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Liberalism as Ideology:

Liberal Precepts as Guide to Action

and

Responses to Philosophical and Practical Challenges

by

Jay P. Brown

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Section 1: Introduction

In order to comprehend and interact with the world we live in, we must understand the dynamic forces that drive human behavior. We must examine, at the foundational level, the nature of man and the relation between his thought and his resulting action. Through close analysis of these causal building blocks of individual knowledge, we can understand why a person reacts to his environment in a particular fashion, and predict his responses to different kinds of external stimuli. Many philosophers--theological, social, and political--have attempted through the years to make these kinds of determinations regarding why man is what he is, and why he does what he does.

In his article, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man," Clifford Geertz claims that culture must be seen as much an affective agent in what man has developed into as a product of that development. Man did not, Geertz says, first develop into a prototypical physical standard of what we see today, and then proceed to "create" culture afterwards as a result of the new cerebral functions he possessed; rather, culture developed (and still develops) along with man's expanding knowledge and is as much a formative refining agent to that knowledge as the reverse
In this way, culture is an integral part of who man is, not only an external product.

Because culture cannot be separated from man, his knowledge, his impulse, his passion, culture is one root of the processes that ultimately serve to determine behavior. Geertz demonstrates that culture is a kind of symbolic, abstract knowledge within man, and that man mentally accesses this symbolic knowledge when formulating behavioral (mental, emotive, or mechanical) responses to differing stimuli. Culture, to an individual, is a symbolic road map to activity (Geertz, 1965, p. 107).

The concept of ideology is very closely related to Geertz's idea of culture. An ideology is a particular set of symbolic ideas in much the same way that culture is a set of abstracts. Both culture and ideology contain principles that guide individuals in their actions. They are overlapping, intertwining foundations of knowledge for an individual. Steve Seitz defines an ideology as "thought rooted in a socio-historical context, an abstraction from human experience, a guide to social and political action" (Shaw, 1973, p. 6).

Neither Geertz nor Seitz claim that any one individual has a complete cultural knowledge or ideology; knowledge must always be partial or flawed. Likewise neither claim that
people always act out their cultural or ideological beliefs in a logical or non-contradictory manner. But because this symbolic knowledge is a large determinant of behavior, it is useful to examine in a practical context.

As political science and political philosophy are concerned in part with exploring causes of human behavior in the political realm, it will prove informative to look at the precepts of a modern political ideology and determine the human behaviors that these precepts guide when individuals in civil society access them in their symbolic form. How do these precepts give rise to certain types of consistent behavior? To where does the ideological system logically direct one's thoughts? Do the individual and collective responses to the ideology match predictions made by authors of the ideology, or do aberrations occur? Most important for this essay, what happens when reality is not consistent with the functioning picture of the world an ideology provides? What reactions are produced as the result of this situation? The answers to these questions will provide an illustration of how ideology influences behavior, but more importantly for political science, will predict human responses when the principles of a particular ideology are challenged. The ideology which we shall examine for this study is one that has appeared relatively recently in world history, but has
forever altered the face of civil society around the globe. That ideology is Liberalism.
The ideological precepts of Liberalism were first enunciated by European theorist John Locke a decade prior to the Glorious Revolution. Locke's political philosophy, presented in the Two Treatises of Government, forwarded ideas for the bases of political power and the formation of civil society which had been completely ignored or unheard of during his time. The radical nature of his writings set off waves of new political philosophy which are spreading and reverberating even today. In articulating the philosophy of Liberal society, Locke began an attack on several existing institutions of state power that would feel the brunt of his criticisms for many years. The political face of the world was altered forever by the publication of Locke's theories. What are the primary tenets of this philosophy that appeared as a new voice among established systems, that challenged the paternal order of rulership, that provided a set of principles that people could order their lives around? That is what we seek to answer as we examine an inventory of the precepts of Liberalism. The philosophy became ideology as people applied its principles and used the belief system as a whole to make their world more secure and understandable.
The main purpose of Locke's first treatise was to discredit the theory that kings rule by divine right. He reviews the claims supporting the theory, and argues that they have no validity. Supporters of this "divine right" thought that in the same way parents have God-given authority over their children, kings have a "paternal" power over their subjects. Locke argues that parents only have a legitimate basis for authority over their offspring for the express purpose of "educating" them so that they may function in the world. He therefore says that when children have reached the age where they understand and appeal to Reason and need no further guidance from their parents to survive, paternal authority ceases. Thus, a king cannot have paternal authority over subjects; they are all grown up and have no need to consult him on questions of survival or living. Locke destroys the legitimation of the divine right of kings by defining the origins of paternal authority in the needs of the offspring. Adult subjects of a king have no similar needs, Locke says.

This left political contemporaries of Locke's time with a gaping question. If political authority could not be somehow drawn from a scriptural reference employed as approval for monarchy, if it did not exist and reside in a
king who must "father" his people, where or in whom was it to
be found? What factor (or factors) then legitimized
political power? Locke subsequently tackles these questions
in his Second Treatise.

It is necessary upon starting out to define political
power. Without a definition, Locke would be providing
aimless proofs towards a nebulous goal. Locke provides us
with his definition of political power in order that we may
trace his reasoning from the foundation to the peak. And
this is the Lockean definition of political power, the
cornerstone of Liberal ideology: "the Right of making
laws...for the regulating and preserving of property...and in
defense of the commonwealth from foreign injury, and all this
only for the public good" (Locke, 1960, p. 308). Locke then
shows how this definition of power may be arrived at through
reason. He begins, as many political writers before him, by
examining man in his natural state, and seeking to trace the
development of civil society from naturally occurring factors
of humanity.

