degree of exculpation because of someone’s temporary and uncharacteristic akrasia.

1. If someone sincerely and, at least, usually believes that behaviour X is always best for himself, then he can—and presumably will—find a way to always do X or to bind himself (possibly *contractually) into that behaviour. There is no need to coerce him. There is even less excuse to coerce all the other people for whom behaviour X is a persistent preference (assuming that such behaviour does not *initiate impositions on other people, of course). To give a real example: people smoke because, at least at the moments of smoking, they judge the risks to be a price worth paying for the benefits; and if they have a sufficiently strong and persistent opposite view at other times, then they will find some way to stop the activity (such as nicotine gum). *See* *addiction.

2. Even if people were capable of “temporary and uncharacteristic akrasia”, that could not exculpate them from full libertarian *rectification. After all, people are rightly liable for full damages resulting from accidents they cause even when we know they were not in any sense intended or reckless. Also, there is a severe *moral hazard in allowing people to plead successfully, “I could not help myself”: the relevant undesirable but unrectified activities will increase. In any case, this is especially absurd if we discover (as we often do) that the allegedly akratic person clearly first took pains to avoid detection and only then was he “unable to help himself”.

See *rationality.

allies *See* *axis.

altruism Caring for others as ends in themselves rather than as mere means to one’s own ends. It is a serious misunderstanding of *libertarianism to hold that it rejects, or is incompatible with, altruism. *See* *atomism, social; *charity; *self-interest; *egoism.

American Civil War (1861-1865) The American *Civil War, or War of Northern Aggression, in which 620,000-750,000 combatants died (often for lack of medical care) and a large but less determinate number of civilians. It is a popular *nationalistic myth that this war was both, 1) needed to abolish *slavery, and 2) fought in order to abolish slavery.

1) Primarily because of the anti-slavery movement’s growing *ideological success, slavery in the U.S. would probably have ended sooner rather than later without war (at least in part because economic progress was making slavery less profitable). There was also the slave-free North as an imperfect refuge (the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 required free states to return runaway slaves) and the, very limited, possibility of buying the freedom of some slaves. Slavery had ended without an actual war—although there were slave rebellions—where it had finally ended, everywhere else up to then. If the North and South had separated peacefully, then the Fugitive Slave Act would likely have been repealed.

2) It is true that the southern states seceded mainly because they did not trust the North to tolerate slavery, although they also opposed northern tariffs. But Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) instigated the war explicitly to maintain the Union (as he repeatedly stated) of the U.S. *regime’s territory. In other words, the North fought to prevent the South from seceding in the same way that the fourteen (all slave-owning) American colonies had themselves seceded from the British Empire. Lincoln promised before the war that he would allow slavery in the South if he could maintain the Union thereby. However, he often said that he would most prefer to have all black people completely out of the country. Lincoln was reckless concerning how many innocent civilians—black and white, men, women, and children—the war killed: tens of thousands.

After the war it became normal practice to refer to the U.S. in the singular rather than the plural, as was the case before. The federal government set up what amounted to the start of a *welfare state with federal assistance to the widows and orphans of veterans, financed out of general *tax revenues (mainly customs and excise duties). The centralised state that emerged from the war has probably led to much more death and destruction in subsequent wars abroad (*see* *war, *cold war) and less *liberty and *wealth at home than there otherwise would have been (due to a greater *political opportunity to exploit *concentrated benefits and dispersed costs nationwide—although it took a while for the ruling *elite in the South to be replaced). Offsetting this, it did preserve a larger customs union within which trade occurred unhindered, which itself might have helped the development of the U.S. *economy and thereby also the rest of the world by trade (despite basic tariff rates being at 40% until 1913, and then cut to 25%). But even if the war were somehow less bad overall than allowing the South to secede, it was still far from as good as having the entire area stateless or a *minarchy, with *laissez faire and *free trade.

One might sum up the American Civil War, as one justly famous book does, as having two major but both unintended effects: *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men* (or, at least, *oppressing them).

American exceptionalism Americans (U.S. *subjects) sometimes think of their *nation-*state as unique in terms that include *economic and personal *liberty, focused on here (other candidates include history, *resources, geography, God, *religion, *individualism, and *classlessness). However, this *country is not, without considerable qualification, a *free-market and *free-trade *society that respects personal liberty (even setting aside its early terrible treatment—but short of actual *genocide—of many of the aboriginals and its black chattel *slavery). It is, rather, merely a more free-enterprise and more personal-libertarian society than most others. Neither was the USSR, despite its opposite reputation, a *communist society or literally *totalitarian. Such as they ever were, American economic and personal liberty have in many ways declined. So-called “free enterprise”, especially since *World War I, has provided excuses for the federal government to interfere with the *economy. And U.S. *‘liberalism’ (*legislated *political correctness or even *wokism) has increasingly damaged both aspects.

American War of Independence (1775–1783) Or American Revolutionary War. This *war has an unmerited *liberal reputation. To a considerable extent this was a *civil (partisan) war between the *Patriots and the Loyalists, with many colonists not initially, or not ever, taking sides; and then often doing so only reluctantly. And like all wars, there are a variety of motives for becoming involved.

This appears to have been an immediate disaster for the American colonists, in that many lives and much *wealth were lost on both sides by the war. The individual people of the American colonies did not gain any independence; only the new American states became independent of the British state. And they would likely have done so eventually anyway (rather as the colonies of British North America became provinces of an independent Canada without a war in 1867). *Slavery might have ended sooner, or at least more peaceably, if the British *regime had continued in power—as slavery did end peaceably in the British Empire subsequent to the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833—unless the augmented influence of slave owners in the British parliament would have significantly postponed abolition. Despite the terrible British record towards the aboriginal population, the near *genocide that subsequently occurred under the U.S. *regime just might have been less devastating; if only on the basis that it could hardly have been worse. Any *tax and regulatory burdens placed on the American *subjects by the British regime would likely have eventually lessened as the population and wealth of the American people grew. Many kinds of resistance to the British regime would have been possible without resorting to war, and these would have made the American colonies ungovernable.

The war helped the individual American states and the United States (before and after the 1789 constitution) to grow bigger and become stronger at the expense of the wealth and *liberty of their subject populations (although wealth grew and much liberty was preserved despite this). And without this war the *American Civil War, which enormously extended the control of the national government over the states, would have been avoided. British trade restrictions were scrapped after the war. But they might well have been repealed anyway as the influence of the American colonies increased and *free-trade *propaganda in Britain became effective. Also, seventy years of the U.S.’s high tariff *protection might have been at least reduced.

See *World War; *Cold War.

anarchic social order This refers to the social order that arises in the absence of *politically imposed commands or other *initiatedly imposed interventions. It is a form of polycentric order (see Michael Polanyi [1891-1976]), or *spontaneous order (see Friedrich Hayek [1899-1992]); although these also include orders arising within, non-human, *nature.

It is one *common-sense theory of human institutions that someone, or a small group of people, has ultimately to be in charge if chaos is not to ensue. This is generally true of a single *organisation. It is not true of *society, because society is not an organisation but more like an evolving pattern of voluntary interactions. How can social order arise or be maintained without someone’s being in charge? Because of the clear benefits to almost everyone of cooperating in predictable ways and the clear *costs of not doing so (*see* *game theory). That such anarchic social orders exist is clearly evidenced by such socially crucial things as natural *languages, *division of labour, *markets, *money, and *law.

Attempting to put someone, or some group, in charge of a society—as a *state does—will usually turn the anarchic order into political disorder and, at the extreme, chaos (by an irony, popularly but misleadingly called “anarchy”). This chaos arises because political rulers—even if not *corrupt—are unable to perform *economic calculations to compare options, as well as their being *procrustean and subject to *capture by sinister interests (*see also* *concentrated benefits and dispersed costs; *market failure). They cannot control any matters with *economic efficiency. They can only interfere here and there, doing damage all the while. Thus, like an anti-Midas, everything the state touches turns to dross.

