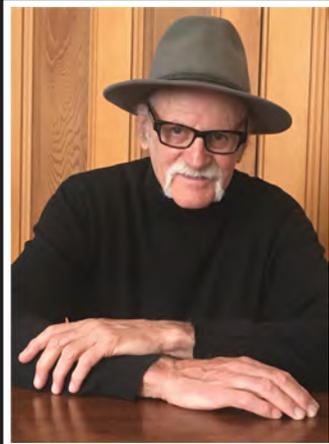


A
SAN FRANCISCO
CONSERVATIVE

David Parker Essays

Volume Two



Time present and time past
Are both perhaps contained in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

—T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

INTRODUCTION

I have 150 years' personal experience. That's why I write: to tell progressives what I know.

I know, for example, the opening quote by T.S. Eliot is the absolute purest statement of classical conservatism: time past, time present, time future, they're the same, which is why people and nations should reform, not change, basics. Conservatism means conserve. Human beings, their centuries-old institutions, nature, the universe, evolution—all, are the result of trial-and-error, all, have an element of perfection, none, are a product of design. Society and culture are not products of design. No species in nature plan their society. The queen bee does not tell other bees what to do. Bees know what to do. And we humans know what to do: behavior and morality are encoded in our genes.

There is no need to try to live in harmony with nature; you can't live any other way.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*

Wu wei er wu bu wei. In essence, “Do nothing and everything will be accomplished.”

—Lao Tzu, 6th century BC

To leaders of warring states, Lao Tzu advised: stop fighting each other, give your people a break, give them a little freedom and they'll work out all your problems. Do nothing, and everything will be accomplished.

And as Machiavelli maintained, give the people some economic freedom. They will be so grateful they will support you when you need them. Do not rely on the aristocracy; they are vain and disloyal.

—Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1580 [The root of modern democracy.]

Do nothing? People will die. No, they won't. Don't underestimate human beings. Consider a homeless person lying on the sidewalk. A progressive's first response is to phone city services to pick him up: A, B, C, D. A progressive, A, sees a problem (for example, a homeless person), B, and tells government, C, to take taxpayers', D, money and give it to B. "A" is in the habit of telling "D," government, to take care of things because he knows himself too well, knows that since *he* isn't going to help that homeless person, no one else may either. *That's* why progressives want big government: to ease their conscience.

A conservative's first response is to bend over and ask that person if he needs help, call for help, wait until it arrives, later, donate to the charity that sent the ambulance. (This San Francisco conservative speaks from experience.) Conservatives detest the idea of citizens delegating personal responsibility to government. Not afraid of freedom, of democracy (constitutional democracy), conservatives see almost no need for government. Jeffersonians, conservatives believe individuals can be counted on to do the right thing.

1

CONSERVATISM

Anarchy, State and Utopia

Society must incorporate a few universal values. Pluralism is such a value, namely, different groups of people living together—with sometimes one group in power (through election), later, others. But when one group’s identity is elevated above pluralism, democracy is subverted. The more that one side says only their view counts, the closer we are to tyranny.¹

In America, the loss of pluralism is most dangerous in the nation’s schools and universities where “woke” liberals, considering their opinions quasi-sacred, their critics oh-so-wrong, use their concentrated power of students and professors to dictate what may be said and who may speak on campus. To such liberals, speech cannot be divorced from the identity of the speaker—why conservative speech is censored. Should conservatives argue that patriarchy and white privilege are not a fact or that gender norms are purely arbitrary, liberals go ballistic. True or false, what’s relevant is

¹ Observe liberal activists at universities overturning tables where conservatives are handing out leaflets. Those light brown cancel culture boots are on their way to lockstep dark brown boots. UC Berkeley.

that speech in America must not be censored. Since the 1970s, thousands of teachers, professors and administrators have lost their positions (or were never hired) simply for tolerating conservatism. The American anti-fascist campaign to eliminate conservatives from education has been successful.²

Liberals who sideline or step upon the principles that created this nation should read John Locke's *2nd Treatise on Civil Government*:

[Individuals] are in a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit . . . without asking leave, or dependency upon the will of any other man. [Section 4]

[The bounds of the laws of nature require that] no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions. [Section 6]

All men may be restrained from invading others rights, and from doing hurt to one another. Everyone has the right to punish the transgressor (proportionate to the transgression). [Section 7 and 8]³

A nation's government must not *use* individuals to solve social problems, for example, tax individuals to redistribute wealth. "Individuals are ends, not means to an end. They may not be sacrificed for achieving ends to which they do not consent." – Immanuel Kant.

