

Walter E. Block

Defending the Undefendable III

 Springer

Defending the Undefendable III

Walter E. Block

Defending the Undefendable III

 Springer

Walter E. Block
Eminent Scholar Endowed Chair in Economics
Loyola University New Orleans, Harold E Wirth
New Orleans, LA, USA

ISBN 978-981-16-3956-2 ISBN 978-981-16-3957-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-3957-9>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2021

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

*To Murray N. Rothbard my mentor, my
friend, my teacher, my inspiration
To the fans of Defending I and Defending II,
who offered me suggestions for this book,
Defending III*

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge my debt to Murray N. Rothbard, my mentor, my friend, my guide, my inspiration.

Introduction

The present book is an attempt to apply libertarian principles to a whole host of activities and professions. My thesis is that as long as behavior does not violate the basic premises of this philosophy, it should be legal. And this applies, in spades, to those that are now either prohibited by law, and/or seen as problematic, even despicable, by most people. I am here attempting to deduce the legality of actions from the basic libertarian premises. Some of these behaviors are truly revolting; they constitute vices. But not all vices should be crimes. If my conclusion offends you, that these acts should be legal no matter how immoral, I will have succeeded in demonstrating that you are not a libertarian, at least not insofar as I understand that philosophy. My goal, here, is to trace the logical implications of libertarianism, no more and no less.

Before we can analyze anything from the libertarian point of view, however, we have to be clear on what this political philosophy is, in the first place. The basic premises of this philosophy are best expressed in terms of three principles.

First, is the non-aggression principle (NAP). No one may initiate violence (or the threat thereof) against anyone else. That is, anyone can do anything he wants, except he is prohibited from threatening or using violence against others. But even this must be qualified, for it is certainly permissible under libertarian law to do exactly that with the permission of the recipient of the aggression. For example, the sadist may (threaten to) beat the masochist to a pulp, provided that the latter agrees to the pummeling, even invites it. One boxer may (threaten to or actually) punch another (above the belt) because each has agreed to be “victimized” in this manner, before stepping into the ring. Indeed, no boxer would ever be allowed into the ring unless he agreed to that proviso.

The second principle is private property rights. This determines whether a given violent act is a rights violation or not. For example, at gunpoint A grabs the shoes B is wearing. Does this violate the libertarian axiom? It all depends upon who is the rightful owner of the footwear. If the shoes belong to B then this act would indeed violate the NAP. But suppose that A is the proper owner (based on homesteading of original land and resources plus voluntary exchanges such as trading, bartering, buying, selling, gifts, gambling) and B stole the shoes from A yesterday. Today, A is

merely repossessing them from the thief, B. Then A's act of violence is certainly justified.

But even this does not get the core of the freedom philosophy. For suppose, now, that B is the rightful owner of the shoes, and A grabs them anyway. This is clear theft. Is this necessarily incompatible with libertarianism? No. Posit, now that the world will end unless A seizes B's property. Work with me here. Or think in terms of the movie, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), where unless our hero breaks into a soda machine in order to steal some coins millions of people will perish in a nuclear war. He needs these coins in order to make a phone call, which alone will obviate this tragedy. But in doing so he destroys the rightfully owned property of Coca Cola.

Does the libertarian say, "Thou shall not steal (or destroy other people's private property)"? No. This philosophy is not a suicide pact. If that were all there were to it, the sanctity of private property rights would have precluded that telephone call, and the entire world would have been destroyed in a nuclear exchange. How, then, shall we construe libertarianism, if it does not, without exception, proscribe stealing justly owned property?

The most sophisticated and accurate understanding is that libertarianism is a theory of punishment. It does not say, do not steal. It does not even demand that no one murder our fellow man (see the trolley example in philosophy), or commit other, lesser, crimes. It only mandates that if we do so, it would be justified to punish us.