However, there can be anarchic disorders too. One example is the dangerously inefficient way that people, if left to themselves, can sometimes leave a large building during an emergency. In such cases, there are anarchic incentives to investigate and test different behavioural rules, physical structures, etc. that will improve the situation. Any political attempt to enforce some apparent solution is also likely to be procrustean.

anarcho-capitalism An *ideology (or social system) that is usually intended to be equivalent to *libertarian *anarchy; but apparently expressed thus in order to be in clearer contrast to “anarcho-*communism”, “anarcho-syndicalism”, or any other type of, alleged, anarchism. However, versions of such non-capitalist ideologies can be compatible with libertarianism as long as they do not flout *liberty: if they are entirely voluntary, including by *contract. *See* *capitalism; *private-property anarchism; *specific performance.

anarchy “Anarchy” means “no ruler” in the sense of no *initiatedly-imposed control by a *state in any form. It can be contrasted with the various forms of state rule—*oligarchy, *monarchy, *aristocracy, *democracy, etc.—as distinguished, for instance, in Aristotle’s *Politics* (strictly, “cracy” comes from “kratos” meaning “power”; but no real distinction is thereby made). “Anarchy” does not mean “no rules”, or “no *law” (that is “anomy”, or “anomie”), or “no order” (that is “chaos”). *Libertarian anarchists are fully in favour of anarchic rules, law, and order instead of the state’s versions of these; which do approach chaos to varying degrees. *Statists often simply misunderstand “anarchy”. But, in any case, they usually have a strong *prejudice that one *organisation must *run the country.

What little mass-media attention anarchy receives is usually bad. Apart from the confusions just mentioned, in recent years there have been the activities of self-described “anarchists”: occupying buildings, looting, and rioting on the pretexts of being against *inequality, *big business, and high finance. These people are really confused anti-capitalists. *Socialist anarchy could exist in small communes. Only *private-property anarchy is practical anarchy on a large scale. Voluntary *market transactions and *capital accumulation are needed for advanced production. These will always occur unless *coercively suppressed; which in practice would require a state and so would not be anarchic (but such a state could not last long: complete *economic breakdown would quickly ensue). Almost all that libertarian anarchy requires is that the state is *depoliticised until there is no state left. However, there also needs to be a sufficiently *libertarian culture.

Should libertarian anarchists abandon the word “anarchy” because of the pejorative confusions? No: they really are anarchists and cannot long pretend otherwise. The confusions are even a useful and interesting excuse to explain libertarian anarchy. Is it not obvious that libertarian anarchists have no influence at all in the real world? No: that the world is not yet fully anarchic anywhere does not imply that libertarian anarchists are without any good influence (the world is never going to be *Marxian socialist anywhere, but that does not show that Marxists have no bad influence). And such *extremists can cause the perceived middle ground of public acceptability to move; indefinitely far, with time.

More-or-less anarchist societies have most famously included, for hundreds of years, ancient Iceland (on which see, e.g., David Friedman [1945-]) and Ireland (on which see, e.g., Murray Rothbard [1926-1995]). States eventually grew in these *countries by combinations of error and conquest rather than any inherent instability or weakness with anarchy. Somalia is a recent, if more contentious and less impressive, example: better off than when it had a functioning government and even still improving relative to other African countries under state rule. But that Somalia has a continuing political “civil war” means that it is far from fully anarchist.

As there has never been a *world government, anarchy has always existed—and without *war in most places—among all the states of the world (although one state will occasionally take over another). This shows that anarchy can be extremely robust and far from inevitably bellicose even while these dangerous *criminal *organisations, states, do exist. Anarchy might also be said to exist in every area of life in which the state does not intervene: in the interstices of state commands.

*See also, *bureaucracy; *hierarchy; *meritocracy.*

animal rights *Libertarianism is only advocated for human *persons. Human persons are also animals, of course: a species of primate. “Animal rights” refers to those animals, sometimes known as “beasts”, that are not persons.

A *‘‘right’’ is normally understood as a *legitimate claim by one person against other people, who thereby have a *‘‘duty’’ to behave in accord with it. It would be clear to say that someone whose sausages were stolen by another person had thereby had his rights infringed. But if a dog took the sausages it would be odd to say that the dog itself had infringed their owner’s rights (and obviously absurd to ‘‘arrest’’ the dog and put him on ‘‘trial’’—although such things have been known historically). It would be similarly odd to describe the beating of a dog, however wrong that might be (*see* *animal welfare), as violating the dog’s rights. The possession of rights implies reciprocal *duties—circumstances permitting, at least—and other animals cannot have literal duties (although a dog might have some inkling of what behaviour is expected of him).

However, it is part of modern *rights inflation that other animals are sometimes held to have rights even though they cannot have duties. Some animal rightists have even called some non-human animals ‘‘persons’’ and asserted that they have *‘‘nations’’. This ascription of ‘‘animal rights’’—and personhood, and nationality—looks to be some combination of *propagandistic hyperbole and a category mistake. One thing that is clearly irrelevant to this debate—and it is, ironically, a form of ‘‘speciesism’’ to assert that it is relevant—is the genetic relatedness, particularly of certain apes, to humans. Being a person is what matters to rights, and that is not necessarily related to a species. If gratuitous cruelty to non-human animals is inherently bad and immoral, this cannot be because those animals have rights.

animal welfare If people object to cruelty to animals, then preventing this is better exemplified by the influence of the *market and *charity than by the *state. People can choose to withdraw their custom from businesses that do not treat animals humanely, or they can buy—or own by first-capture—the animals they wish to protect (including rhinoceroses, elephants, and whales; with GPS tagging and tracking). Animal charities are often more popular than human ones. The state sometimes causes unnecessary animal cruelty, such as the introduction of compulsory animal-testing for various products: this can serve little purpose, especially when human volunteers would otherwise be available and more relevant if allowed.

That said, there is a danger of anthropomorphism and sentimentalism with respect to ‘‘beasts’’ (animals that are not *persons) especially where there is no actual suffering involved, although some experiment might look or sound gruesome. These errors are also muddled with the views of *egalitarian statist who partly use them as pretexts to attack—upper *class—fox-hunting, game-shooting, and fur-wearing but not—lower class—rabbit-hunting, rod-fishing, and leather-wearing. When interest groups can lobby for *legislation on these grounds, then the state can overprotect beasts—or even hurt them—at the expense of people.

A beast has little conception of its own future or its own death, and certainly no life-plan that can be frustrated. Neither has it, in most cases, relations and companions that will grieve severely and long at its death (although these things are sometimes less true of the higher animals, which approach being persons and so might merit more considerate treatment). Many animals only exist, in such great numbers or at all, because we like the products we can obtain from them. And if we continually replace, say, older sheep with younger ones, in a humane way, then there will be more animal *welfare than if we instead allowed the sheep to die of old age or predators; and considerably more animal welfare than if we did not breed them at all (as we largely would not if we could not *exploit them). By contrast, to kill a person is to destroy a higher being with a unique biography and life-plan and mind (intellectual life), and usually a network of similar friends and relations. Any systematic human-killing is also likely to be known about and thus give rise to a general fear and even terror that would undermine human welfare considerably.

People who are sincerely interested in animal welfare should be championing the humane exploitation of animals rather than denigrating all animal use and likening them to persons. Where there is a clash among people in terms of the treatment of animals, both *liberty and humaneness would seem to suggest that it is better to allow the different groups to go their own ways (although *free speech, *boycotting, and purchase remain to persuade the other side) rather than that either side uses systematic *aggressive coercion, paid for by *tax-*extortion if statist, to impose its preferred option on the other.

apartheid From 1948 onwards, the apartheid (apartness) system of South Africa was officially and *initiatedly imposed by the *state for the segregation of “white”, “black”, “coloured” and “Indian” *racial groups, and set up to give *political and *economic dominance to the whites. It was originally intended to be full separate development in different homelands, but a caste-like system was all that was achieved (*see* *class). “Apartheid” is now also often used to mean any system of imposed racial segregation that is similar. In embryo, apartheid was held, somewhat disingenuously, to be a form of *socialism. In 1921, the striking miners’ chant was, “Workers of the world unite, and fight for a white South Africa”. White unions remained apartheid’s major champions. The *capitalists and *businesses generally were, and remained, against apartheid: as such imposed *discrimination simply raised the cost of labour and so reduced *profit. However, the fact that apartheid South Africa still had blacks trying to enter the *country indicates that it was not as bad, at least overall, as the surrounding states; the criticisms focusing on it were in part due to *politically correct *hypocrisy. Despite apartheid, people were being attracted by the *wealth that the *free market was creating in South Africa.