Locke looked at man in the state of nature through
glasses of a different color than the ones worn by political
philosophers before him. They had often regarded the world
as partitioned into two kinds of people; the philosopher and
the vulgar of Benedictus de Spinoza provide a sufficient example of the division. Locke, however, departs from this sort of dichotomous model. He provided a clue to his view of the natural man while discrediting the theory of divine right. His refutation rests in part on the view that adults are able to appeal to their own Reason in the course of everyday living to solve problems. The king is in no way more intelligent, reasonable, pious, or less prone to mistakes than the average person. Locke expands this facet of his argument and clarifies it in his second treatise. He states that all men are provided naturally and at birth equal access to nature's abundant provisions and to use of the same faculties of Reason. He places men on the same level mentally and, from the outset, on equal terms materially. Because of this equality, Locke derives that all men are born free. Since no man can claim superior access to Reason over another, neither can they appropriate for themselves an unequal proportion of power over another. These two principles, equality and freedom, form the core of Locke's political theory, and affect the entire structure of his argument. More currently, they are familiar to us as the foundational points of America's Liberal existence.

Locke's argument that men are free rests on his first
postulate that all men have the same faculties and use of Reason. Reason, he says, is the "law of nature," available to all, which directs how men ought to conduct themselves in the state of nature. Locke considers Reason so important, so fundamental, that he refers to it as "given from God." In the state of nature, men have only Reason to appeal to in decision making, because there exists between men no judge which is common to all or superior over all, who might settle their grievances. Fortunately, though, "Reason, the Law of Nature, teaches that none ought to harm another in life, health, liberty, or possessions" (Locke, 1960, p. 311). Without this law accessible to all men, Locke's description of the state of nature might more closely resemble Hobbes'--more brutal, violent, and deadly.

Why, then, is it necessary for men to enter into civil society? While Reason is commonly available to men, problems occur when men refuse to use this wisdom given them. Locke remarks that men "biased by their interest as well as ignorant [of Reason] for want of study of it, are not apt to allow of it as binding to them in the application of it to their particular case" (1960, p. 396). This fact necessitates civil society. Man's penchant for fallibility requires him to establish a structure which allows him to carry on life
protected from the passions and errors of himself and others. In order for this to occur Locke prescribes a law common to all men, whether they be citizens or executives of society. This law must not have exceptions or show favoritism in regard to its executors; this would be quite contrary to the idea that men are each others' equals, and might allow those with power to use it unjustly to their own favor. Locke is trying to eliminate just such evil with his political theory. From Locke's description of such a common law springs the Liberal tenet of government that men should be governed equally under the law, and that their disputes must be settled by an impartial, unbiased observer of the law. The United States is referred to as a "democracy" under general terms; actually "republic" provides a truer label: civil society by the rule of law, a principle in accordance with Locke.

The reason that Locke takes such pains in delineating exactly who man is in the state of nature, and likewise, the reason that description is so essential to our understanding of Liberalism today is that the state of nature can never be entirely separated from the conception of civil society. The characteristics of man in the state of nature still remain inseparable from him in society, and the Reason which governs
him naturally is facilitated to govern him more completely in society. In this sense civil society is not an alteration of the state of nature, but and extension of it, with certain advantages accruing. An example of a situation which illustrates the presence of the state of nature within society: the hypothetical meeting of two men on the highway, far removed from any common judge or executors of the law which governs them. While these men are under the law of the civil government at this time the law and government are helpless to exercise authority as a common judge; there is no ability to see that the law is enforced. At this point in time the men are for all intents and purposes relating to each other within the state of nature.

This is one sense in which the state of nature exists within society; another is in the way that the defining principles of man in the state of nature do not change when he enters civil society. The fact that all men are equals is not altered within society. The fact that all men have access to the same Reason is not altered within society. The precept that all men must be free from arbitrary rule by another is not altered within society. These postulates are unalterable no matter what state man is in. They are the consistent, unchanging root of Liberalism, discovered in the
state of nature, but true everywhere. Locke's civil society does not seek to alter who man is, but only to avert the disaster of his mistakes.

We must step back from scrutinizing the characteristics of man for a moment. We have defined, in part, what man is, but that does not necessarily tell us what he does. Without that knowledge, it is useless to discuss the forces that drive him or his relationships with others, because we have no idea where these are leading him. Locke says that man is primarily motivated (or perhaps driven) by his desire for self-preservation, a desire given by God through Reason. This is both an individual and collective goal of mankind. It directs his actions, makes it imperative for him to abide by the law of nature, and necessitates some sort of social functioning with others. Locke's description of the characteristics of man enable us to discover the sphere in which he must work while achieving this goal. If equality is the fundamental characteristic of man, preservation is the fundamental goal. This also holds true whether man exists in a state of nature or civil society. It is this goal, in fact, that causes man to form civil society; his Reason dictates that it may best be achieved through that formation.
In order to preserve himself, man must have sustenance and shelter. In the original state of nature, acquiring these was not difficult because of the abundance of necessary materials. The materials were so plentiful that they were of little value in and of themselves. Locke says that they only became valuable when a person had need of them and applied his hand in gathering them or using them. Such a person was not harming others in this way because of the plenty and availability of goods. His labor had value which made his goods valuable, although left in nature they were worthless. No other person was entitled to take away the goods that a person had labored to provide himself with; they were valuable because of the labor involved in gathering them from nature—and labor, Locke says, must be the sole property of the person who works. No other could be said to own a man's labor. This would involve forcing another to act, which is prohibited by Reason because equals cannot arbitrarily demand action of each other. If one person controls another, a state of inequality results. Therefore, since a man cannot be said to "own" another's labor, he cannot either own that which another's labor has given value to. This leads to the definition of property. Locke describes two kinds of natural property: a man's person (his life, thoughts, etc.), and his
labor. From application of these comes the definition of
derived property: material goods which he has labored for.
To the three of these kinds of property, no other person is
entitled. Liberalism champions these principles in every
sense. People are entitled to the inalienable rights of
"life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (property
certainly implied) because of the equality given them by
their Creator and their labor for self-preservation.

