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EVOLUTION OR CORRUPTION?

*The Imposition of Political
Language in the West Today*

BY Jeff Deist

ON SECESSION AND SMALL STATES

BY Ryan McMaken

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From the Publisher

Jeff Deist

*In our time, political speech and writing are largely
the defence of the indefensible.*

—George Orwell, “Politics and the
English Language,” 1946

Language is at the core of everything we perceive, know, think, and express. We use words as a tool, to communicate and navigate life in a social context. We use them at every stage of cognition, from our earliest babbling at infancy to our most abstract or demanding intellectual pursuit as adults. But words also shape our worldview in ways we may not fully appreciate. As the great Spanish economist Jesús Huerta de Soto explains, language is an institution in society.

So it should not surprise us to see language attacked and corrupted, as so many of our institutions have been. This is the topic of my new essay in the Italian journal *Etica & politica*, reprinted here with permission. I examine the idea of linguistic corruption—i.e., consciously imposed changes in language engineered by elites for political reasons—and contrast this with natural and organic evolution of language.

The conclusions are not pretty: self-appointed cultural czars, from academics to woke CEOs and central bankers to the Associated Press and Merriam-Webster, have positioned themselves to control language from the top down. The goal, of course, is not merely to control our words but our actions as well. Thus, equal treatment under the law yields to “equity” and equal outcomes; transgenderism starts with pronouns but proceeds to create an ever-evolving lexicon; and corporations stray from serving shareholders to satisfying ESG buzzwords.

None of this is new. Kings, clergy, and intellectual elites have always sought to control speech among common people, just as common people have always changed their various vernaculars from the bottom up. But in a digital age of instant communication, with English as the dominant language of business around the globe, linguistic changes happen much faster. A tiny group of ideologues can dream up “Latinx” and see it almost immediately adopted by credulous journalists, professors, and politicians across multiple countries. This is linguistic vandalism.

All of us have an obligation to resist the new political language. What Ken Smith termed “junk English” in his 2001

book of that name seems quaint now. Political correctness has been replaced by far more grim and unyielding demands of a new orthodoxy, broadly termed “woke.” Woke is nothing less than a totalizing worldview which applies critical theory (a broad social critique of history, society, and culture) to every facet of human life. It demands rigid adherence to a growing list of left-wing cultural, social, political, and economic precepts regarding inequality, race, sex, sexuality, and climate. Language is at the fore of this adherence, and the new coded words contain their own admonitions and exhortations. “Systemic” comes to mean irrefutable and inescapable, “inclusive” connotes the exclusion of certain undesirable viewpoints, and “democracy” becomes a euphemism for “when our politics prevail.”

Like it or not, language is now another battleground in the culture wars.

This issue also features David Gordon’s review of Willmoore Kendall’s *The Conservative Affirmation*, first published in 1963 and recently reissued by Regnery with an introduction by our friend Daniel McCarthy. Kendall never attained the fame or influence of William F. Buckley or certain other of his *National Review* colleagues, but his midcentury writings on populism have new life in the Trumpian, “postliberal” Right.

These times call for strange bedfellows, and as progressives veer further toward the abyss, our time for potential alliances grows short. Kendall, antiegalitarian and clear eyed, should inform any such alliance. He is not overly intellectual or ideological, and refreshingly never fell for the Lincoln myth. He shares Murray Rothbard’s antipathy for elite dominance, and sees the Left’s phony push for equality as nothing more than an attempt to install themselves as leaders of a revolutionary social order. He questions the “open society” for the same reason, as a euphemism for corporate, media, and state collusion toward (supposedly) egalitarian goals. Kendall also recognized the rising “deep state” and the growing power of the elitist bureaucratic stronghold in Washington even in the 1960s.

While the book looks promising, at his core Kendall is not for “liberty” as a political abstraction or for natural law as the basis for rights. He is, like most conservatives of his age, far too comfortable with military empire (and all its associated domestic costs) if required to defeat the Soviets. He is willing to use nuclear weapons and intervene anywhere to support American interests. But unlike the tired conservatism of Buckley and his few remaining acolytes, Kendall is interesting and vital.

As always, we appreciate everything you do for the Mises Institute and our mission. 

Jeff Deist is president of the Mises Institute.



EVOLUTION OR CORRUPTION?

The Imposition of Political Language in the West Today

by Jeff Deist

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Language is the perfect instrument of empire.