The evidence is dubious that various *sanctions and political actions against South Africa over many years did anything to ameliorate apartheid or bring about its eventual demise. Standard *liberal theory predicts that such actions shore up the *power of the existing *regime as popular support rallies to it out of *nationalism, as appeared to happen in South Africa, while trade would be more likely to open the country to liberal influence. From the 1970s, apartheid was perceived to be increasingly uneconomic in its labour restrictions and *policing. Since the dismantling of apartheid—only seriously from the 1990s—the regime has switched from compulsory racial segregation to compulsory *racial integration. Thus, instead of merely abolishing apartheid it has gone in for a kind of inverted apartheid (somewhat like inverted snobbery, except that is not inherently illiberal).

apathy Politicians sometimes complain about apathy among the public as regards *politics, and they say that *‘‘democracy’’ needs people to take more interest. As a result, they occasionally suggest that *voting ought to be made compulsory; which would be another small loss of *liberty for people. The politicians’ complaint about apathy is not made because they want the public to control things democratically, but because they know that their own *legitimacy and *status as elected *oligarchs partly rest on this very feeble form of political participation. Not only is political apathy not a problem, active antipathy would be even better. Only antipathy can hope to restrict political *power and thereby increase human liberty and *welfare. However, antipathy will not work well if it is based on mere cynicism. The public have to realise that liberty is *moral and productive while politics is immoral and destructive. *See* *libertarian culture.

appeasement It is a *statist *meme that appeasement was a disaster when faced with Nazi Germany in 1938, would have been a disaster with *Iraq under Saddam Hussein, and would also be with Iran, *Islamic fundamentalism, etc. “Appeasement” is used in different ways, some of which are intended to be biased definitions. There is no need to list and dissect these usages. The only important question in each case is whether what is being called “appeasement” will make things worse or better. There was no sound case for the UK or the USA *states to enter *World War II; it merely increased the death and destruction. There is no sound case to invade Islamic countries around the world; it merely increases the death and destruction. To the extent that avoiding counterproductive strategies is called “appeasement” we need more appeasement. The real problem here is bellicosity or warmongering.

apriorism From the Latin *a priori*: from the earlier. The idea that some theories can be *known to be universally *true, or false, independently of particular experiences. We might need experience to help us to understand these theories, but we can then see that the experience is not what makes them true or false.

Theories within mathematics are an example. *Austrian *economics uses an aprioristic view of *rational agency (*see* *economic man) and many, possibly all, of its theories are supposed to be *a priori*. Thus, empirical tests of these theories are not supposed to be possible. However, it would at least seem to be an empirical question just which *a priori* theory (whether in economics or mathematics) is applicable, and to what extent, in some empirical situation. So, empiricism is not avoided when technologically applying them to the world. There is also the view that so-called *a priori* truths are often really just empirical truths of such a general nature that it is hard to see how they are likely ever, or often, to be false. And this does seem to be the actual situation with Austrian economics.

A posteriori (from the later) theories are those that cannot be known independently of some experience, such as the shape of some material object.

aristocracy One attempt to legitimise the state is that it can be ruled by only the best people (as “aristocracy” etymologically means). Even if there were some way to identify “the best”, ensure that they rule, and never become *corrupt, there remains the apparently insuperable problem that rulers are inherently inefficient because of the *economic calculation problem.

arms trade *Libertarians usually argue that the *free market promotes *liberty and human *welfare. What about selling arms that will possibly, or probably, be used to kill innocent people?

Most of the more dangerous weapons are sold to *states around the world. These states can only buy the weapons with *tax-*extorted *money. Hence, this is no more an example of a fully free market (market free of *aggressive intervention) than if I sell to people who have stolen their money or if I buy stolen goods. The states might also be known to be buying the weapons for aggressive attacks on innocent people, which make the sale even more *criminal (wittingly to supply a would-be murderer with a weapon is to aid and abet the murder). Thus, it would be libertarian for private *law agencies to prosecute arms dealers that sell to states (or any dealers in anything selling to states, as they would be receiving extorted money).

To sell arms to private *persons and businesses is free market and *legitimate to the extent that they are not tax-subsidised in some way or known to be criminal. Where private persons and businesses use arms aggressively, the problem is more to do with the absence of libertarian law and order or lack of private streets (in which people could choose to ban certain weapons).

See *balance of power; *gun control.

arms race *See* *balance of power.

artificial intelligence Potential issues for *libertarianism of artificial intelligence (AI): human *unemployment; an out-of-human-control superintelligence; and an AI that is a *person with libertarian *rights. Several responses appear relevant.

People have no libertarian *right to employment. But if they would be reduced to unemployed poverty by AI, then that clashes with the libertarian compatibility thesis (of *liberty and *welfare). But this is Luddism (*see* *labour). The vast increase in the human population combined with the innumerable inventions that have gone along with this, appear to undermine this as a realistic problem. A life of increasing human leisure with ever-more useful machines is real but hardly a problem.

The possible dangers of a hyperintelligent AI *initiating impositions on humans is a fear of a new technology that matches that of various others in the past. Doubtless, it is prudent to be reasonably cautious; maybe including having strong failsafe devices. But it is not prudent to be so cautious as to put a brake on possible progress, as the *precautionary principle does.

There seems to be no sound explanation of the conjecture that AI is yet, or is ever likely to become, conscious. A Turing test that causes a human interlocutor to think that the AI is a full person is no serious evidence that it is one. How then, it might be asked, do we even know that other human beings are really persons? That is also a conjecture but one that does withstand criticism (which cannot be briefly explained). *Critical rationalist epistemology explains how no “supporting justification” is necessary or possible.

What about the hypothesis that apparently natural human beings are all simulations on a computer? Then we are all artificial intelligences. But this seems to be an unrealistic fantasy of people overly impressed, as they have also been before, with the idea that new technology or science is also what explains human beings in some fundamental way. Alternatively, people are overly impressed by mere logical possibility, and maybe also any “supporting justifications”: analogous versions of this hypothesis have long existed in philosophy. Apparently observable reality is a recalcitrantly consistent and incredibly detailed fit with the materialistic theory of humans and the universe. Unless some reproducible “glitch in the matrix” becomes evident, or some clear and unambiguous way of testing this view is devised, then there is no reason to take it more seriously than the infinite number of other logically possible analogous theories.

Libertarianism is a theory about what is, and ought to be implemented as, the liberty-observing way to treat humans that are persons. A non-human person, including aliens, might be quite different. For instance, suppose AI could be designed to be a person that is a willing tool of humans. Would it be immoral to design it this way? It is not obvious that it would. This naturally suggests another question: then what

about altering the genes of human beings so that they are willing slaves (assuming that this could also be done)? But it is an initiated imposition to damage a pre-person human in this way (*see* *circumcision, infibulation, etc., of children). By contrast, an AI person would not have had an inherent initiated imposition: there is usually no way that it would have been that has been changed to a worse state (unless someone designed it, all within his own *property rights, to be an autonomously-willed person and then someone else interfered with that).

arts and sciences Do arts and sciences depend on the *state? There is no good evidence that there would be suboptimal production of them if they were left to the *free market and *charity. The arts and sciences both began and flourished long before state involvement. And many of the greatest artists and scientists in history did some of their greatest works without state “assistance”, or even in the face of state *persecution. The state often tries to jump on a bandwagon and take some of the credit, but it inevitably crowds out competing alternatives with its *initiated impositions; and so people cannot see what best, and here likely better, option would otherwise have existed: the *opportunity cost. Thus, even any occasional state-funded “successes” will on balance be at the expense of greater lost opportunities.