These principles of property appeared within the state
of nature. In today's world of many billions of people,
however, the resources for every person's self-preservation
are not available in overabundance. Man was and is required
to solve this problem of shortage, Locke says, because if he
does not he will cease to exist. Man's desire for self-
preservation is always foremost in his mind. Man met this
challenge with the innovative processes of agriculture.
Growing techniques allow a person to produce enough
sustenance for himself plus a large surplus which may be
provided to others. Thus, a person who owns little farmable
land because of its scarcity may still benefit from others'
ability to produce. The normal consequences of shortage are
circumvented in this way by agriculture.
But a problem develops because individuals do not have an incentive to grow more than they may need for themselves or their family. Besides, their surplus may spoil, unused, and they would lose the value of all the labor that went into creating that surplus. Locke describes the development of money as a process that enabled man to receive non-perishable goods in exchange for his perishable surplus that others need. These non-perishable goods—in the form of scarce metals—could be then re-applied towards the development of more surplus usable by others. The producer could also use a portion to reward himself with comforts and conveniences. In this way a person could gain wealth justifiably because of the benefit of his surplus to other people. And by storing up precious metals, he is not robbing others of provisions necessary for survival, but helping to produce more of them.

Locke saw that among men there exists varying levels of "industry," or the will to labor. Money becomes an incentive to a person to work so that he increases benefit to others in conjunction with benefits to himself. People though, according to their nature, apply themselves in varying degrees to labor, and Locke showed how they would be rewarded in accordance with their labor. This justifies the inequality of possessions, because those who labor hardest
will earn for themselves more benefit than those who labor very little (Strauss, 1972, p. 468). Their advantage materially is permissible, though, because their produced surplus—which helps preserve others—also increases with their personal gain. This idea remains a principle aspect of Liberalism.

We have already discussed the idea that disputes occur between men in the state of nature because either they are ignorant of what Reason teaches, or because their personal passions keep them from obeying Reason. The inequality of possessions which Locke has now justified causes a great exacerbation to this problem. Some men, having little because they do not apply much labor, will undoubtedly be led by their "covetousness" to question another's right to great possession. While Reason teaches that he should search out a means by which to produce more for himself and society and apply himself wholeheartedly to it, he is blinded by his passion for comfort. In this case, disputes between men about ideas and possessions abound, with no law or judge common to both to resolve the conflicts peaceably and justly as Reason dictates. They must turn to the formation of a civil society which will afford them protection of their persons and their property. The government of this society
must also encourage "industry" so that the collective preservation of mankind may be better accomplished. Reason dictates that man embark on this course of civil society, for protection and freedom from others' non-Reasoned passions. Locke postulates, "The chief end of men uniting into commonwealths and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property [life, liberty, and possessions]" (1960, p. 395).

Thus, Locke has described the nature of property, as related to the nature of man. The question that we must subsequently ask then, is, how does the nature of property affect formation of actual government policy? Locke has stated that the general goal of government is to protect the property of individuals, but it will be informative for us to examine the structure of current Liberal government today and see in specific fashion how this goal is being accomplished.

One very direct example of the effect of the nature of property upon government is found within the Constitution of the United States. The Liberal government of the US is often referred to as a "limited" government. This means that while it does reserve some areas of complete sovereignty over its citizens, there are also bounded areas of individual sovereignty where it cannot interfere. The reason the
government has been established this way is two-fold: an unlimited government would ultimately place tyrannical power in the hands of governmental leaders even if their authority had, at first, been given them by the people; and an unlimited government would violate not only the rights of individuals to be secure in their own persons, but also in their possessions, to borrow some Constitutional language. Individuals are specifically granted the right to the security of their possessions in the Constitution because according to Liberal ideology every man's pursuit of the increase of personal possessions benefits all of mankind.

This translates into a "hands-off" or laissez-faire approach by the government in most matters regarding personal or corporate properties. The government keeps its hands out of profit-making ventures because Liberal ideology dictates that people will be best motivated by pursuance of their own best interest--and they will recognize their best interest through the Reason available to them. This in turn results in efficient production of resources helpful to mankind in common, while each individual pursues their own security and prosperity. People work hardest, Locke implies, when they are working wholeheartedly for themselves. The Liberal policy of limited government takes this "self-centeredness"
and allows it to produce benefits for the common good, as opposed to authoritarian governments which Locke criticizes because they assume planning of all production and then rape the producers of the benefits.

Another reason that Liberalism promotes the idea of limited government is that centrally planned governments tend to reduce worker initiative to be efficient and innovative. Laborers will only work as hard as they are forced because they realize most of what they produce and earn will be taken from them and used by the authorities to bolster their own positions or the safety of the state which secures their positions. Factories will turn out goods of poor quality because they are interested only in rushing to meet a state-specified quota so that they will not be punished. Innovations in production will not be voluntarily made because that involves risking a certain amount of capital—and for what? Workers will only receive the same benefit by reaching their quota, but if the innovation fails, they will be reprimanded. There is no good reason, on a localized scale, to risk that for the sake of innovation. The recently failed Soviet economy provides a good illustration of the problems resulting from centrally planned policies.
Everyone is hurt by that type of system. An economy that puts together second-rate products and discourages innovation cannot ultimately provide for the security and prosperity of its citizens or the safety of its borders. Liberal, limited governments seek to avoid those pitfalls by allowing individual initiative to be the driving force behind production. Workers are allowed to experience the fruits of their labor rather than having it governed away. This provides the motivation for future work to be undertaken. Innovative risks are explored as individuals seek to profit more from their endeavors. This in turn provides chances for benefit to individuals outside of the original corporate structure.