Let us return to A who relieves B, at gunpoint, of the latter's rightfully owned shoes. What are we to do with A? Simply, punish him appropriately. What is the just reaction to the fictional character in the movie who shoots the Coke machine in order to get coins to use in a pay phone booth (this was before the advent of cell phones)? He did so, remember, in order to make a telephone call that will save the world from nuclear warfare. Why, penalize him appropriately of course. He should be punished to the full extent of the law, governing such robbery. At the very least he would have to pay for a new dispensing machine plus the spare change he used to make the call. In "*Dr. Strangelove*," another character strongly urged against engaging in this act with the horrified expression: "You can't shoot the Coke machine. Why, that's private property." Obviously, the intent of the dialogue writer was to impugn the entire notion of private property, to make this crucial institution into a suicide pact. Had he succeeded, he would have successfully undermined libertarianism which has as one of its foundational principles the sanctity of private property. And this riposte would have succeeded, against an unsophisticated notion of private property and libertarianism, but not, hopefully, against the one now being employed. Libertarianism predicated upon the NAP and private property rights based on homesteading, and legitimate title transfer is a good introductory understanding of this philosophy. But we are now engaged in discerning a more advanced understanding.

Jean Val Jean in *Les Misérables*, stole a loaf of bread. For this crime he paid a heavy price. The author of that novel directs our attention, and our pity, to the draconian nature of the penalty. And we are also asked to focus on the dire

circumstances of those he fed with this loaf of bread. However, it is important to stamp out, as much as humanly possible, stealing bread or anything else for that matter. If people were commonly to relieve bakeries of their products without paying for them, the bakers would no longer be able to create this foodstuff. If that were generalized, we would all starve, not merely the poor. At the very least we would all be poverty-stricken, on the verge of starvation. That we are not stems from the fact, in great part, that stealing is properly prohibited by law. And this occurs, in turn, because there are severe penalties attached to walking out of bakeries with bread in our arms without paying. If the implicit message of *Les Misérables* were followed, and bread stealing was met with a slap on the wrist, or with no punishment at all, it would be much the worse for society as a whole as our risk of going without any bread at all will be greatly increased.

Precisely, the same fate awaits us if we denigrate the barbarism of shooting Coke machines and relieving them of their coinage. Precious few of these conveniences would still be available to us because of any such general practice. Of course, there are emergency situations. These fiction writers focus attention on them to undermine private property rights. One way to counter them is to rely on the insight that “emergency situations make bad law.” But that implies a dysfunction, a bifurcation, in law. There is one set of principles for ordinary circumstances, and another, an entirely separate one, for emergencies. One difficulty with this way of looking at the matter is subjectivism: what is an emergency for one man may be an ordinary circumstance for another. Another issue is the continuum problem. Situations of this sort tend to meld into one another. Then, too, there is the difficulty of having two sets of laws for different occurrences, even if these were objectively given. The benefit of the libertarian perspective is that it becomes enmeshed in none of these traps. There is only one law. There is only one principle justifying punishment for violation of the NAP, for undermining private property rights. No one is forbidden from doing any of these things. But, if they do so, justice requires that they be punished.

The third principle of libertarianism is voluntary association: no one should be forced to associate with anyone else at all against his will. Slavery violates this (in addition to the NAP) in that the victim is compelled to associate with the master against his will. Without that, slavery would be reduced to a weird sort of voluntary sadomasochism. Rape should be banned by law because, in addition to a NAP violation, the victim is compelled to associate with the rapist involuntarily. No man of good will would disagree with these implications of this philosophy. But anti-discrimination laws, too, violate this principle. If the Christian baker does not wish to associate with the gay customer, he, too, should not be forced to do so. If the black grocer does not wish to sell to the KKK member, or the Jewish one to a member of the Nazi Party, the same applies. And the same holds true for discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual preference, etc. Not everyone will agree to these implications, but they follow logically, inexorably, from the basic premise just as in the cases of slavery and rape.

A word about the demagogue chapter. This brilliant essay was written by Murray N. Rothbard in 1954. I include it in this book since it is so quintessentially an

instance of the “defendable” phenomenon. Needless to say, Murray stole this idea from me. True, he published this way before I even thought of it (I was 13 years old in 1954), but still, this is yet another example of the theft that Murray has perpetrated upon me. On a more serious note, there would not be any Defending series were it not for Murray, I would not have a career as an Austro-libertarian but for him, so I dedicate this book to him with great love and respect. He was for many years my mentor, my guru, my friend, I am honored to be able to say.