In the unlikely event that the market and charity were to leave the arts and sciences languishing, then there is nothing about these activities such that they axiomatically deserve to be funded by *tax-*extorting *money from people who patently do not find them worth paying for in their current forms. In reality, state involvement results in *political bias and *aggressive *monopoly replacing diverse and efficient free *competition among would-be *consumers and would-be practitioners. One cannot seriously maintain, for instance, that new art has wonderfully improved since the Arts Council of Great Britain (now of England) was formed in 1946. A lot of it seems deliberately to insult the public’s intelligence or values at the public’s *unconsenting expense. Contrast this with design, which has flourished almost entirely on the free market.

At the *statist extreme, we see an atrophy of art and science as they are perverted into little more than state *propaganda and other purposes, as seen in the worst excesses of the old *totalitarian *regimes of China and the USSR. Art and science might sometimes have given the appearance of thriving under political patronage such as in the Renaissance, although a lot of that was really private or semi-private. But that cannot defend any extortion that paid for this. And there seems no reason to doubt that the richer people and richer businesses that would have existed without taxation would have spent even more on, and on a greater variety of, art and science.

assassination As all social systems rest on the general culture, the main task of the *libertarian activist is to promote liberty by argument and evidence until a *libertarian culture is eventually achieved. It is highly improbable that there could be a libertarian *revolution in any violent sense. However, if someone such as—but not necessarily—a political figure is responsible for mass murder or other egregiously evil acts, and he cannot be arrested and tried (or tried *in absentia*), then *just assassination cannot be ruled out: both as an act of libertarian *retribution and to deter similar behaviour from others. It counts for nothing that such a political figure might be *“(democratically)” elected or that the majority of the electorate supports his actions.

Statists sometimes like to distinguish appropriately state-sanctioned “targeted killings” (which they say are never murder) from non-state assassinations (which they say are always murder). However, “just assassination” is not an oxymoron, and so not “murder” (unjust killing). And it is absurd to suppose that all actual state-sanctioned “targeted killings” are thereby not murder.

For an assassination to be more clearly just, and better *propaganda, there would first need to be a public trial (probably in a neutral *country). In the absence of a private court recognising *natural *law, then some kind of state court that sufficiently does so might be better than nothing. Although most likely tried *in absentia*, the accused should be allowed to appoint defence lawyers, otherwise these could be assigned.

Obvious candidates for assassination would include *war *criminals. And this category cannot exclude those who foreseeably bomb civilians unnecessarily, or otherwise recklessly initiate or exacerbate an armed conflict without having exhausted all other possible avenues for avoiding war (*see* *just war). Other targets might be *statesmen or state officials that had ordered the murder, torture, or persecution of any of their regime’s *subjects. Thus Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976), Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), and Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) were clearly *legitimate targets for just assassination. But it is also hard to see how any of the war leaders of *World War I could be exempted. The reader is left to consider which living politicians might fall into such extreme groups.

Assassination of a bellicose foreign statesman is also a possible alternative to a war that will certainly kill innumerable innocent people and expend an astronomical amount of resources. Maybe this can best be achieved by a bounty—as suggested in *Utopia*, 1516, by Thomas Moore (1478-1535)—and raised by public subscription.

asset stripping If a company has *resources that some new owner prefers to sell off and realise the cash instead (whether to be spent, invested elsewhere, or saved—which usually releases the money for borrowing), then that strongly indicates that those resources are not being as productive as the projected alternative uses. It does not matter that these resources are currently being used to make a demanded product, yield an accountancy *profit, and provide employment. The alternative uses are, other things being equal, ultimately likely to make more-demanded products, a greater profit, and employ more people.

These *opportunity-cost points make it irrelevant to keep citing the former use’s mere appearance of *economic efficiency. Still less is it relevant to impugn the character of the persons engaged in this activity or point to their motives as being mere profit-making—as though businessmen, *qua* businessmen, do anything else; and as though the efficiency of the *invisible hand of the market can simply be ignored. So-called “asset stripping” is a socially valuable reallocation of the uneconomic uses of resources. To prevent it by pandering to vested interests or dubious *egalitarian—even *envious—sentiments, will most likely do nothing but damage.

That said, any attempt to sell off the assets while leaving the liabilities with the original company—so that *free-market creditors are not paid—is not mere asset stripping but *fraud (whether or not this is allowed by *state *legislation).

asylum seekers See *immigration.

atomism, social One popular criticism of *libertarianism arises from the apparent implication, to some people, that human beings can exist outside *society. We are told that they cannot do so and, more to the point, living within a society brings *collective *rights and *duties that are incompatible with libertarianism. Connected with this point is that libertarians are held to believe in a socially disconnected “rugged individualism” that is quite impractical for many people as well as being heartlessly destructive of general *welfare. These, and similar points along the same lines, are sometimes pejoratively labelled the “(social) atomism” of libertarianism. Such criticisms are invariably some combination of misunderstandings and fallacies.

Of course, libertarians do not deny that we need other people (parents or guardians) to raise us to a state of individual *sovereignty. We could then, at least, live a hermitic existence if we so choose. But most people, including libertarians, would find such a life to be hugely impoverished.

As for collective rights and duties, nothing is given to us by, or by us to, an agent or organisation that is society. Everything is given by particular people (or *organisations of people, which society is not) to particular people, including life itself from our parents. Despite the inestimable value of what we all receive by social participation, it is arbitrary to suggest that people can be entitled to an enforceable *right to any kind of positive benefit from anyone else without a *contractual agreement (and such a “right” would, and does, lessen *liberty and welfare).

However, libertarianism is only about liberty; it does not require personal independence or autarky. With libertarianism people can be as “collectivistic” as they like—taking out insurance or even practicing, small-scale, *communism—as long as what they do does not *initiate impositions on the *person or *property of anyone else. Moreover, most libertarians heartily approve of *charity, which is inherently libertarian as well as being far more efficient than *tax-*extorted transfers.

The market is not harsh, as some people assume. They feel that the market means that “the weak must go to the wall. But only weak goods and services “must go to the wall” in a libertarian society. (Strictly, this commonly misunderstood expression refers not to weak people being ruthlessly neglected but, quite the reverse, their being offered the relief of leaning in church instead of having to stand unaided.)

What of an individual's duties to his *family, *community, and *state? Apart from what might be in the *marriage contract (or any subsequent, possibly implicit, contracts among family members), there are no enforceable duties to benefit one's family: it does not own what one produces. Family relations are mainly based on, and sustained by, natural affection. If this fails, then we each have a right to exit; although any *children need to be found proper care first. To the extent that we live in any kind of literal community, it is *ipso facto* voluntary. The state, by contrast, is a *criminal organisation that we have a positive duty to avoid supporting; to the extent that we can do so safely, at least. We do, of course, always have a libertarian duty to avoid initiating impositions on other people.

Only from a perspective that sanctions *aggressively-imposed collective ownership might libertarianism appear to be "atomistic".

See *communitarianism; *individualism; *jury service.

Austrian School of economics A school of *economics that often uses *aprioristic arguments and methodological *individualism, largely rejecting econometrics and aggregate *macroeconomics. It strongly tends to argue in favour of the *spontaneous and *economically efficient nature of *free markets. *See* *agent; *economics imperialism; *economic calculation problem; *economic rationality; *inflation; *liberty; *marginalism; *markets; *opportunity cost; *rationality; *value.

authoritarianism This is usually held to be *state rule that is not based on—possibly tacit—*consent, or *contract, or does not respect *liberty. People who live "in *democracies" (i.e., they live *under*, are ruled by, popularly *elected *oligarchies) tend to think that they are free, while "non-democracies" suffer from authoritarianism and, at the extreme, *totalitarianism.

However, there is no—even tacit—consent or contract with respect to the state, although general popular support is necessary (*see* *libertarian culture). What is not socially *libertarian can only be authoritarian to one degree or another. It matters not that the "voice of the people" is supposed *collectively to sanction some *initiated imposition or that it is intended for the people's "own good". State police and courts enforce such authoritarianism, as with all *police states. And a "non-democratic" regime can be less authoritarian than a "democratic" one. It has only to be more **laissez faire* overall as regards liberty: both of *persons and of *property (*see* *left-wing).