To be sure, Liberal governments like the United States have discovered through experience that the "free-market" does require some regulation. And no government can survive without some means of collecting income through taxes. One needs only to remember the failed ability of the government to administrate under the Articles of Confederation. The idea behind limited government is that enough can be gleaned from individuals for administrative functions--that make citizens' lives better--while leaving them the largest proportion of their earned income to provide incentive.
That is the reason that tax monies in Liberal systems like that of the US are not largely redistributed in order to bring all citizens towards a median standard of living. To do so would be to discourage those who, by their industry, have the potential to produce comparatively greater benefits for themselves and consequently for everybody. Tax laws in the US also allow for exemptions when money is used in investment-for-profit. This is an acknowledgment by the government of the Liberal principle that the more people invest in their own gain, the more they invest in everyone's favor. These systems of limited government and of tax collection and expenditure illustrate how Liberal governments apply the theory of the nature of property in practice.

Formation of government must follow certain guidelines, however, so as not to contradict any principle of equality, freedom, or self-preservation as all citizens pursue property gain. Locke handles the arising issues by prescribing a government formed by "compact, with all consenting" to its powers and limits. This can be the only legitimate form of power. If some should structure the government so that it gives them personal advantage over others or subjugates others, then a situation is created in which there is inequality and ownership of another's labor and unjust force.
This is unacceptable and contrary to all Locke has shown up to this point. The government formed by equal consent of all participants in society must have the power to punish those who would offend the principles of equality or justice or preservation. Otherwise, it is helpless to preserve man, which is its main goal.

It must be noted that personal power of the participants or citizens under government can never be wholly surrendered up, or there would be no defense against encroachment on a person's right to preserve himself. As a corollary, no power can be given by the government to any individual or group that would cause or allow the society's destruction. This would also be contrary to preservation, the reason for which government is formed. The decisions of the government can neither be made by authority of an individual or minority group unless they are conducted with the express consent of the majority of people and/or conducive to the common good. For any minority party to make decisions contrary to the majority will—what Locke terms "the greater force" of society—would be to destroy the principle of equality. The majority may however give its consent to rule by a minority party through varying forms of government.
Locke advises on this point that a separation of governmental powers would be prudent. Otherwise, "it may be too great a temptation to human frailty, apt to grasp at power, for the same persons who have the power of making laws to have also in their hands the power to execute them" (1960, p. 410). A separation of powers guards against an attempt by a governing party to exert their will unjustly over others or the majority. Liberal societies have honored this principle of separation of powers time and again. It has proven an adequate protection against usurpation.

In every facet, Liberal theory protects the equality and freedom of people. Under a Liberal system of government, people are freed to pursue their highest and common goal, self-preservation. Freedom enables fulfillment of this goal and is multiplied, not limited, by common laws. People of Liberal societies have freedom from arbitrary rule or subjugation by another, and freedom for personal security and gain in life. Locke wrote that a recourse to law in disputes is the greatest asset man can have in pursuing his goals. When a government diverts from the goal of preserving society and subsequently its citizens, it has shown itself to be contrary to Reason. It is ruling by arbitrary power, and
thus has effectively dissolved itself, freeing the people to form another.

These principles of Liberalism fueled the fire of revolutions against such governments and a broader conceptual revolution for equality and freedom. They are powerful, innovative, proven principles that continue to be upheld the world over. But what happens when Liberalism is faced with a set of circumstances contrary to how it says the world should function? How does Liberalism stand up to pointed philosophical attack? Are there results which Locke did not or could not foresee? This is the question we seek to answer in the following section: How has Liberalism dealt with several challenges committed to its destruction?
Section 3: Challenges to Liberalism

We have discussed Liberalism as a political ideology, its fundamental precepts and goals. We have also noted that ideologies help people to organize a chaotic world along general lines of functionality, and serve as a set of beliefs that guide the actions of individuals, organizations, governments. A few examples were given, in the section that summarized the key propositions of Liberalism, of how the ideology has guided the establishment of government and governmental policies. There is, however, an important question regarding ideologies, and specifically the ideology of Liberalism, that we have yet to explore. The question is important to examine because it will spring up somewhere in the life of just about every ideology that has ever been used or ever will be used by man to make sense out of a complex world. We must ask: what happens to an ideology--and what happens to Liberalism--when it is confronted by a set of circumstances which it failed to predict or anticipate? When a people has ordered their lives around general principles which they hold to be true and functional, what occurs when they climb out of bed one morning and realize that events happening around them are taking place completely outside the
realm of—or contrary to—their ideological belief set? How will this people respond? What will become of the ideology?

Ideologies, as we have said, are for many people, principles that explain the how, why, and what of mankind. They allow people to imagine motives, understand another's position on political or social issues, or determine a logically consistent course of action in their personal lives. Because ideologies are employed in some form or another by most people over the course of their lives, it is no mean occurrence when an event springs up suddenly and shouts, "My existence defies your ideology! Your ideology is not functional in the way you believed, and I am the proof."

This can be particularly stressful when an entire group of people function according to a shared ideology. It is much easier for a person to believe in the truthfulness or pragmatism of his own ideology when others are joined with him, working from the same origins for the same goals. Surely, the thought goes, if it is a view held by many, it must be correct. At least that is how we check our actions subconsciously. So, when a situation occurs that presents a challenge to an ideology, that shows the world (or in particular the "world" of the ideology) is not painted all over in a shade drawn from the same bucket, people are forced to fashion a response, an answer, an explanation. An
ideology is too personalized and too internalized to be shrugged off. A serious examination begins, of the ideology, and of the challenger.