There are no species in nature where leaders tell others what to do. Let that be humanity's guide: the spontaneity of the invisible hand of nature that created everything we have—language, custom, money, common law built over centuries, a trading economy. Crime, too, is a product of evolution and should therefore be dealt with

² 1.5 percent of college faculties are conservative. See David Brooks, Chapter 3, footnote 73.

³ John Locke, *2nd Treatise on Civil Government* (Pantianos Classics, first published in 1689; still in print).

naturally, wherein a natural desire for justice is satisfied through immediate punishment (not years later when the perpetrator is no longer the same person). In *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Robert Nozick elaborates on a cost-benefit analysis to determine the extent of law enforcement, the extent of retribution. It was not necessary. Necessary is to impose a few rules about which a society has achieved consensus: the U.S. Constitution, one page; the Bill of Rights, one page; the Ten Commandments, one page—and enforce them. Purposely drop a candy wrapper on the sidewalk: prison—one hour.

Don't underestimate human beings. An evolved species, citizens understood New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani (who drastically reduced crime): zero tolerance, punish *all* crimes. People got the message. Our Jeffersonian democracy is based on the notion that citizens can and do think for themselves. Our Lockean democracy is based on the notion that the sole purpose of government is to protect the life, liberty and property of free and independent citizens. To Nozick, anything less ignores the right of persons to give what they produce to whomever they choose.⁴ To this author, attacking producers ignores the fact that the most important participants in a market economy are its producers, individuals who (along with labor), must not be forced to give away their hours or work extra hours to pay for services they're not asking for, government-mandated health insurance, for example. To Nozick,

⁴ What people create—their art, inventions, crops, the land upon which those crops were cultivated (and by extension, additional land purchased by selling their creations)—*that* is property. Although stolen land should be returned, economic reality is that, in America, land ownership today is exactly how it would be if land had not been stolen. Lacking the entrepreneurial vision of those who followed, past owners would have sold their land for what would have seemed to them an irresistible price, multiples of what they deemed it was worth. (In Southern California, visionaries William Mulholland, Henry Huntington, and Charles Crocker did exactly that—in the 1920s, '30s and '40s, they bought all the land between Owens Valley and Los Angeles. In the 1980s and '90s in New York City, Donald Trump purchased buildings at astonishingly high prices, Trump Tower at Columbus Park Circle, for instance, where he may have paid \$1 million for units worth \$500,000 that are today worth \$10 million.) Land ownership would be the same today even if, in the 1930s, the nation had turned Communist. Why? Because communism, false theory, collapses. Redistributed wealth wears out, production slows, citizens are forced to return to some form of market capitalism as in Russia, China, Vietnam. Cuba can't wait. In Communist nations there is no incentive to produce, so no one produces. (Continued on next page)

the moral argument is that the state has no right to compel citizens who are not asking the state for anything.⁵ Forcing citizens is not a basis for building community.⁶

Theories of distributive justice show disbelief in the market process. Yet, trickle-down theory *is* how an economy works: producers create the economy, workers are glad to have a job. Every economy has hardships, but in a market economy they are offset by a far greater good in the aggregate. The poor in a socialist economy think they are well off because they're not aware they are poor: everyone is poor. In a rich nation, they notice. In America they notice because the poor are poor in relation to the wealthy.

But the poor in America are not poor in absolute terms; they live better than 95 percent of the rest of the world.⁷ For the last 400 years, those wishing to better their lives have moved here, not the

(Continued from previous page) “To each according to his needs, from each according to his ability” (Marxism) *guarantees* that citizens show need, not ability. Consider Plymouth Rock under Governor William Bradford, 1620. To ensure equality, colonists were given equal portions of land, then, forbidden to sell or pay others to work it. Those capable of producing twice as much from the same parcel were forbidden to farm other parcels. Those possessing other talents, not interested in farming, were forced to farm. [Life in the Soviet Union.] Entrepreneurial colonists simply jumped the fence and farmed outside the fort—a perfect example of how markets circumvent regulation. Bradford canceled his equality rule.

In other words, governments have no business telling citizens what to do. Academic bureaucrats, believing such nonsense as “resources are scarce,” have no right to tell others where to live or what and how much to consume. Resources aren't scarce. The earth is *huge*. Land is not scarce. At one-half acre per person, the entire population of the U.S. fits into the state of Texas. Water is not scarce. The Amazon River dumps 7.381 million cubic feet of fresh water *per second* into the Atlantic Ocean. Oil is not scarce. There are at least 90 billion barrels of oil under the Arctic, 264 billion barrels in the U.S., 168 billion barrels in Canada, 800 billion barrels of oil in the Middle East. Abundant energy? Nuclear.

⁵ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1974), p. 168.