Authoritarians typically imagine that the world is far worse than it is. But their "solutions" would make (or have made) the world far worse than anything they originally imagined to be the problem.

authority There are various conceptions and theoretical explanations of authority. The most germane sense here means having a perceived *right to control or determine something. It is crucial to distinguish the separate matter of whether there is a real *power to control or determine something.

All *social systems in practice require considerable authority and do not necessarily require the possession or use of much power (the British *regime in India needed little power because of its great authority). Power will only be needed in instances where the authority is not acknowledged (for only those people who, at least implicitly, deny some authority can flout its claims; *see* *akrasia). If some social thing—whether a state, or a specific regime, or *libertarian *private property—were universally perceived as having authority, then no power would be needed to enforce it. If some social thing were universally perceived as without authority, then there would be no power to enforce it.

Authority can to some extent be manufactured or maintained by *propaganda and *censorship. Libertarianism will finally gain dominant authority, in the first instance, by *honest propaganda that converts a critical mass of the *intellectuals: their arguments persuade the politicians. Eventually this authority will become part of *common sense.

See *libertarian culture.

autonomy, intellectual This is here meant as a *person's intellectual independence. It is, therefore, to be contrasted with being intellectually heteronomous (or dependent): the intellectual puppet of one's circumstances, including the mainstream media. By this understanding, it exists to varying degrees and never perfectly. Engaging in philosophy can be one extreme of intellectual autonomy (but *see* *academics). Following *common sense can be one heteronomous extreme. However, intelligence does not appear to be strongly positively correlated with intellectual autonomy. Most bright people are timidly orthodox in their *opinions. For instance, even people with a scientific background typically accepted all the *state *propaganda on *COVID-19. Overall, as Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) once wrote, "most people would die sooner than think—in fact, they do so".

Sometimes such autonomy is said, usually by non-*libertarians, to be what *"justifies" (gives supporting value to) *liberty. This is because liberty can be destructive and so is not always an end in itself, supposedly unlike autonomy (which liberty has a tendency to promote, but which might be overridable if it does not do so). However, it is part of the justificationist fallacy that anything can be supported beyond assumption. Instead, one can value liberty directly and in a *critical-rationalist way. One need only conjecture that there is no sound criticism of the idea that people ought to have liberty, without giving an impossibly exhaustive and epistemologically irrelevant list of the reasons that liberty is valuable. It would also be more libertarian to hold that, in any case, people have a *right to be heteronomous.

And it would be more *economically informed to realise that there is a price to be paid for acquiring intellectual autonomy (in terms of forgone *opportunities), and passed a certain point it is not worth paying. This point differs with different people, at different times, on different issues. Individuals have a right to choose the extent to which they judge intellectual autonomy to be economic in their own case, and other people have only a right to attempt to persuade them otherwise—and only then if they are willing to listen (*see* *freedom of speech or expression).

autonomy, personal Self-rule. To *rule oneself is simply not to be ruled by other people. There is no logical implication that one is thereby intellectually autonomous, or personally prudent, or respects similar autonomy in others. However, it is not uncommon to conflate the bare concept with such desirable additions. *See* *sovereign individual.

axis Since *World War II, an alliance among any *regimes that are regarded as somehow not *legitimate or *moral has sometimes been called an "axis" (such as George Bush's "Axis of evil": Iraq, Iran, North Korea). The "good guys" (*"we") are instead called "allies". This bias is part of *war *propaganda. It might aid clarity and balance to refer to such things equally, such as the "US-British axis regimes" (and to *their* actions and *their* troops rather than to *our* actions and *our* troops: for the regimes are not the people or the *nations they rule). Alternatively, as Bobby Fischer (1943-2008) put it, we might refer to "the allies of evil".

B

balance of trade Does the exchange of *money and products between two *countries (imports and exports) "balance" or is some *state correction needed? (For the sake of simplicity, balance of payments won't be distinguished.)

This is really a fabricated problem. As David Hume (1711-76) saw, one can always create a similar "problem" by drawing an arbitrary line through any area of trade—such as the North and South of any country—and then worrying about whether there is a balance between the money and products travelling in both directions.

With different state currencies these ultimately must balance, because any money leaving a country can only be a claim on the products in that same country. The best thing that could happen from the viewpoint of the people in the first country, is that the foreign country sends all the goods but never uses the first country's currency to make a claim on its products; in which case the first country would have had all the products for nothing (and this has partly happened with, for instance, the US and the UK with respect to China, thanks to Western *inflation and poor investments made by Chinese sources). So, it is particularly perverse to worry, as many politicians seem to do, that another country is not purchasing as much of one's own country's products. In fact, one *comparative advantage of some countries is in the production of a relatively stable currency itself, which other countries keep to use as an international currency. As their *economies grow they need more of that currency, and so trade more goods for it.

Of course, some areas will rise and fall in terms of production and wealth. This is the *market reallocating resources to more efficient uses arising from changing *economic circumstances. But, because of the law of comparative advantage, there is no way that interfering with *free trade among countries can do anything but lower the overall wealth of all of those countries.

balance of power (international [interstate]) This is the theory that *states need to have enough military *power to deter other states from attacking them without having so much power that they are tempted to initiate *aggression. Thus, war is prevented by the balance of power being preserved by such things as alliances, treaties, and *arms supplies.

As it is thought better not to risk being or appearing less powerful, the practical result is an expensive arms race. And, as a separate point, the mere misperception of superior power or probable concession can suffice to start an armed conflict. The overwhelming, but now waning, power of the USA *state explains its aggressive interventions around the world (although always in the name of some supposedly good cause).

Balance of power has no application with an *anarchy, as it is without a state as either a potential aggressor or as an Achilles' heel that only needs to be defeated for the *country to be taken. *See* *national defence.

banking *See* *money.

bankruptcy, insolvency, and limited liability It is a *initiated imposition for the *state either to allow or to disallow, 1) people or businesses to declare bankruptcy or insolvency so that they are exempted from paying any further debts once certain resources have been distributed to the creditors, or 2) imprisonment or debt bondage for the non-payment of debt.

It is *libertarian and *economically efficient to allow people to trade on whatever *contractual basis they agree to do, but some contracts might be inefficient to enforce and this would constrain practical choices. In some cases, the *market might generate limited liability and fairly lenient bankruptcy or insolvency clauses and—at the other extreme—strict, total, and personal liability. It is then up to people to choose which they are prepared to accept. There will be *costs and benefits associated with whatever is chosen. To insist on the strictest liability means that one might not be able to benefit from trading with many thriving businesses of good reputation. While to be reckless as to the non-liability of a business means that one is more likely to lose out in any dealings with it.

Generally, market-generated limited liability (but not against *tort or *crime) is a boon because the spreading of the risk allows many new businesses to be started and take chances that they otherwise would not risk. It only becomes a clear bane when the risk is not a matter of contract because of *fraud or state interference.

barriers to entry It is sometimes objected that there are various barriers to entry that restrict *competition and thus *economic efficiency in *markets and industries, and so these ought to be “corrected” by the *state.

Barriers to entry are held to include *economies of scale (cost savings due to being larger: although these are the main things that help to keep down *prices), control of the *supply of inputs to production (but, without a state-granted *monopoly, this is usually an economy of scale), control of retail outlets (although it is not clear how this is a real problem without the *aggressive state regulation of various types of vendor), the preferences of consumers for existing firms (how shocking that the market allows firms to develop a good reputation that new firms might have some difficulty competing with), and the threat of a price war (but the big company has more to sell and thus more to lose so this will not be engaged in lightly; and the mere threat of such potential competition will generally help to keep down prices in the first place). Such purported barriers also neglect the fact that new businesses can often simply start by using the latest equipment or copy the latest techniques learned at great expense by established businesses (where these are not protected by being *intellectual property). Industry is replete with examples of a new David killing an old Goliath that was once thought to be invulnerable due to such barriers to entry. One could as easily construct equally dubious insufficient-barriers-to-entry arguments for protecting the efficiencies of existing big companies.