Contents

Part I Politics

1	The Federalist	3
2	The Anarchist	5
3	The Election Purchaser	11

Part II Free Speech

4	The Flag Burner	15
5	The Demagogue (Written by Murray N. Rothbard)	17
6	The Yellow Journalist	21
7	The Blasphemer	25
8	The Hater	27

Part III Discrimination

9	The Obese Disparager	33
10	The Pay Gapper	37
11	The Beard Belittler	41
12	The Diversity Demeanor	45

Part IV Labor

13	The Wage Stagnationist	49
14	The Gigster	51
15	The (Voluntary!) Slave Owner	53

16 **The Labor Union Opponent** 57

17 **The Precarious Labor Employer** 61

18 **The Housewife Non-payer** 63

19 **The Minimum Wage Challenger** 67

20 **The Academic Tenure Denier** 73

21 **The Work Sharer** 79

22 **The Jury Refuser** 83

Part V Sex

23 **The Group Marriage Participant** 89

24 **The Straight White Male** 91

25 **Jessica Yaniv** 95

26 **The Adulterer** 99

27 **The Front Lawn Nudist** 101

28 **The Host Mother** 105

29 **The Rape Forgiver** 107

Part VI Medical

30 **The Evictionist** 111

31 **The Gay Conversion Therapist** 113

32 **The Drug Price Raiser** 117

33 **The Non-licensed Doctor** 119

34 **The Suicide Instigator** 125

35 **The Prescription Drug Violator** 129

36 **The Socialized Medicine Debaser** 131

37 **The Ambulance Chaser** 135

38 **The Food and Drug Administration Challenger** 137

39 **The Gene Editor** 141

Part VII Real Estate

40 **The Redliner** 145

41 **The Airbnbber** 147

42 The Gentrifier 149

43 The Holdout 155

44 The Evicter 157

45 The Rent Control Adversary 159

46 The Pet Hating Landlord 165

47 The Zoning Renouncer 167

48 The Housing Rights Repudiator 173

Part VIII Business

49 The Metric Protester 179

50 The Cultural Appropriator 185

51 The Entrepreneur 191

52 The Self-Dealer 193

53 The Religious Broadcaster 197

54 The Motor Vehicle Department Derider 203

55 The Sunday Shopper 207

56 The Business License Rejecter 211

57 The Banker 213

Part IX Sports

58 The Booster 219

59 The NBA-NFL-MLB Eliminator 221

60 The Olympic Drug Taker 223

61 The Olympic Commercializer 227

Part X Finance

62 The Billionaire 233

63 The Bankrupt 237

64 The Predatory Lender 239

65 The Anti-egalitarian 243

66 The End the Fed Supporter 247

Part XI International

67 The Water Seller 251
68 The Illegal Immigrant. 255
69 The Free Trader 259
70 The Car Warrior. 263
71 The Foreign Aid Denigrator. 265
72 The Dumper. 269

Part I

Politics

Chapter 1

The Federalist



A federalist is someone who takes the side of the federal government vis a vis state governments. When the two are in conflict, such a person sides with the former. The anti-federalist of course takes the opposite position. By extension, when it comes to a dispute between state and local levels of government, such as counties or cities the centralist (federalist proxy) supports the former, and the decentralist (anti-federalist proxy), the latter.

This is a crucially important question, particularly in this era of the Covid 19 pandemic. Why? This is due to the fact that often, the federal and the state governments are at odds with one another as to which is the best way to deal with the coronavirus. That issue is beyond the scope of our present considerations. The bottom line, here, is that we should take neither a federalist nor an anti-federalist position. Rather, we should support whichever policy it is, centralist or decentralist, which has the best chance of dealing with this disease, or, indeed, any other challenge.

How do the various political factions fall out on this important question? It cannot be denied that there is some correlation; the left, or the Democrats, tend in the direction of centralization, while the right, or the Republicans, tend toward decentralization. However, there really is no right answer. It all depends upon whose ox is being gored. In past decades, the conservatives favored states' rights (mainly in support of the south), while the liberals opposed it. Nowadays, the tables have turned, and "progressives" are looking to states such as California, to over-ride federal immigration programs vis a vis what they see as unwarranted federal incursions. During the violent protests in Seattle and Portland in 2020, the local mayors adopted a hands-off policy while President Trump wanted a federal presence there. Here, the leftists were localists, the rightists, centralists. Similarly, when President Reagan threatened New York City with a cut off in funds unless it eliminated its prized rent control law, all of a sudden the shoe was on the other foot.