These reactions to questions about ideology can take three forms. In one instance, after a defeated struggle to make the disparate parts fit together, the ideology will be thrown on the junk heap and forgotten, only to be replaced by a new and different one. This is certainly one way to resolve a conflict that arises when events are not as an ideology says they should be. Another response would be to somehow refashion the existing ideas within the ideology in a way which makes room for the new situation without internal conflict. Sometimes this grafting of the new and the old is done in a form which perverts the logic of the original belief set just enough to make fit the new part. People do not easily or willingly condemn to meaninglessness that which has been a part of them for very long. To do so would injure the self respect. But sometimes even this restructuring is not possible. Sometimes events are such that they are diametrically opposed to some of the precepts of an ideology, and in order to preserve some, the contentious part is simply dropped from the rest. Most people will choose a solution involving the latter two principles, because in retaining part of an ideology they hear whispered reassurances that
they were not completely wrong, after all. Not too many folks like to admit they are completely wrong—and where ideology is concerned, they usually aren't anyway. Ideologies really offer understanding of the broadest kinds of issues.

In understanding Liberalism and ideologies in general, we must examine them at some points at which they were confronted by the challenges just discussed. For the purpose of examining Liberalism, there exist a variety of circumstances of this kind which would offer a good scope of inquiry. Two of the profoundest occurrences in American history—a country built mainly around the ideological precepts of Liberalism—provide an excellent framework from which to view the swirling dynamics of an ideology in crisis. The events and philosophies of the South during the Civil War period, and the policies of the New Deal era give us prime illustrations of what happens when Liberalism is confronted with opposing viewpoints or circumstances. These battles of principle and philosophy flesh out nicely the hypothesis of the three possible responses, given above.

To refer back to the image of people waking up some morning and discovering the world just was not how they had thought when they fell asleep the previous night, that is just what happened to America quite a few years before the
start of the Civil War. America woke up from its grogginess, and must have exclaimed aloud, "We believe that individuals are equal and free. We have built our entire civil society around this concept of man. And yet, right here in America we are abiding the existence of a class of slave-laborers! How can this be?" Northerner and Southerner alike opened their eyes to the realization. Of course, they were not so asleep as to have no inkling of the paradox facing them, and neither did they admit to its discovery in a single moment as a man jolted from slumber makes a discovery. Social ideas move through a populous in slow waves like tidewaters—first advancing a little, then receding a bit, but all the while it progresses more than it recedes. But the analogy of the sleeper does give some sense of the feeling which gradually pervaded the entire populous of the country. Liberalism said that all men were born free into a state of equality, and that civil society was created to preserve those qualities in best possible form. But below the Mason-Dixon line, thousands of people were born into a state of bondage, considered less than worthy to eat at the table of the master. Those masters, too, were heralders of the Liberal ideology and in some way the champion products of its scheme. They had gained wealth and preeminence for themselves through the innovative establishments of private agricultural
plantations. They had responded to the incentives of the Liberal atmosphere and proved themselves "industrious." Yet, their profits had not been massed by the efforts of other free capitalist apprentices learning Liberal market nuances. They had been extracted by forced labor from a people made subservient. Here, indeed, was a problem brewing for Liberal ideology—a source of fomenting aggravation that would have to be dealt with. It could not be ignored forever.

Both the North and the South would have to deal with this ideological inconsistency, and it is not surprising that they took divergent paths in doing so. The South was much more dependent on slave labor for agricultural production than the North was for industrial production. Slavery was deeply ingrained in Southern culture, in the Southern way of doing business and turning a profit. The North had no such economic reliance upon slavery for production. Thus the North came comparatively easily to the viewpoint that slavery was an injustice to human beings who should be, under the principles of Liberalism, free and equal. The South, fearing the change in production and power that abolition would bring, began to develop a defensiveness about the issue. Under no circumstance did the South want to see the emancipated slave carry away with him the means of cheap agricultural production and subsequently large profits. The
personal and collective pride of the South was tied up in the spreading lawns and wide porches of the plantation. To use a Biblical phrase to describe the situation, "Where a man's treasure is, there his heart will be also." In other words, the Southern heart was enamored with the stateliness of the empires-in-miniature it had built. The South could not possibly desire to break its own heart--this was too much that the North asked. But supporting the whole structure was the African slave.

The South, in order to keep its treasure and preserve its heart, was forced to come up with answers to the problems posed by the Liberal ideology to the institution of slavery. They were, in effect, backed into a corner by a moral interrogator. At that point when they could retreat no further from the accusations and disparaging remarks made on their vocation, they had to turn and vociferously return the challenge. Once defensive, the South had to become offensive, to confront Liberalism, to show where and why it was void and non-applicable to their situation. This would be no easy task, especially considering that part of the reason for the South's prosperity was the Liberalness of the agricultural market it grown on.

In this sense the South would have to oppose itself, one of the main point Louis Hartz brings up in his book, The
Liberal Tradition in America. He says that again and again, the South comes up with philosophical arguments designed to refute some portion of the Liberal theory, but ends up slaying itself by returning again and again to the principles it tried to destroy. On Calhoun's several reversals, he remarks,

The idea of state "sovereignty" shatters a meaningful American union, and yet he insists with the most anguished repetition that this alone can serve as a national "preservative". The idea of a fixed Southern minority and a fixed Northern majority amounts to civil war, and yet the scheme of the "concurrent majority" he builds upon it he describes in terms of compromise that are nothing short of idyllic (Hartz, 1955, p. 160).