Any state interference with *legitimate industries and markets is bound to damage *liberty and is far more likely than not to damage efficiency. The “barriers to entry” criticisms seem more to do with anti-*big-business *ideology or *envious competitors than any substantial economic points. *Hypocritically, there are ubiquitous real regulatory barriers to entry that are *initiated impositions by the state, such as with *healthcare, *postal services, *universities, *qualifications, and all the *professions. Any market barriers are usually relatively temporary and surmountable. The state’s aggressively imposed barriers are not.

See *infant industries; *market failure; *perfect competition.

BBC *See* *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

begging *See* *homelessness and begging.

belief The feeling that some proposition (whether considered in words or abstractions) is *true. False theories of belief are often used to dismiss unusual views and defend familiar ones, including those about *politics. It is a *common-sense view that people sometimes “believe what they like”, and that “there are none so blind as those who will not see”. Therefore, it is alleged, it is not worth arguing with such *dogmatic, *bigoted, or *irrational people who, not by coincidence, are often seen as having *extreme views and *dangerous ideas such as *libertarianism. But these views on belief appear to be erroneous and, ironically, often also excuses for the accuser’s own dogmatism or bigotry (it is not clear that irrationality is even possible).

Introspection shows us that we cannot simply choose to believe or disbelieve any proposition, although we can choose to avoid criticisms and counter-arguments or seek only evidence that fits what we believe. Belief is an automatic function of the brain. Consequently, we cannot have a *right to believe what we like (if “ought” implies “can”). The phenomena of so-called *wishful and fearful thinking are more to do with not giving up too easily when we seek something we value or want to avoid something we disvalue.

If “faith” is intended to mean believing by some act of will, then there is no faith; or if there is, then perhaps there really is insanity (*see* *mental illness). On the other hand, if “faith” is intended to mean only a belief that goes beyond the evidence then, vacuously, every belief is faith; as *critical rationalism explains.

We discover what we believe at the moment we consider some matter. And our beliefs are ephemeral and subject to change, sometimes by the moment, by our senses and thoughts. By harmless extension, we also speak of “beliefs” when what we must really be referring to is some disposition to believe certain things: for something cannot actually be being believed if it is not being considered at the time, and a disposition to believe X might not result in belief X when the new consideration occurs. Beliefs are changed immediately by anything that appears to us, however mistakenly, to be a genuine refutation. But arguments often take time to be adequately understood and evaluated, especially when confronting an array of ancillary beliefs that also need to be dealt with. Therefore, it is not illogical or dogmatic to feel that some apparently inconsistent piece of evidence or argument is an anomaly to be explained, unless and until we feel we have adequately tested its strength.

Whether we believe or how strongly we believe some proposition has nothing to do with whether that proposition is true, except in certain special self-referential cases. So, it is usually irrelevant to an argument to question the sincerity or strength of someone’s beliefs (*see* *hypocrisy, *opinion). Moreover, although someone’s belief might feel “strong” it has no way to resist a perceived refutation thereby.

The above sense of “belief” is quite distinct from that which would less confusingly be called, *moral, *value. Someone who expresses his “belief” in *anarchy does not mean he believes anarchy already exists. These two senses of belief sometimes appear to be especially conflated in *religions. It would be clearer if people saw and said this was a value. However, values are not chosen either. We find out what we value by similar introspection. Hence it is always worth arguing with people (unless they are insufferably insulting or, potentially, violent) if our aim is to intellectually cooperate to find what is true or what is right.

A useful criterion of belief is someone’s behaviour. The expression, “actions speak louder than words” is relevant here. If someone says that he believes X but behaves as though he believes ~X, then that suggests that ~X is his real belief.

betting See *gambling.

big business There are sometimes aspects of “big business” that are dubious and even *criminal. They can be guilty of enormous *frauds, receiving *illegitimate funding and other resources, and *initiating imposed *risks and *pollution on people. The worst of these can usually be put down to two things. 1) The *state corruptly connives to allow these practices. 2) By *politicising *law and order, the state enables big businesses to escape the efficient *libertarian *restitution and *retribution that would usually make *crime a very bad bet.

Otherwise, big businesses tend to provide us with better, cheaper, more, and new products and are thus great *public servants; as they have no direct *power, especially in a *libertarian culture. In fact, they are themselves increasingly state-persecuted: burdened with dubious regulations, *politically correct policies, and *tax-*extortion (although all of these can sometimes be even more damaging for small businesses). However, these costs must then to a great degree be passed on to their customers; otherwise, the businesses would become insolvent.

bigotry Bigotry is, broadly, having *unfairly *intolerant views regarding some (or possibly all other than one’s own: universal bigotry) opinions, ideologies, ways of life, or groups of people (by *race, *sex, *religion, *sexual orientation, *nationality, etc.). The first thing to note is that people have an absolute *libertarian *right to be bigots in the expression and implementation of any such view, as long as it is within the framework of *consenting *persons and their *legitimate *property. This is part of *free speech and *freedom of association. Therefore, any alleged bigotry must be legally *tolerated. If bigotry does result in *initiated impositions on the persons and property of others, then it is the initiated impositions that need to be rectified (*see* *restitution) and not the bigoted views in themselves (at least, not by any unlibertarian *censorship, *propaganda, and *education”).

Many self-described “anti-racists”, “anti-sexists”, and *wokists of all sorts typically accuse people of “bigotry” even when those people have entirely fair reasons for their views (not wanting self-described “women” with male genitals in real women’s communal changing rooms, for instance). So, it is ironic that wokists are usually *hypocritically bigoted in their own views. But the real problem is that they attempt to *aggressively impose their views on other people; whether via *state *legislation or by physically attacking them.

See *dogmatism; *prejudice.

biodiversity It is an *environmentalist idea that a diversity of organisms is a “good thing” (often in itself and only if natural) and that, in addition to natural changes (including five, or possibly six, previous mass extinctions), human activity—not least *industrialisation and *free markets—has and is destroying biodiversity; especially in a sixth, or seventh, mass “Anthropocene/Holocene extinction”. But with full *private property of all planetary resources plus free markets, there will often be *efficient incentives to protect biodiversity; as it can then be *economically *exploited. However, much *charitable protection is also possible and likely. The means will include class action *law suits, through competing private legal systems, for any relevant damaging *externalities. By contrast, *states often override *liberal and efficient protection with either a short-term concern about buying *votes or procrustean “solutions”—up to a global scale. The state will tend to over protect or under protect biodiversity depending on which interest group it is pandering to at the time. As biodiversity is usually greater in the warmer parts of the planet, then (other things not being too different) we can expect it to increase up to the extent that there is any of the predicted *global warming.

See *endangered species.

bioethics See *abortion; *animal rights; *animal welfare; *biodiversity; *cloning; *drugs; *environmentalism; *eugenics; *euthanasia; *future generations; *genetically modified organisms; *human body parts; *playing god; *population; *precautionary principle; *yuck factor.

black market This is normally used to refer to buying or selling that is against *state *law or official regulations.

It is part of *liberty and increases *utility for people to buy or sell on the *free market whatever they *legitimately own in a *libertarian way. Taking *natural or libertarian law as real law means seeing that much of the so-called “black market” (but not when the goods are stolen, *fraudulently misrepresented, or in some other way flout liberty) is really white (such as commerce in recreational *drugs or items *smuggled across “*national” [state] borders), while much of the so-called “white market” (to the extent that the state buys things with *tax money, *aggressively imposes a *monopoly, etc.) is really black.

The “black market” flourished so well in the ex-USSR that, as Stalin observed, virtually any member of the Politburo could have been arrested for trading in it (although this was partly intentional: more banning means more discretionary *power for the authorities). “Black markets” in drugs are prevalent in gaols around the entire world. These things illustrate some limits to effective state control, even with extreme *power, when faced with voluntary exchange.

blackmail From *black* (bad or *illegitimate) plus *mail* (possibly from “male”, obsolete term for payment of rent or tribute). Normally used today primarily to refer to demanding payment, in money or kind, to prevent some revelation of information (although broad usage includes *extortion).