Antonio de Nebrija, Bishop of Ávila, 1492

Language is an institution in society. In both its oral and written forms, language functions as a mechanism for communication and as a cognitive tool. But language serves much broader societal and even civilizational functions. Like any institution, it changes and evolves naturally, without design or centralized control. We might analogize this natural linguistic evolution to a “marketplace,” operating like a liberal or laissez-faire economic system. But language is also subject to corruption, to impositions from actors seeking to control or shape speech for their benefit—e.g., kings, clerics, government officials, politicians, journalists, or professors. We might analogize this type of “unnatural,” or imposed, evolution in language to a hampered economy, marked by

state intervention in the linguistic “marketplace.” But either way, linguistic evolution is relentless and inescapable.

Examples are manifest. Latin once was spoken across the sweep of the Roman Empire, beginning seven centuries before Christ—imposed (or at least introduced by soldiers) over hundreds of local vernaculars as a by-product of conquest. Today, at least in the view of Pope Francis, Latin is a “dead language.” Germanic tribes spoke Old English in the fifth to twelfth centuries, only to be replaced by Middle English across most of today’s United Kingdom beginning in the thirteenth century. The modern English of Shakespeare and the King James Bible then became the language of the Anglosphere. And the process continues, as late modern usages like “betwixt” or “wherefore” would sound odd in conversations today.

Again, language evolves through both natural and “unnatural” (corrupted or imposed) processes. How and why both happen is exceedingly complex and multifaceted, and beyond the scope of this essay. Changes in language over time and across geography reflect phenomena as

diverse as oral traditions, family and tribal life, in-group and peer conformity, war, conquest and colonialism, migration, trade and travel, education, religious and clerical practices, the development and spread of printing presses, and more recently, modern telecommunications and digital technology. In today's internet age, the speed of changes and new usages across geography is evident. Along the way, changes reflect both natural evolution and interventions by authorities in the form of royalty, government officials, clergy, clerisy, media, academia, tech overlords, and elites of all stripes.

The question of evolution versus corruption, of natural versus unnatural changes in language, has important insights for modern society far beyond linguistics. Politics, for example, is where linguistic corruption operates most openly and visibly. Political language is used to persuade and inspire—or to a political cynic, to inflame outrage, demonize opponents, and solicit votes or donations. Words and phrases are overused or misused to the point they become meaningless, or even radically redefined (in practice) to mean their opposite. Speech is weaponized, while “linguistic kill shots” are employed to shut down debate and shift focus to a politician's personal identity rather than issues.

Economics is not immune from corruption in language. In economic science, speech serves as a variety of action. Thus we can study language in the context of praxeology, with attendant characteristics like scarcity, economizing, and trade. We would like to perceive language as an expression of spontaneous order, “the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design.” But economists too, especially those writing for lay audiences or social media, like to use language designed to obscure or persuade rather than inform. Among central bankers, for example, we see “word inflation” happening alongside monetary inflation. Thus we endured the legendary wordiness and opacity of the Maestro Alan Greenspan: “I'm trying to think of a way to answer that question by putting more words into fewer ideas than I usually do.”

Furthermore, public choice theory suggests our understanding of “consent” (in the linguistic, conceptual sense) is badly served through expressions of democratic majorities, even by large supermajorities. The perceived public interest, an important but often unstated goal underlying much of our political rhetoric, is simply an unknowable aggregate of voters' multitudinous self-interests. As such, “public interest” becomes jargon to be abused by politicians, economists, or bankers to further a goal other than truth.

This essay briefly considers the modern corruption of language in the sphere of political economy and media. Even five years ago, the top-down or centralized force operating to corrupt the language of politics and economics could have been broadly termed “political correctness” (PC). Today the term is obsolete, another example of the rapid (unnatural) evolution of usage in Western society. PC referred more narrowly to

acceptable speech, whereas today's linguistic enforcers seek to impose a whole new mindset, attitude, and way of thinking. Thus, PC has been replaced by an even broader and more amorphous term, “woke.” Woke, whether a slur or not, may be used very broadly to represent strident left progressive beliefs regarding race, sex, sexuality, equality, climate change, and the like. Woke demands ever-changing language, and constantly creates new words while eliminating old ones. As a result, “cancellation,” deplatforming, and loss of employment or standing all loom large, giving pause to speakers and writers, who must consider a new woke orthodoxy.

Orwell's Meaningless Words

George Orwell's famous 1946 essay “Politics and the English Language” is perhaps the single best modern summary of the corruption of language for political ends (although primarily a style and usage guide for writers). Ironically, Orwell himself sought to turn “political writing” into an art, evincing his own desire to shape language for ideological purposes. Note too that the Englishman Orwell wrote this essay not long after the end of World War II, during which time he had worked as a broadcaster for BBC's Eastern Service creating British propaganda for India to counter Nazi propaganda. So even before his famous political novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell was quite familiar with the politicization of language. Politically corrupted language frequently veers into outright propaganda.

