

# WHAT IS LIBERTARIANISM



## PART I

The political philosophy that is called libertarianism is the doctrine that every person is the owner of his life, and that no one is the owner of anyone else's life; and that consequently every human being has the right to act in accordance with his own choices, unless those actions infringe on the equal liberty of other human beings to act in accordance with their choices. Dr. Hospers, 1974

Most freedom seekers are satisfied with the explanation of 'Libertarianism' as a philosophy, an apolitical philosophy advocating "do your own thing" providing that "your own thing" is not physically harming the life, rights or property of another. However, as Dr. John Hospers has illustrated at numerous lectures, libertarianism begins with the 'self;' it begins with the fact that each individual is the sole owner of his body. And until this is realized, peaceful man as an individual with inalienable rights cannot be comprehended.

Yet, the individual self-owner factor as master of his physical being is rather economic in nature. Others not so economically inclined, point to non-aggression as the center of libertarian metaphysics.

Both are predominate in libertarian thinking, and it is rather difficult to say which one comes first since both are needed to support each other. That is, if a person did not own himself, how could he justify or reason with anyone that they should not aggress upon him? Or if a person was in the position of being constantly aggressed upon, would it matter if he was said to own himself?

Both themes compliment each other, and are required to defend liberty with any intellectual rational.

### 'THY OWN THY SELF' TIME FACTOR

The best method to explain the 'thy own thy self' time factor motif of libertarianism is to utilize something similar to syllogistical logic.

Premise 1. The major axiom in this motif of libertarianism is that every man and woman 'owns himself or herself.' That is to say, speaking negatively, man is not owned by anyone, any group or any institution.

This means that if man is not owned by someone else he is in a condition where only he chooses his own lifestyle. It is a condition where if man is physically harmed by anyone or any institution it is considered as immoral and a crime by the community. If man is truly free, he is able to go to hell and back without raising his hand for permission; he is free to dig his own grave as well as erect his own paradise. To be free is to choose voluntarily, under no threats of violence, where to work, what to do and how to spend his time and wealth.

But, on the other hand, if man is seen as not the sole owner of his life and body, if man is seen as merely renting his body and actions, then man is owned by someone else. Man is then owned by some feudal overlord who assumes both roles of slaveholder and savior. Paternalistically, the benevo-

lent feudal overlord might bless the serfs with temporary liberties (i.e. to grow the crops of his choice or grind the grain at the mill of his choice, but the serf is as much the real estate of the State as what the serf produces with his time and labor). And if the serf objects or rebels its either off to the dungeon or off with the head.

Man without 100 per cent ownership of his life is similar to the Negro slave of a little more than 100 years ago. The reason is obvious. If one inch of man's ownership of himself is held by another, it is a claim, a foothold that could be extended at anytime. It becomes the question of not if man is a slave (that is already established by the smallest claim to man's life), rather it is to what extent man is required to obey the State, to what stage he is a slave.

The Black man was never a slave in essence; no man is a slave. The Negro was only a slave in the eyes of the laws of the State.

But it should be remembered that although the slaveholder of any era might be the so-called good master who seldomly beat his subjects, one is the 'master' and one is the 'slave,' and this is never forgotten. For the State knows all too well that if man's enslavement can be increased on the justifications of other restrictions and enslavements, it is possible for the domino to fall over the other direction to increased freedoms based on other liberties.

The State never forgets. It is no longer "here boy," but what the State wants, the State usually gets. How could it be any other way when the State claims ownership on everything it touches?

All in all, if man cannot conduct his life without artificial interference, if man is always harassed by physical force waiting to swoop down on him as a vulture, if man is forced to give his life to defend the State that enslaves him as well as forced to pay for it, man, therefore, does not own himself. And although he may grow the crops of his choice, grind the grain at the mill of his choice and is seldomly beaten, man is, nevertheless a slave.

Many citizens believe that they are in the free world sector and therefore are free. To be free is to be owned or controlled by no one. But in the so-called free world, the chains of government are hidden but present to pull on the leash to demand obedience.