Normal market exchanges are beneficial to both sides, except for mistakes or *frauds (and the latter are not genuine *free market exchanges, for they are not as agreed). Blackmail might appear to differ radically. X threatens to reveal information (not necessarily of an illegal or *immoral nature, nor *illegitimately obtained, nor even true) to Y unless Z pays him not to do so. Unlike other market transactions, this might appear to make Z worse off. After all, no one is pleased to be blackmailed. Several interrelated questions arise. 1) Does blackmail differ significantly from other market exchanges? 2) Does blackmail make the blackmailee worse off? 3) Does blackmail interfere with the blackmailee’s *liberty? 4) Is it immoral? 5) Should it be illegal?

1 & 2) Consider, for instance, where an independent researcher discovers some technical information that would greatly facilitate *competition with a successful business. He offers, for a payment from that business, to *contract not to reveal the information to anyone else. That business would have been better off if the researcher had not made his discovery. But once he has then it is not true to say that buying his silence is what worsens the business’s new situation: for that is better for the business than having the researcher reveal the information to other people. This exchange appears to be legitimate.

By analogy, blackmail does make the blackmailee worse off than if the blackmailer had not discovered the information. But once he has then it is not true to say that buying his silence is what worsens the blackmailee’s new situation: for that is better for the blackmailee than having the blackmailer reveal what he knows to the relevant person (or possibly other people). These two situations appear to be structurally equivalent and not to make the payers worse off. Therefore, blackmail as such can be a legitimate exchange (or the researcher is also an illegitimate blackmailer). By contrast, making blackmail illegal—assuming this to be efficiently enforceable—does make the potential blackmailee worse off than his option of paying to stop the revelation.

3) Does blackmail interfere with liberty by being a kind of *initiated imposition? In a pre-propertyarian “state of nature”, anything that other people do that constrains our want-satisfaction is an initiated imposition. But then the same applies to what we do that constrains the want-satisfaction of those other people. There is a clash of complete liberties-in-themselves. However, once *property is derived from applying liberty in a way that maximises overall liberty in such clashes, then blackmail need not initiate impositions in terms of liberties-in-practice.

Blackmail can involve violations of *libertarian property. If the information was illegitimately acquired, then *restitution is due to the person who is the victim of that (not necessarily the blackmailee). The blackmail itself can remain legitimate. Matters are different if the blackmailer has information about some libertarian activity that is illegal under state law. For instance, if the blackmailer threatens to report someone's drug use, homosexual behaviour, Jewishness, etc., to the authorities under a regime where these things are punishable, then the blackmailer would be infringing a liberty (initiating an imposition). And if someone is lured into a situation that is subsequently used for blackmail, that might constitute a form of fraud. Etc.

4) Is "libertarian blackmail" immoral, nevertheless? It can be, but then so can many activities that are otherwise libertarian. We are often within our libertarian *rights to do things that are immoral, foolish, wasteful, etc. However, such blackmail can also be moral or have good *unintended consequences. For instance, if it at least partially punishes or deters people who would not otherwise be punished or deterred with respect to some immoral or rightly illegal acts. (*See* *retribution.)

5) Even if blackmail were always immoral, that could not in itself be a sufficient reason to make it illegal. Only if an activity clearly interferes with people's libertarian property rights can it rightfully and usefully be made, or recognised as, illegal. To make honest blackmail illegal interferes with the liberty of the, potential, blackmailer.

There is also the related practical argument that any contractual agreement with a blackmailer would seem to be unenforceable: for to sue a blackmailer would seem to involve that the damaging information is likely to come out. But in a libertarian society the contractual penalty for defaulting could deter this by some combination of being sufficiently onerous (*see* *specific performance) and efficiently enforced by private courts and *policing.

To defend a libertarian activity is not, of course, to advocate it. (*See also* *bribery; *cannibalism; *libertarian culture.)

blasphemy To communicate impiously about some god, or gods, or what is considered sacred (worthy of worship or considered holy, i.e., inviolable). This can involve the mere denial of their existence or sacredness.

Should blasphemy be illegal because it insults god(s)? If there were a god of any serious kind, then presumably he would be able to punish blasphemers himself (if he were not to think that genuine piety must be voluntary and so cannot be *coerced; as John Locke [1632-1704] argued). So, it is not clear why anyone else needs to punish blasphemers; they might want to do so more out of their own hubristic, *xenophobic, and *collectivistic identity than from genuine piety.

Should blasphemy be illegal because it causes great *offence to the *religious? Then what of the great offence that the religious can cause the non-religious if they choose to react with similar *intolerance (as some nominally *communist regimes have done)? *Freedom of expression among *consenting persons within *private-*property rules has negligible *externalities, especially when this is compared with either side imposing its preferred rules of expression on the other.

However, it can be entirely *libertarian, and *utilitarian, to ban blasphemy in any place of worship, street, publication, television channel, etc., where this is what the *private property owners choose. It is also possible to bind oneself *contractually to punishment for blaspheming. (Even death for apostasy, as exists in Islam, can be libertarian as long as it is due to a genuine contract; *see* *specific performance.)

To people who are fanatically—and even religiously—*woke, making fun of wokeness is blasphemy (literally, for they regard it as sacred). It is often treated by them as more of a "sin" than not being woke in other ways.

booms and slumps *See* *business cycles.

borders, political It seems likely that the idea of *political, *national, or other *state borders must originally and mainly have been to settle which state has the *right to *rule generally, not least to *extort *taxation, within some territory. Such borders have also often been used to *privilege certain vested interests by preventing the *competition of *free trade, thereby preventing the higher productivity that this would otherwise make possible.

Since travel has become easier and *passports have been demanded (from about 1914), such borders have also been used to stop uncontrolled and unlimited *immigration. Borders sometimes keep out people who mainly wish to seek asylum from an even worse *political *regime. And under the very worst regimes their own state's borders sometimes stop people from leaving in the first place.

While states exist, it is now probably necessary for them to limit immigration. If sufficiently large numbers of people (tens of millions?) were to arrive in a sufficiently short time (a few years?), then that could cause all manner of social problems for the existing population who have a prior *libertarian claim to all "public" (state) property. With the abolition, or at least reduction, of the *welfare state there would be less reason for people to be attracted to a *country by the various state handouts or for them to be excluded as a potential drain on such a system. In a fully libertarian country everything would be privately owned, and entry to all areas would be by agreement with the owners. Some businesses might be happy to take a lot of immigrant labour. Some residential areas might prefer to exclude all uninvited non-residents (*see* *gated communities).

See *freedom of movement or travel.

boxing and dangerous sports Adults have a *libertarian *right to engage in *sports that risk severely damaging, or even killing, themselves; whether for fun, *profit, or any other reason. They may do this alone or with *consenting or *contracting other adults. They must, of course, be liable for any ensuing medical care, funeral arrangements, or damage to third parties; so that no part of the *costs of such activities are *initiated impositions on others.

*Paternalists often wish to ban boxing because of the brain damage it causes. Bare-knuckle fighting has more blood, scars, and superficial damage, but it would do less brain damage. Sometimes paternalists also object to the "glorification of violence". This appears to be more aesthetic than *moral. And it is ironic that it is only by the threat, or reality, of violence that any dangerous sports are regulated or banned by the *state. And that violence, unlike with dangerous sports, is *aggressive.

Gladiatorial combat (which might be needed to enforce extreme *restitution, in any case) and *dueling, are two extremes that some people might choose to engage in. Freedom and *welfare, in the *modus vivendi* sense of want-satisfaction, will overall increase by such activities compared with persecuting their participants. People have no more right to prevent dangerous sports than those sportsmen have to force them to participate (unless, perhaps, as *retributive restitution for any bans they have caused). The existence of entirely voluntary activities that "respectable" people deem to be ugly, disgusting, dangerous, or immoral is a touchstone of a free society.

See *sport abuse.

boycott To refuse to have dealings with a person, business, or organisation. The word comes from Captain Boycott, a landlord's agent in County Mayo Ireland, who was so treated. Along with *freedom of expression and financial influence, boycotting is in itself a *libertarian way of responding to those of whom we disapprove in some way although their behaviour might not be illegal, or not provably so.