In this way, the South betrayed true Liberal sentiments which still bubbled under the surface of its collective soul. It was indeed difficult for the Southerners to assail the freedom and conventions of a market system which had brought so much prosperity to them. Liberalism, outside of the blind spot of slavery, was woven throughout the Southern cloth.
The South attempted through various other means to circumvent the Liberal ideology with which they had existed for decades. They declared a "Great conservative reaction," in which they proclaimed that Locke's precepts for social freedom were wrong. Hartz illumines the holes in the logic of this approach when he points out that the Southerners really had no conservative tradition which they could turn back to. They had experienced the power of being "born equal," in the words of Toqueville, and in attempting to be "conservative" there was nothing in their experience except this Liberalism to conserve (Hartz, 1955, p. 151). In trying to adopt the philosophies of a feudal reaction, the South was attempting to replace one ideology with another that better fit their circumstance, and did not condemn them at the same time. Hartz treats this scheme of the South with the same disregard the North did, referring to it as "simple fraud. When we penetrate beneath the feudal and reactionary surface of the South, we do not find feudalism: we find slavery" (1955, p. 147).

These philosophic approaches that the South presented as a replacement for Liberal ideologies were, because of Southern history and "plantation capitalism," fraught with difficulties and inconsistencies that could not be overcome. Upon the realization of this fact, some in the South began to
implement a new approach to solving the problems Liberalism was causing their production and profit system. If they could not beat Liberalism by exchanging their identity for a non-Liberal one, they would have to find a weakness within the ideology so that it could be turned back on itself and employed to set the South free to follow its own road. Here we see the South developing a solution to its conflict of conscience by attempting the remaking of Liberalism at some point where it may have practical weaknesses. In doing this, Southerners twisted the logical premises of Liberalism a bit, realigning some of the principles in order to make slavery become non-problematic. This is the second kind of an approach that was discussed previously. It offers the resolution of challenges posed to an ideology in a way that may be slightly logically perverted.

This new line adopted by Calhoun and others in the South involved a two-faceted advance on Liberalism that was intended to reveal that American Liberalism was really not what it had seemed, and that it was unworkable without some further mechanisms to reduce tensions between some of its precepts. Calhoun took full advantage of two general principles of Liberalism that relate in a give-and-take manner; in some situations Liberalism produces outcomes determined through a majority-rule process, and in some it
dictates that individuals (and minorities by logical extension) through property rights and pursuance of personal goals reserve sovereignty in areas that the state cannot touch. At some points, in the normal course of events of civil society, these two general areas necessarily overlap and cause conflict. An appropriate current example of this conflict may be found in the heated debate over abortion rights in America. The majority, Locke's "greater force of society," has vested its powers of decision making in a court that could possibly decide that abortion must be limited in greater scope or that it must be made illegal. "Pro-choice" activists contend that abortion regulations are regulations applied solely on the body of the pregnant woman--an area declared beyond governmental control by Liberalism. Organizations like the Supreme Court, and other constitutional arrangements, were designed to carefully consider and decide questions that arise in this area of overlap between the two principles.

Calhoun, though, wanted to exploit this tension in favor of Southern sovereignty. He came up with a scheme that he termed the "concurrent majority," which basically declared the states had the right to secede at any time according to principles of minority (individual) rights found in Liberalism. What he put together was a confusing array of
theoretical mechanisms which Hartz says "quickly unravels itself into separate individuals executing the law of nature for themselves" (1955, p. 162). Basically, Calhoun elevated what Hartz calls the "individualism" of people in Locke's system to the group level. When Calhoun's theory is examined, what it amounts to is a proclamation of the right of minority groups— in this case the states—to disable the policy making process of the majority and even to disengage themselves totally from it. Hartz could not be more correct in his assessment then, that the theory of concurrent majority results in a return to Locke's state of nature, which in turn supports the formation of Liberal government. And Calhoun somehow failed to realize was that the slaves themselves constituted a minority grouping by his definition. In that case, they reserved to themselves a veto on the South's legal definition of them as property. In essence, Calhoun said that based on Liberalism as he saw it, the South as a minority group should not have to abide the mastery of the Northern majority. How then, we must ask, could the South retain its majority mastery over the slave? The serious instability of Calhoun's position is made plain.

The only other way the South could assail Liberalism was to somehow show that the application of its principles did not produce the freedom and equality intended. In fact, the
South would have to show that Liberal society actually kept its members trapped in a more disadvantageous arrangement than slavery. This would logically make slavery seem a better alternative to Liberalism, and this is exactly the portrayal the South attempted to make during one phase of the secessionist rebellion.

Freedom, the South said, was an illusion. What Liberalism and the free market actually produced was "wage-slavery." Through tempting promises of freedom and equality, laborers in the industrialized North were drawn in and exploited as they sought dreams of prosperity and security they could never achieve, went the argument of the South. Some went so far as to make dire predictions about the emergence of socialism in the North. Hartz calls this damming philosophy the "crusade against free society" (1955, p. 178-200). What was interesting and contradictory was that the South itself actually dreamed of and recognized the need for industrialization. And the Northerners simply turned a deaf ear when the South accused them of treating their "enslaved" factory laborers worse than the plantation slaves. Nothing was more damaging to this Southern position, Hartz says, than the simple and "brute reality of economic freedom that prevailed above the Mason-Dixon line. Nobody in the North, whether rich or poor, considered themselves a slave to
capitalist masters. These were products of a desperate Southern imagination, and the North didn't buy it. Liberalism had passed a crucial test.

We now move to a more current example of another way America has dealt with a serious challenge to the Liberal ideology it lived and breathed. Out of the three possible approaches to dealing with this sort of challenge, the South employed the first two in its quest to secede and retain slavery. We will refer to these for the sake of easy organization and reference as substitution and reconstitution, respectively. The third human response to a world that does not seem to fit ideological parameters is in one sense possibly the hardest to adopt, because it is somewhat dishonest. Borrowing a term from the psychology, we will label this third type of response repression. This generally involves the removal of certain parts of an ideology from the whole set for a temporary amount of time until the world once again is returned to a state in which the reality matches the complete ideology. An example of practically an entire nation involved in this process of repression is found in the response of America to the challenge of the Great Depression. The New Deal policies of Roosevelt presented a challenge to Liberalism as America knew
it on a scale that perhaps had not been equaled since the confrontation with the South.