Similar goings-on occur at the state versus city level. In Parkland, after the deadly shooting that took place there, local citizens demanded stricter gun control laws.

However, a law passed in 2011 in Florida gave that state the right to over-ride such policies implemented at the more local level. These pre-emption laws hold city and county officials personally responsible for violating state firearms strictures.

So, which is the rational position for the various contending political advocates to take? Federalism or anti-federalism, that is the question? The correct view is neither. If you favor rent control, then you should be an anti-federalist, at least in that one instance when Reagan wanted to quash it. If you are an open-borders opponent, then at least under the Trump administration, you should veer in the direction of federalism.

Presumably, if there is a tie, or if nothing much is at stake, anti-federalism should win out. After all, it is a lot easier to pull up stakes in a city, and move elsewhere (job, home, school for the children) in the state; than it is to transfer from one state to another. And, it is very much more convenient to leave Georgia for Wyoming or vice versa than to immigrate to another country. But with regard to all other issues, the rational position is to jettison the federalism—anti-Federalism controversy and stick to one's principles.

There is one caveat to the above, however. If one or the other side of the centralism—anti-centralism is heavily supported, it may well have aggregative effects: it may well tip the balance in one direction or the other. What then? There is thus no clear answer to this conundrum, then. Most libertarians are anti-federalists; they tend to support the smallest jurisdiction in confrontations with larger ones. In so doing they veer from libertarian principle.

Chapter 2

The Anarchist



At first blush, the anarchist does not belong in this book; not within a million miles of it. For do not members of this ilk “throw bombs” in general, and, specifically, blow up innocent people? This cannot be denied. Of course it is true. History is replete with such despicable goings-on. Thus, this chapter does not concern such persons. However, not all anarchists do any such thing. Therefore there is still hope for supporters of this philosophy.

While we are discussing bomb throwing, let us look at the facts. In the last century, governments have killed some 200 million of their own citizens, and this is totally apart from those unfortunates who lost their lives in the wars incessantly fought by states. (Nor does this horrendous figure include motor vehicle deaths on government highways, another 35,000 per year in the U.S.) No, when it comes to bomb throwing, the government leaves the anarchist entirely in the shade.

Nor will I defend “left-wing” anarchists such as Noam Chomsky, Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Murray Bookchin. For they would if they could prohibit private property, money, hierarchy, and other non-invasive institutions. I rise to the defense, instead, of libertarian (philosophical) anarchists such as Murray N. Rothbard, Gustave de Molinari and Lysander Spooner. Only the perspective of the latter variety is fully compatible with the non-aggression principle of libertarianism. And not only compatible with it; logically implied by it.

What is free market or libertarian anarchism? Etymologically, the prefix “an” means “against.” As for example in “anti” or “Anabaptist.” What, then, does this perspective oppose? It rejects archism. And what in turn is that? Archy is the unjustified rule of one person over another. Slavery, rape, murder, etc. are all instances of archy. Free market anarchism is the only philosophy consistently and bitterly in opposition to all such rights violations.

Exhibit “A” in this contention is that governments, all of them without any exception whatsoever, presume to “tax” their subjects. Sometimes their spokesmen go so far off the rails as to claim that these compulsory payments are actually voluntary. But nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, true, if you do not pay the

government what it thinks you owe them, the initial response will not be very invasive. Rather, it will be along the lines of, "Hey, did you forget to send us a goodly portion of your hard-earned money? We can really use the money, and it is all for your benefit, the taxpayer." But this will be followed up by letters of escalating harshness, until one day, if you ignore them all, a man in blue, with a badge and gun will come and offer you a visit to the local hoosegow. If you resist, he will shoot you dead. It is amazing, and appalling, that anyone in his right mind could consider such a process a voluntary one.

But did we not agree to pay taxes? Are they not, instead of coercive, akin to club dues? After all, if you join the tennis or golf club, you are expected to pay your fees, which go for the upkeep of the premises. We can hardly have such organizations if its members refuse to contribute in this way. In like manner, all citizens of the country, and all those living there, too, must pay for the care and well-being of the country. If you do not wish to call what the state collects, "taxes," fine; but, pay up! Let us not have here a mere verbal dispute.