Such actions can sometimes be extremely effective in altering the behaviour of other people. They can often *legitimately do more economic "damage" (in reality, only a withheld benefit), while maintaining the upper hand *morally, than can *aggressive action. Businesses, in particular, are extremely keen to avoid doing anything that might cause customers to boycott their products. As long as a boycott does not also involve any *initiated imposition, it cannot be an illegal *"conspiracy to injure". Nor can secondary boycotts—of those who decline to boycott—be illegal (although some *states have *legislated against these).

bribery To bribe someone is to pay him in some way to betray a position of trust, often by breaking a *contract. To bribe someone to do something against *libertarian *law is to become jointly and severally liable for *restitution. For instance, to obtain money or goods from a business by bribing an employee of that business is to *conspire with that employee to *defraud the business in question. By contrast, to bribe a *state official to break some *illiberal regulation or state command (in the guise of a law), will often be commendable (*see* *corruption). It is an endemic aspect of *"democracy" (elected oligarchy) that in order to win elections politicians openly "bribe" potential *voters with promises, which they do sometimes keep, that involve *tax-*extortion and other *liberty-violating activities.

See also *blackmail.

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) This remains the culturally dominant broadcasting *organisation in the United Kingdom; with multiple television channels plus sundry *national, regional, and local radio stations. Although nominally autonomous, it is in effect a *nationalised company (and thereby part of the *state) that is very loosely politically controlled by a variety of *corrupt state appointments, regulations, and *bribes or threats of one sort or another (including the implicit promise to leading individuals of eventual state titles, or not to raise or to abolish the licence fee). To the extent that it is not thus controlled it can largely afford to be a law unto itself (Ofcom, the state-imposed regulatory body also covering the BBC, largely being a fellow traveller). This is because it is *tax-*parasitic, primarily by a tax on TV ownership, and has other *privileges that no other broadcasting organisation has. In self-advertising we have been told that BBC “quality” (for which people would not pay voluntarily) is only possible “because of the unique way in which the BBC is funded”—*extortion (they strangely fail to add). The *aggressively imposed television licence pays for most of it: currently several billion pounds per annum. The BBC also raises substantial revenue from selling its programmes worldwide. But as these programmes were made with tax-money they are not the BBC’s *legitimate property to sell: they are the property of TV-licence victims, as are all the assets of this *criminal organisation. The poorest people are hit hardest by the licence fee, non-payment of which is the largest reason for the imprisonment of single mothers (technically for non-payment of the £1,000 fine, which is even worse).

Originally the BBC had a greater pretence to social betterment with “*public service broadcasting”, although this was always extortion-funded, *paternalistic, *hierarchical, and *nationalistic. *Competition with *commercial stations has seen the BBC increasingly become more populist in its programming, thereby considerably undermining its official excuse for existing in the first place. However, with the rise of *political correctness (PC), it has also become the leading mouthpiece for PC *propaganda; which is not popular. And that has now often become the even more extreme *woke propaganda. For some decades it has also been the leading propagandist for bogus *environmentalist catastrophism and orthodox scientific theories. As such, it is now the leading source of misinformation in the country. The commercial, but state-regulated, channels have also had to become at least as bad if only to keep their broadcasting licences or to avoid fines. One example of BBC popularism and anti-education was its pandering to the ignorant view that the year 2000 marked the start of a new millennium, when the *common era calendar, which counts from one instead of zero, entails that 2000 is one year early.

That the BBC has occasionally produced some good programmes in the past with all the money it receives cannot be an excuse for its criminal funding and cannot compensate for the *opportunity cost: people would rather have spent their own money in other ways that they judge to be superior. Some *privatisation of the BBC has occurred and more is likely. This will be to the good for *liberty and *welfare, as long as privileges, political *cronyism, and state-regulation are restricted. Only full *depoliticisation can turn the BBC into a genuinely *liberal and *efficient organisation competing freely in the *market.

BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) Often known as “mad cow disease”. As with *AIDS, *tax-*extorted *money has in effect *monopolised a particular (prion) theory of the cause of BSE, thus crowding out competing theories that might be true. To blame the problem of BSE on the *market or *profit motive, as some have done, is to overlook that *procrustean *state-regulation (rather than diverse and competing market regulations) has been in operation throughout. Neither is it “obvious” that feeding animals parts of other animals was “looking for trouble” because it isn’t *natural: this has been done safely with various kinds of animals for many years. Once the problem arose, instead of allowing private organisations and individuals to assess the risks and make their own decisions, the state ensured a financial disaster by imposing mass tax-compensated killings because of its fear of being blamed for any human death otherwise combined with its desire to be seen to “do something” that seemed popular.

bureaucracy This relatively modern word (mid-18th century) originally meant, and still more precisely refers to, a so-called “civil service” (although these go back at least to ancient Sumer). Today it is often used more loosely of non-*state *organisations as well, but they do not have the literal *power that the word etymologically implies. The civil service is part of the state. It does not serve *civil *society but helps to *rule it from its innumerable bureaux—offices or desks—and thus is rightly known as “bureaucracy”. At the same time, the “civil service” is a real servant of state *legislation and the *government of the day, and thus might more accurately be known as the “state service” or “political service” rather than its current euphemism.

Despite being constrained by state legislation and the government, the bureaucracy has interests and powers that are at odds with these. It has an inherent tendency to “empire build”. That is, it becomes a special interest in its own right and one where its members can increase their income, status, power, and influence by pressing for more money, control, and employees. No sinister conspiracy is necessary here (see public choice theory). It is enough that these employees are in a situation where it is in their immediate interests to see the “need” for greater regulation and “resources” (as with all other state employees, bureaucrats are not tax contributors). However, a sinister “deep state” that deliberately flouts government policy and the public interest can also evolve.

It is erroneous to think that comparable empire-building happens in the free-market sector, as empires rule rather than serve as firms do. In the free market there is the spontaneous limit of what is profitable, and profit comes only through offering a product that people want to buy. If a business cannot efficiently offer this, then consumers will patronise their competitors. Thus, businesses are the real servants of civil society. With a bureaucracy there is no such limit or other criterion of economic efficiency. The general rule is that the bigger the overall bureaucracy the more it will cost all tax victims without a proportional benefit to them and the more that all state subjects will lose their liberties.

Despite some popular perception of the damage done by bureaucracy, hence the pejorative connotation of this name, concentrated benefits and dispersed costs severely restrict effective challenges to its existence. More “democracy”, sometimes thought to be a solution, usually results in even more bureaucracy.

business cycles The free market is often thought to result in spontaneous booms and slumps in general production in entire economies over a period of varying years, sometimes known as “business cycles” (USA, originally but now becoming prevalent) or “trade cycles” (UK). In the growth stage we have a surge in economic activity that might look sustainable. But then we often have what is not merely a levelling off but a serious decline to a recession or even depression, usually marked by falling prices (unless further inflation of the money supply is imposed) and, supposedly involuntary, unemployment (as people take up state benefits).

These “cycles” do exist, but there is little reason to ascribe severe endemic versions to the free market. With free markets there will tend to be steady diversified growth over large geographic areas, although with some ups and downs due to changing patterns of supply and demand in small areas. Where there is sudden growth or steep recession in an entire economy (rather than in particular sectors), this is most likely caused by state inflation of the money supply and spending being increased, ultimately unsustainably. The state regulation of financial markets generally is a further destabilising influence. The “slump” is bound to come because the state spending was in effect with stolen (taxed) or counterfeit (fiat) money (so it is a negative-sum game), rather than due to a genuine increase in production. And resources will have been reallocated to deal with the apparent new demand (new capital goods, in particular), which is then seen to have been wasted.

In short, it is not really a business cycle at all but a state-intervention cycle. Economic calculation has been proactively disrupted by the state and wealth has thereby been destroyed. This can be rapidly corrected on the free market but a return to a similar level of wealth will take time (and the real loss cannot be made up). There is no way to hasten this by further state intervention that will not ultimately delay and exacerbate the problem. To avoid the chief cause and prolongation of state-intervention cycles, state money and financial regulation should be depoliticised and state benefits (in particular for unemployment and housing costs) should be abolished.

To the extent that markets might nevertheless have occasional spontaneous booms and busts to any significant degree, there is no reason to think that state intervention could lessen them. And even if it could do so, this would not be desirable if economic growth were curtailed as a consequence.

END B