⁶ Nozick, p. 174. Forced bussing to integrate public schools and forced affirmative action to integrate employment and university admittance do not engender fraternity. Voluntary bussing, voluntary affirmative action, that does.

⁷ With hot and cold running water, heat and air-conditioning, inexpensive food, dwellings built to high safety standards, public transportation, public education, health care, Social Security.

other way around. In 1790, the U.S. population was 4 million. In 1990, 250 million; in 2020, 330 million. After China and India, America today, with twice the population of Japan, is the third largest nation in the world. In the forefronts of science, technology, business, and the arts, America's high standard of living reflects the opportunistic intelligence of a *self-selected* immigrant population (unlike the rest of the world whose citizens are born and remain where they were born).

European socialism? The poor in Europe receive more benefits than the poor in America, but must live in a highly regulated uncreative business environment, where workers, rather than dream of work, dream of early retirement (in France, at age 55 if you work for the nationalized railroad). Except that in socialist economies, large portions of the population are always unemployed. Government make-work is not work; collecting unemployment insurance is not employment. During the 2008 economic downturn, 25 percent of the workforce in semi-socialist France was unemployed. During the 2013 recovery, 10 to 15 percent. Unemployment in the U.S. was 9 and 3 percent, respectively.

One very strange liberal notion connected with distributive justice is that the wealthy should be allowed to keep all the money they need (to lead their wealthy life), but beyond that amount forfeit the rest to the state to give to the less fortunate.

Another strange liberal notion is that the wealthy, because they live in a society where tax dollars contribute to the infrastructure that make it possible for them to become rich, have a duty to see that no one lives in poverty. Both are complete nonsense. In 1965, poverty in America was 15 percent of the population. The War on Poverty was the liberal solution—except that 55 years and 23 trillion dollars in U.S. government debt later, poverty is still 15 percent, *as it remained*, on average, through those 55 years.⁸

Politicians asked for that War on Poverty, and politicians still ask for funds—for infrastructure, research and development, public

⁸ United States Census Bureau, *Historical Poverty Tables: People and Families—1959 to 2019*, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html>.

transportation, the damming of every river in America. People in business are not asking for that. Politicians ask because delivering on such promises gets them reelected: throwing money at problems without explaining to middle-class voters that it is *they*, not the rich, who pay.⁹

Successful countries are the result of their entrepreneurs. Producers in a supply-side economy must therefore be protected: they are the ones at risk. If not confident, they will *not* invest. If regulated, or if government pumps money into the economy, they will *not* operate. They know that money is temporary, that consumers will hoard it in preparation for the pump running dry, the Ricardian equivalence (or, if you're a Keynesian, the liquidity trap). Producers know that such basics as infrastructure, rule of law, private ownership of property, come *afterward*. Governments think they come first, that nations are poor because governments haven't provided those basics, precisely why foreign and domestic aid fails: *initiative must come from the entrepreneur, not the donor*. Aid must go to entrepreneurial individuals, not their governments. Plus, to receive aid is to break a basic rule in starting a business: don't borrow. Grow your business, reinvest profit. Borrowing is for professional investors, not for those trying to better their lives.

The illegitimate use of a state by economic interests for their own ends is based upon a preexisting illegitimate power of the state to enrich some persons at the expense of others. Eliminate that illegitimate power of giving differential economic benefits and you eliminate or drastically reduce the motive for wanting political influence.¹⁰

To end corruption in government, end government. Create a minimal state that protects—a night watchman. The United Nations could be that institution worldwide, except the UN can't even stop small nations from fighting—why this author says, “Nations of the

⁹ You can't tax the poor, they can't pay; you can't tax the rich, they won't pay; you can only tax the middle class, they have no idea how to get out of it.

¹⁰ Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, p. 272.

world, stop trying to solve your problems through the political process. Life doesn't work that way: outside of socialism, the political process cannot solve economic problems. Economic problems are personal; governments, impersonal. Governments cannot solve their citizens' personal problems by redistributing the earnings of richer citizens. Those richer citizens will leave—after sending their money offshore.”¹¹

Rich or poor, citizens do not want their earnings going into the pockets of politicians, populists elected by telling voters they will get tax money spent in *their* district, asking voters, “Why are you not benefiting from government largesse? Is it because you earn \$100 a month more than those who do?” Always, the argument is that the cutoff line is arbitrary.

What's not understood is that socialism only works in rich nations—nations rich enough to afford the social, political, and economic waste from redistributing middle-class earnings (even if in the form of goods and services the middle class would have purchased anyway: health care, child care, education, pensions). Politicizing social and economic problems, allowing social programs to remove the necessity of individual responsibility, only rich nations can afford the interest on the debt that pays for such waste.