Not so fast. When a man joins a club, he does so voluntarily. He fills out a membership form and agrees to pay dues. Did anyone sign any such contract with the U.S. government? Hardly. (New immigrants may well have done so, but it is a circular argument to deduce from this any tax justification; for it assumes the very point in question. Namely, that the government has the right to extract taxes from newcomers in the first place.)

Another argument is that the U.S. Constitution was agreed upon by a majority. True, representatives of nine out of the thirteen colonies did indeed assent to that document. But it was not a *contract*. The latter is unanimous; the covenant amongst these colonies was not. Even in the nine that initially supported the Constitution there was far less than unanimity. Yet this is the criteria for all contracts; purchasing a car, borrowing from, lending money to someone, and, the proverbial joining of the golf or tennis club.

What about the common refrain: "If you don't like it here, leave." This, again, argues in the circle, assuming the very point of contention to lie in the direction of the state. It posits that the government has the right to collect taxes, the very point under dispute. But why posit this conclusion? Why not the very opposite? That is, that the statists, criminals since they mulct taxes from the unwilling, should be the ones to leave?

One argument for government is that without it, we would each be at each other's throats. Murder, rape, theft, would be the order of the day. (Sounds familiar, no?) We must therefore cede to the state the monopoly of licit violence so that we can all be safe (They do a great job of this, right?) This claim, too, fails. How, then, would law and order be attained without government? This will be difficult for many people to wrap their minds around. However, in the free (anarchist) society, there will be private police-court corporations. Will they be perfect? Will they attain heaven on earth? Of course not. They will be staffed with imperfect human beings. There will be temptations to rule in favor of the richer of the two legal adversaries, not the one with justice on his side. But it is a matter of comparison. An economist was asked, "How is your wife?" Came the answer: "compared to what?" Precisely. The

private justice system need not be perfect, merely better than the government, a low bar indeed. A judge who ruled in favor of someone who bribed him would more quickly than under the present system lose all of his customers, even wealthy ones.

Posit five actors in our little drama: Al, Bob, Charles, David and Ed. The former and the latter get into a legal altercation. Al invites Ed to seek justice from judge Bob. Ed splutters, but Bob is your brother, cousin, father, son, friend; he will not be fair. Instead, let us patronize judge David. Whereupon Al mutters along the same lines: David is Ed's brother, cousin, father, son, friend; he will not be fair. So, each takes his case to the judge of his choosing: Al appeals to Bob, Ed, to David. Neither as much as shows up in the other's court.

There are four possible results. First, both Bob and David rule in Al's favor. That will pretty much be the end of the matter; Al wins. For Al and Ed both signed a contract with, respectively, Bob and David, obligating themselves to be bound by the decision of their respective judges. In any case, both judges are replete with a police subdivision, to enforce their findings on recalcitrant customers. A similar conclusion applies if both judges find in favor of Ed. The third option is that Bob supports Ed and that David rules on behalf of Al, violating friendship and familial obligations. Let us ignore this option and focus instead on the fourth possibility. Just as we all feared, consanguinity prevails; Bob favors his buddy Al and David takes the side of his main man, Ed. Ayn Rand would say at this point that libertarians "blank out" at this point, but that is not at all the case. Rather, let us probe more deeply.

We note that there are two types of courts; rational, civilized ones, that have anticipated just such an eventuality, and bandit courts, which either have not foreseen any such possibility, or, if they did, would insist on prevailing in any case. Call the former legitimate courts, and the latter bandit courts. What will Bob and David do if they fall into the former category? We have not so far mentioned Charlie. He now comes into the picture. Both Bob and David have previously agreed with each other that if they should ever find themselves on the opposite side of a ruling, they would use this worthy (or a group of honorable judges, one of whom will now be chosen by a random number selection process) as a court of appeal. This they proceeded to do, and the case is settled as fairly as human beings are capable of doing.

However, if one or both of our judges belongs in the bandit category, there will have to be a resort to violence, at least theoretically. Why theoretically? Because banditry simply does not pay. Bandit courts will have to fight each other, as well as licit judiciaries. The latter will only have to engage in fisticuffs with the former. Violence is expensive. Bandit courts will tend to be driven into bankruptcy. They will not exist in the real libertarian anarchic world. Then, there is that little matter of legitimacy. The pen is mightier than the sword. At the outset, it would appear that the latter would win any battle with the former. But no. The pen determines in which direction the sword is pointed. If that is not winning, then nothing is. The point is, not only will the bandit courts of the day, should there be any at all, have to fight everyone, they will do so with 1.99 hands (I calculated this exactly to the nearest decimal point) behind their backs, given that they will have not a scintilla of legitimacy to rely upon.