The New Deal can be described as a time when Liberalism, or at least part of it, went under cover. When Roosevelt announced the implementation of many New Deal policies, America was hopeful that it finally was putting its feet back on the road to recovery. But it was also aware that the plan for this recovery was in many ways opposed to the ideology which they had formerly lived by, and were now only just squeaking by on. But the economic hardship of the previous years had somewhat dulled America's sense of ideological narrow-mindedness. To be sure, Americans across the nation still firmly believed in the Lockean principles of freedom and equality. But when you are forced to live on a shoestring, not knowing where you will find money in the next month to feed your family and keep them clothed, you have to question the dynamics of the Liberal market that brought you to that point. Was the deflated economy the product of greed and risky ventures that went wrong? Or did the market fail because there was something inherently wrong with the system? Those were the questions many Americans were forced to ask themselves.

A discussion of the questions about the market system is not, however, where we find the real challenge to Liberalism
arising. The challenges became apparent when it was announced that many of the programs that were being planned to lift America out of its smothering economic troubles involved the expansion of the powers of the state into areas which had previously been under individual control. The problem came when new systems of taxing, spending, and redistribution were announced. The problem appeared with the idea that the federal government would be establishing business organizations to do the nation's functioning. But to a country that had come through some of its bleakest times, the problems would have to make a way for answers that worked. That is why repression occurred. When life is easy and comfortable, questions of ideology can be debated at leisure and with great fervor. But when belts are tight, ideology has to play second fiddle to the more pressing needs of survival.

And that is exactly what Liberalism did. There were a number of justifications for sending Liberalism to second chair, some valid and some that may be more properly termed rationalizations--those which soothed over the ideological conscience. One way that America reassured itself was through telling itself that the New Deal policies were radical innovations. They did this, Hartz says, rather than "leave Locke openly," and expose themselves to the full force
of the socialist ideologies that were gathering some steam (1955, p. 262). By "leaving Locke," Hartz meant a verbal acknowledgment that the policies of the New Deal were breaking the cords of Liberalism. Roosevelt never chose to make this outright acknowledgment. This is one reason why we can be sure that repression was taking place in his mind and in the minds of other Americans. There can be no doubt that when the realm of state power is expanded, it is at the expense of the rights and freedoms (and pocketbooks) of individual citizens. This was their key trick for America to accomplish during the rebuilding period of the New Deal: to "extend the sphere of the state, but retain Locke" (Hartz, 1955, p. 259). As we look back on post-New Deal history, we see that Locke was in every aspect retained. We are particularly reminded of this today by the country's obsession with debating Lockean—and Liberal—questions of state versus individual rights, of welfare programs, of national health insurance. Locke is alive and well in America today; he was only temporarily instructed to stay out of sight, to lie low. Problems are best worked out when a selective memory helps to remove questions of ideology from the solution set.

Another way in which America was able to deal with the shrinking of their sense of Lockean individualism during the
New Deal was to paint the programs of the era not only as innovations for solving a temporary problem, but also as actual pillars of support for the capitalist free-market that would soon get back to its feet (Hartz, 1955, p. 263). Certainly, for a time, the state might run its programs and spread its tax monies around, but it was all for a future day when the free-market would again distribute wealth and general prosperity according to a man’s industry. Through this kind of thinking, the Liberal urgings of the nation’s heart were put off until a day when Liberal policies would once again be vindicated.

There is another kind of challenge to Liberalism which we have not yet considered. This kind differs from the others in form. Whereas the previous two examples of an ideological confrontation occurred when the entire nation realized that the country’s situation did not exactly match the Liberal belief set, this challenge is brought in a philosophic manner, presented by one person through a literary medium. Theodore Lowi’s contention about Liberalism is that, even when a Liberal government is established according to the principles outlined by Locke, it does not function as a government should. He takes the precepts in Liberalism as a whole and at face value, but says that they
simply do not produce a system of government that is competent to meet the challenges and tasks that every government must face.

In Lowi's book, *The End of Liberalism*, Lowi states that the biggest problem of a Liberal government is that it cannot effectively plan a strategy of administration: "Liberal governments cannot plan. Planning requires law, choice, priorities, moralities. Liberalism replaces planning with bargaining. Yet at bottom power is unacceptable without planning" (Lowi, 1969, p. 101). He intends to show by his examples that before complex policy issues Liberal governments are doomed to grope aimlessly as if in a dark thicket.

Lowi contends that the reason Liberal government (i.e. the US government) cannot plan is two-faceted. It is partly because the authors of Liberal philosophies all the way back to Locke have not given a complete "rule set" for establishing actual Liberal governments, and partly because of the rise of what he terms "interest group" approaches to policy questions (1969, p. 124). In regard to the first problem, Lowi seems to be frustrated in some implicit sense that Locke and others did not provide a detailed set of instructions on how to construct a functional government. For instance, Locke did not start his second treatise, "Begin
with a bi-cameral legislative body consisting of two senators taken from every state in the federal union..." He did not even propose specific sections of America's constitution. Lowi, though, feels that because of the generalness of some of Locke's governmental prescriptions, and due to certain other precepts within the Liberal ideology, the government of America has developed a system of policy-making approaches that are ultimately a failure, economically and socially speaking.

He says that because of "pluralist interests" within Liberal society and the amount of freedom they are given under Liberal government to pursue their own life, liberty, and happiness, the Liberal American system has developed a mechanism of producing policy which panders to the interests of this large assortment of groups (1969, p. 101). This, Lowi says, makes long-range social or economic planning unfeasible on a national scale, a problem that he states will eventually lead to the demise of Liberalism.