Utopia doesn't mean perfection: it means *your* vision of the best of all possible worlds. Progressives have no monopoly on such a vision. Pluralist societies will always include some citizens whose vision is “no government,” who acknowledge de Tocqueville's appreciation of America (1835) as a land where individuals take responsibility for their lives.

In “Politics,” Aristotle said there is a choice: a communal society where no one owns property, a mixed society where there is some ownership of property, or a free society where all property is

¹¹ The first thing Donald Trump did as president was lower the corporate tax rate. Yet he also ordered American corporations, Apple, for example, headquartered in Ireland, to repatriate their cash.

privately owned. He chose a free society because that's the only society that guarantees diversity. Yes, Aristotle's words.¹²

What if citizens vote to have a socialist society? Let them, but make certain they first experiment in one small region, not the entire nation—unlike the French and Bolshevik Revolutions, which forced everyone to conform to *their* particular vision or die. That's totalitarianism, socialism's logical outcome—because taking property by force (even if purchased) is illegal, and citizens will revolt, after which the state will crush them. America doesn't confiscate private property, but not because America is a democracy, a nation where the majority rules, but because America is a constitutional democracy, a nation where laws rule, not men. Citizens cannot vote 90 to 10 to take private property. It's *unconstitutional*.

As long as citizens can escape to a state respectful of their larger (or smaller) vision of freedom and diversity, socialism cannot thrive: citizens simply compare free-market states to socialist states (West Germany to East Germany), then abandon the socialist model. Nations can't live half-free, half-slave. Citizens cannot impose their vision on a constitutionally based government; government cannot impose its vision on a constitutionally free citizenry—force them to purchase health insurance, for example, or to hire minorities. That's Dystopia.

An ideal society allows for some bad behavior: its latitude makes its people better. De Tocqueville commented that only by being free [to make mistakes] can people develop virtues [integrity], capabilities and responsibilities. In socialist societies, everything is done for you. Your teacher does your homework. What's the point? Better, a minimal state where citizens depend on each other, deal

¹² *The Philosophy of Aristotle (with commentary by Renford Bambrough)* (Mentor Books, 1963), "Politics," Book II, Section 5, pp. 392-399. College students, before you advocate anything, read something modern, such as Aristotle. Our Founding Fathers did. Rising to the occasion, diversity *was* their vision—give maximum freedom to the states so that dissatisfied citizens have a choice as to where to live. Not possible when a centralized government controls the nation. Nozick, in *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, recommends that students also read Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Jane Austen, Rabelais and Dostoyevsky—to remind themselves just how different people are.

with each other, inevitably respect each other—the only cure for racism and ethnic hatred.

The goal: independent citizens living in a minimal state, free to say and do what they please within an agreed upon set of rules. Independent, responsible, investing their capital so that when they retire, they will be financially independent: that's Utopia!

Conservatism

The conservative temperament is an acknowledged feature of human society everywhere.

—Sir Roger Scruton¹³

Everywhere and throughout history, classical liberalism, conservatism, reason: Apollo. Romantic liberalism, progressivism, emotion: Dionysus.

Conservatism starts from a sentiment that all mature people can readily share: the sentiment that good things are easily destroyed, but not easily created. This is especially true of the good things that come to us as collective assets: peace, freedom, law, civility, public spirit, the security of property and family life, in all of which we depend on the cooperation of others while having no means single-handedly to obtain it. In respect of such things, the work of destruction is quick, easy and exhilarating; the work of creation slow, laborious and dull. That is one of the lessons of the 20th century. It is also one reason why conservatives suffer such a disadvantage when it comes to public opinion. Their position is true but boring, that of their opponent exciting but false.

—Sir Roger Scruton¹⁴

¹³ Roger Scruton, *How to be a Conservative* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), p. vii.

¹⁴ Scruton, p. viii.

“Moderates and Progressives, both, will benefit by reading *A San Francisco Conservative*, an influential explanation of classical conservatism, an understandable explanation of the timeless laws of social, political and economic freedom.”

~ Judge Quentin Kopp (Ret.)
California State Senator, 1986-1998;
San Francisco Board of Supervisors, 1972-1986

A “San Francisco Conservative” may sound like an endangered species, but author David Parker reminds readers that it is who he is: a “Classical Liberal.”

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DAVID PARKER served students of public elementary schools in San Francisco for more than 40 years as a music teacher, and is committed to returning America’s schools to excellence. During his career as a teacher, he simultaneously became a successful real estate investor. In addition, as a jazz bassist, he is the leader of The Dave Parker Sextet. David Parker is the author of *Income and Wealth* and *A San Francisco Conservative*.