The case against anarchism is also subject to a powerful *reductio ad absurdum*. If the U.S. is needed to keep Smith and Jones from creating mayhem against each other, then what about governments themselves? Must they not be kept apart from one another? At present, Albania and Argentina are in a state of *anarchy* with each other. That is, there is no World Government to act as a referee between them. The exact same situation applies to Bolivia and Burundi; to Canada and Chile, to Denmark and the [Dominican Republic](#), to Egypt and Ecuador, to France and Finland, to Greece and Ghana, to Haiti and Hungary, to Ireland and Israel, to Japan and Jamaica, to Korea and Kenya, to Luxemburg and Liberia, to Mexico and Morocco, to Netherlands and New Zealand, to Oman and ... wait, I need a country that begins with an "O" if I am to continue my alliterative march through the alphabet, and there is none. I'll press on in any case: a state of anarchy exists, also, between Pakistan and Panama, Qatar and (uh, oh, I've run out again), Romania and Rwanda, Singapore and Somalia, Tunisia and Turkey, Uruguay and Uganda, Venezuela and Viet Nam, Wallis and Futuna Islands and Western Sahara, Yemen and I don't know who, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Whew! Not only does a state of anarchy obtain between these pairs of countries, but it does so also between any one of them and all the rest. We live in an anarchic world!

Should we then address this lacuna? Should we fix it? Should we end this state of anarchy that now exists amongst nations? If we do, we must impose world government! That is the only solution to world-wide anarchy. But this institution comes with problems of its own. If it is at all democratic, the world government will tend to resemble China and India since they are amongst the most heavily populated nations on the planet. They each have over one billion people. Together, they comprise almost 40% of the world's population. Do we really want to be governed by people with philosophies of this sort? The next most highly populated states, apart from the U.S. are those in this order: Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Russia. Not very attractive. No, the western countries would be simply overwhelmed by the force of sheer numbers. Then, there is always the (outside?) chance that the leader of the world government would be someone akin to Mao, or Stalin, or Hitler, or Pol Pot, with devastating results for all civilized peoples. With over 200 nations, despised groups can sometimes, often, find a refuge. With the end of anarchy between countries, there would simply be nowhere for them to run.

Then there is the matter of secession. One of the main building blocks of libertarianism is free association. No one should be compelled to associate with anyone else against his will. All interaction between people should be purely voluntary. That lets out slavery, rape, and other such forced associations. The slave master, the rapist, want to "associate" with their victims; the latter wish to disassociate, have nothing to do with, the former. It is the same with secession. Those who wish to depart from the nation to which they belong to, wish to leave; to secede. Suppose that that South wishes to disaffiliate from the North. May they do so? Of course it may do so, at least on libertarian grounds, based on the philosophy of free association. (There are some who claim that this constitutes not so deeply hidden support for slavery; not so, not so. The North had slaves too. Further, the first state to wish to secede was the abolitionist Massachusetts in 1825; they could hardly be accused

of pro-slavery sentiments.) But then suppose Louisiana wanted to separate from the Confederacy. Would this, too, be allowed. You bet your boots it would, on the basis of the same perspective. However, suppose New Orleans wanted to vacate from the state of Louisiana? Again, we offer the same response: indeedly do. But the Garden District no longer wishes to be associated with New Orleans. Must the latter allow the former to do so? Yes, once again. But now, horrors, one city block in this neighborhood wishes to strike out on its own. Permissible? Of course. Patience, gentle reader, we are soon coming to the end of this process. There is one individual who wishes to secede from all of the other political entities. Kosher? Yes, this too. The goal here is seven billion or so sovereign states, one to each person (then, you can no longer ask out a woman on a date; your foreign minister has to first deal with hers ☺). What would we have if we pushed the envelope this far? Why, anarchy, of course. Unlimited secession, then, is yet one more argument in favor of that institutional arrangement. Nowadays, it is not likely that the South would want to separate from the North. Far more likely would be both coasts splitting themselves as one or two countries from “flyover” territory and/or vice versa. But the same analysis applies.