The only difference between the two worlds of the East and West lie in

the fact that the Iron Curtain countries constantly choke their slaves with the leash, whereas the Western world has more restraint, only occasionally choking their serfs with the leash to demonstrate who is boss.

In the West the leash is still present, hidden by democratic rhetoric, the brass knuckle is still present, cloaked by the white glove of humanitarianism, and the deadly sword is still present, concealed by patriotic cries of national security.

In any State, man can never possess freedom, only temporary freedom because he is merely 'renting' his liberties from feudal government, a rent that may be raised at any time depending upon the disposition of the landlord. Man cannot be free by sharing his freedoms with the State; man cannot coexist with a Frankenstein.

Premise 2. If it is accepted that man owns himself and is not a slave to anyone, then it is possible to argue that man owns the sands of life. That is, man owns the essences of life-"TIME."

Since man's time (i.e. hours, weeks, months, years, etc.) is limited by the natural process of growing older with each passing day, man's life is not eternal. No one grows younger, no one lives forever.

So man's life or lifetime is limited by time, therefore it is part of man's life. For what is life without time-nonexistence. And again, if man does not own his time, if man cannot employ his limited time as he sees fit, he is in the category of serf.

Therefore, man's life is part of man's time, which is a part of man's labor.

Premise 3. Since man owns himself and his time, anything he produces with his time belongs solely to him. That is, if man spends his time voluntarily in a place of work and receives some agreed value (perhaps like money) to compensate for his lifetime spent, he is entitled to that value.

To work for yourself or for another is only swapping time for another value. And since time belongs only to the person who swapped it for money or whatever, no one has the right to confiscate what it has created. In short, man has the right to own the fruits of his labor absolutely since man owns his life and time absolutely. Man's valuables are part of man's life because he spent his limited time of his life to work for it voluntarily.

Since man is free to do whatever with his time, he has the option to trade it by working for another, working for himself or not working at all. However, few forget that it is man's nature to take in nourishment periodically to sustain man's life, and most living entities find it essential to spend part of their life to gather sustenance.

Eons before, man gathered sustenance by hunting or by plucking natural food from wild plants (i.e. like Euell Gibbons-"did you know that 'wild bureaucrats' are edible.") As time progressed, man spent his time growing his nourishment instead of gathering it in the wild. And when the industrial revolution entered the picture, man spent less time of his life down on

the farm growing his nourishment. With less individuals working on the small farm, a more feasible barter system was necessary. Man's time was put in the value of silver, gold and paper currency rather than ten hogs and a ton of wheat. Man's spent time was exchanged for a value which would feed him and house him. Money serves this purpose.

Conclusion. Since man owns his life which is in essence man's time, and since next it follows that the things he produce with his time belongs to him, no person or institution has a claim or right to confiscate man's wealth.

The reasoning is simple to follow. If someone claims exclusive right to man's wealth, he also claims a right to man's time which is a claim to man's life. It all falls into place. If man cannot control his own wealth, his own time and his own destiny, then man's life is being manipulated. And therefore, in such a situation, man has a leash around his neck.

To control man's opportunity to gather wealth and kept it is to directly control man's life and happiness.

How could anyone be anything but a slave if he does not own himself? As one slogan reads, "Don't Commit Suicide: It's Illegal to Destroy Government Property."

"Because a man has a right to own his life," writes Morris and Linda Tannehill in The Market for Liberty, "he has the same right to any part of that life."

Moreover, as Ayn Rand brings out in The Virtue of Selfishness, "Since man has to sustain his life by his own effort, the man who has no right to the products of his effort has no means to sustain his life. The man who produces while others dispose of his product, is a slave."

The only method for other men and institutions to take the wealth, time and life of another is to utilize physical force or threats of physical harm to plunder. And when such is committed, by a band of thieves on the street corner or the band of thieves in the legislature, it is an act of 'aggression.' Thus when the gun or bully club is employed against the wealth or life of a peaceful individual who has committed no physical harm against anyone, the act, whether done by the Pope, the people or another man is aggression, and the men who perform the act are aggressors cast from the same mold of men who put Hitler in power. (Part II deals with voluntarism and non-aggression in the series on "What is Libertarianism.")

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