Interest groups develop power, according to Lowi, because of a process he calls delegation. Liberal governments appear to have some measure of flexibility in the first stage of a response to an issue, but this is only an illusion. What is really occurring is that the government in a Liberal society develops a bureaucratic expansion to
deal with the problem, and this expansion is comprised of interest groups that are most familiar with the type of work to be accomplished. The appearance of government flexibility arises as a flurry of activity gets underway to form the expansion organization (Lowi, 1969, p. 101).

The problem with this system comes into play in the next stage of the process. The self-serving interest groups which have been given control to formulate policy in given areas soon find that there are policy matters to be dealt with in areas that lie partially within another group's jurisdiction. Since the organizations are "self-interested," they are not willing to bargain away any share of their pie to the other group so that a meaningful, functional policy compromise may be formulated to address the need. Thus Liberal government organizations spend most of their time and energy trying to unsuccessfully break interest group deadlocks on matters of important national policy. Lowi uses the example of agriculture in America to show that interest groups really are in control of regulating industries that operate in the sphere of national development, saying that it is clear that "This has been accomplished...by private expropriation of public authority" (1969, p. 102-115). He also makes direct reference to the enormous influence these interest groups exert over government, noting within his illustration of
agricultural regulation, "Rural congressmen and state assemblymen...are recruited by and owe their elections to the same forces that operate the quasi-public committees, and each level of activity reinforces the other" (Lowi, 1969, p. 124). He sees the process as self-perpetuating and unbreakable. And that is exactly the problem that Lowi describes as crippling Liberal government in America: an idealized scheme of "cooperative" interest groups engaging in an unending battle for power because of constitutional regulations on government taken directly from the ideology of Liberalism.

On the surface, this challenge to Liberal forms of government seems very serious and threatening indeed. It is easy to see by the examples and statistics that Lowi offers that his assessment of the situation is basically correct. But Lowi is making a large mistake in assuming that this is an overwhelming error of Liberalism, one that will lead to the eventual downfall of the entire system. The reason he falls into this error is that he tries to redefine Liberal governments and what their purpose is. Lowi presents his own system of government in his book, one which he refers to as "juridical democracy." This is really the standard that he is holding Liberalism to, but it is an unfair comparison. Lowi has his ideas about the purpose of government in
general; the framers of Liberalism and the American constitution had theirs. And their purposes are distinctly different from those of Lowi, and a more careful reading of the history of American government should make that abundantly clear.

When Lowi says American government cannot plan, cannot formulate a process wherein to assimilate all national policy areas under one umbrella of directive organization, he is not saying anything that the framers of the constitution failed to realize. In fact, when Lowi decries interest group policy-making mechanisms as an "imposition of impotence" (1969, p. 156), he is actually giving an enormous compliment to America's Liberal government and its builders. This deadlock of conflicting interest, this delegation of matters of public concern into the private sphere, this bump-and-grind and bargain system of churning out government policy is exactly the system which the constructors of the American constitutional system wished to effect.

Recall Locke's writings on the matter of the separation of powers. He instructed in general terms that this was one of the most important aspects of a Liberal government, because of the dangers of concentrating too much power into one group or individual. It is from these kinds of warnings that the American system of policy-generation through
interest group conflicts developed. American government, and Liberal ones in general, are not supposed to have largely centralized bases of policy planning. The further away a Liberal system can get from a nucleus of command and the dangers of tyranny, the better. Policy initiatives, laws, and legislation are meant to be difficult, time consuming processes. This is the best way to distribute political power and sovereignty to the people—and the best way to insure that it stays with them. These are the stated goals of Liberal government from the outset.

Lowi, by criticizing Liberal governments for a lack of a centralized approach to public matters, has implicitly changed the definition of what Liberal government is all about. In the process, he condemned Liberal government to die an agonized death in the quicksand of paralysis. He went so far with this assessment that the title of his book is the funeral announcement of Liberal philosophy and government everywhere. Only he couldn't see that what he called Liberalism's mortal flaw is actually its greatest strength. To use, somewhat smugly, an a modern example of what happens to governments with centralized planning schemes, one could point to the recently defunct Soviet Union. The power of Liberalism is that it allows large numbers of people to participate in the policy-making process, and that this takes
enough time and effort that mistakes may be discovered before they are made into law. The power of Liberalism is distributed widely, yes, but that is what provides it a firm, broad base on which to stand. Liberalism has thus faced several pivotal conflicts and emerged a triumphant ideology.
Section 4: Conclusions

We have examined Liberalism as an ideology and the manner in which individuals and governments have applied it as a guide for action. Liberalism has proved itself over and over since it came into being through the political philosophy of John Locke centuries ago. Liberal principles have survived numerous challenges on the practical and philosophic level, always triumphing over adversaries because of its celebration of individuality and its dedication to freedom.

The study of Liberalism has proved to be of value in a predictive sense; we may, through understanding historical mechanisms of dealing with confrontations to ideology, look to the future and imagine the ways in which those same mechanisms may be similarly applied. Or, we have merely to look around us at this present moment in America's Liberal political development to discover what challenges to Liberalism are now taking shape and substance. We have a standard, through our analysis of Liberalism, for interpreting ideologically driven events as they unfold.

If the past is any indication, the future is inviting indeed to champions of Liberal philosophy. Liberalism has been aptly titled in every sense: as a theory of man, it
celebrates his intelligence through liberal distribution of Reason to all; as a theory of property, it establishes a means through which common men, left to themselves, produce liberal amounts of the good fruits of life which everyone may partake of; and as a theory of government, it gives men liberal freedom the tyranny of punishing, self-serving rulers. All its precepts taken together form a set of beliefs which encourages the human spirit through its willingness to trust it and make it free. Such an ideology can be praised not only for the functional benefits it provides, but also for the freedom it gives us in ourselves. That is the ideology of Liberalism; we have viewed its legacy, learned its lessons, and now look ahead to the future.
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