How is it that a government starts up initially? The state has not always been with us. Which came first, the people or their government? This is not an insoluble chicken and egg problem. Obviously, there can be people without a state, but there can be no such thing as a government with absolutely no people belonging to it. So, there were people in existence, and then, only later, came the state. How did it come into being? Well, possibly, someone got up on his hind legs and said, hey, let’s start a government. Did everyone else in a given geographical area immediately give their consent to this new apparatus of control? This hardly seems likely. People disagree so much, nowadays, and it is difficult to see how our forebears were very different from us in this regard. Five friends want to get together for a movie and then dinner. Chaos almost erupts over the various choices. Imagine them all agreeing to set up a government of any one type. All but impossible. No, wait, scratch that “all but” business. It is logically impossible for a state to arise in any such manner. If it did so, it could not be a government. Rather, it would be a (large?) voluntary association. We quite properly reserve the word, “state,” for an organization that came into being in violation of the libertarian non-aggression principle.

Here is another hypothesis. Governments came into being by conquest. One gang was more powerful than the others, and took it upon itself to regularize its tribute. Instead of continuing as hit and run gangsters, they settled down in Murray N. Rothbard’s “Hector’s Valley” there to batten down upon the local innocents. The monarchist eventually gave way to the tyranny of the majority, that is, democracy. But it is difficult from this perspective to see the government as anything other than born in subjugation of some by others. This is not very attractive. Sad, really, that so many people would be taken in by so illicit an institution.

One last nail in the coffin of the state: economic efficiency. We all want to be rich; or, at the very least, to ward off poverty. All men of good will would wish this. How to attain this goal? Why, by reducing the government to the smallest size possible, and that would be zero. Why? This is due to the fact that the market is much

more efficient than the bureaucratic state. Look at the Fortune 500 for the last few decades. Notice anything? Yes, corporations, even large ones, come and go. Where is Packard anymore? Where is Trans World Airlines? Bankrupt, that is where. In contrast, the U.S. Post Office continues on its merry way. When a private concern no longer pleases its customers, investors, suppliers, it automatically goes the way of the dodo bird (unless of course it is “too big to fail” and garners government bailouts). The same cannot be said for the Army Corp of Engineers, which killed some 1900 people in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, due to its failing levees.

To summarize. There are utilitarian and deontological reasons to oppose the state and its power. These all point in the direction of supporting statelessness, or, anarchism.

Chapter 3

The Election Purchaser



Language is important. Apart from smoke signals, hand gestures, facial expressions, it is the only known way we have of communicating with each other. Thus it is important to be ever vigilant in protecting this vital resource of ours.

When he was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, Former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg was widely accused of buying votes. Later he pulled out of this race in support of Joe Biden, and could no longer be accused of “buying” anything of the sort. For himself that is. But when he donated big bucks to Biden, he was again accused of buying up the Democratic electorate, this time for the presidential nomination for this former Vice President.

These accusations must stop. Such charges constitute an undermining, a vitiation, of our major means of sharing information, accurate language.

What’s wrong with all of these claims? Isn’t it true that Mayor Mike was indeed trying to buy the Democratic presidential nomination for Biden, and, since he succeeded in this “purchase” of his, he continued down this path in November against Trump? He might well have been trying, but this cannot be done. Mr. Bloomberg might as well have tried to draw a square circle.

If we are to respect language, we must reject all of these charges against the former Big Apple mayor, whether on his own behalf, before, or, later on, so as to support Joe Biden. It cannot be denied that Bloomberg had spent over \$400 million of his gigantic fortune in the presidential race. Contrary to these widespread allegations, however, Mr. Bloomberg hasn’t “bought” anything of the sort, nor did he do so for Mr. Biden.

What is it to “buy” something? It is to pay someone for services rendered, or goods shipped from vendor to purchaser. Did Mike Bloomberg ever pay a single solitary penny directly to any voter so as to obtain a vote? Of course not. That would be illegal. Even his most bitter critics, see above, do not allege that he has done that.

Instead, what the former mayor of the Big Apple bought advertising time in newspapers, radio, television, etc. So, yes, he purchased something of value, but not votes, not elections, not a nomination for the top spot on the Democratic Party’s list.