Orwell attacks “meaningless words” as a form of corrupted language which is not only intended to obscure the accepted meanings of words, but to actively pervert them in “consciously dishonest ways.” As such, meaningless words become weapons in political combat:

Many political words are similarly abused. The word Fascism has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies “something not desirable.” The words democracy, socialism, freedom, patriotic, realistic,



justice, have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. In the case of a word like democracy, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of régime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different. Statements like Marshal Pétain was a true patriot, The Soviet press is the freest in the world, The Catholic Church is opposed to persecution, are almost always made with intent to deceive. Other words used in variable meanings, in most cases more or less dishonestly, are: class, totalitarian, science, progressive, reactionary, bourgeois, equality.

Surely Orwell was particularly prescient with respect to “fascism” and “democracy,” both of which are wildly overused particularly in Western political discourse today. Former US president Donald Trump regularly was termed a fascist (i.e., something not desirable) by the American commentariat, perhaps more than any modern president. And what made him so undesirable? He was a threat to democracy, of course. And by democracy, the commentariat meant “voters approving the kind of government and the kind of president we advocate.”

“Fascism,” despite its different manifestations in the twentieth century, is not simply an amorphous word for bad or oppressive government. Its fundamental elements include an authoritarian or unchecked individual ruler,

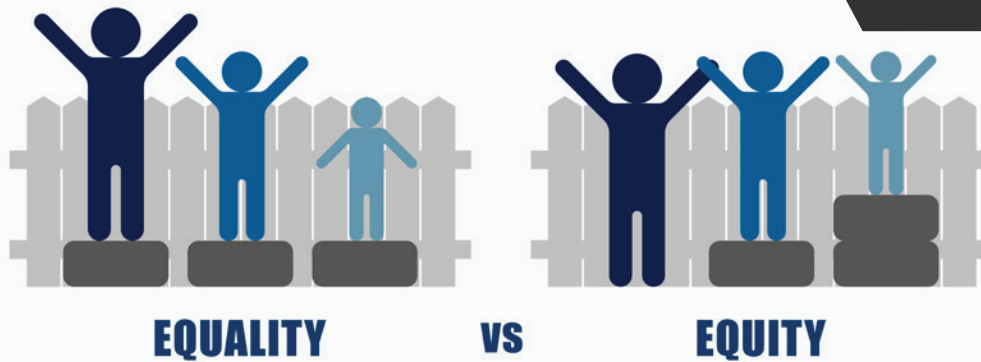
suppressions of political and press freedoms, and a melding of corporate and state power in service of that ruler’s ambitions. All of these elements could be ascribed to any modern US president without too much hyperbole, or to none at all. But the relentless campaign to label Trump as uniquely fascist or even a “Nazi” was unprecedented and based almost entirely on his abrasive personal style rather than his action. Because political and media elites held such deep contempt for Trump as a populist outsider—*the wrong kind of person*—they did not hesitate to corrupt and wildly abuse a term normally associated with Hitler’s atrocities. “Fascism” has become one of Orwell’s meaningless words.

Similarly, a very peculiar “democracy” has become a weaponized shibboleth for political progressives. On the heels of Trump’s 2016 electoral victory, the *Washington Post* breathlessly and ominously added a new slogan to its masthead, “Democracy Dies in Darkness.” The implication was not subtle: democracy exists when the right candidate wins, in this case Hillary Clinton. She was destined to win, destined to become the first female US president, and destined to lead the inexorably progressive American future—a future unburdened by the Deplorables who supported Trump. And yet something went terribly, terribly wrong on that election night in 2016. The wrong candidate won, and so democracy ... dies? Suddenly the Electoral College, a mechanism purposely built into the US Constitution as a compromise between election of a president by Congress and by popular vote, was an unconscionable evil. Trump’s victory was due solely to this antiquated and antidemocratic system, not to mention election interference by the Russians! The endless references to democracy as a sacred part of American politics, a holy rite defiled by Trump’s victory, were a remarkable example of the naked corruption of political language in service of a narrative.

The UK press and political classes reacted much the same with respect to the Brexit vote, bemoaning the “threat to democracy” posed by those who even dared hold such a referendum. When “Leave” carried the day, to the shock of pollsters and pundits, they declared something surely must be wrong with British democracy! Never mind the very high turnout (more than 72 percent of registered voters) and comfortable 3 percent margin of victory—over one million votes. British journalists (not to mention the absolutely bewildered European media) simply could not believe the result. Concentrated in London, which voted heavily against Brexit, many scribes knew almost nobody who voted to leave—just as millions of US progressives in blue cities seemingly did not know even one of the sixty-two million Trump voters in 2016.

Because Little Englanders were an afterthought for Remainers, and because the deep divide between young, urban voters and old, rural voters was so stark, the psychological shock of the result demanded an explanation. And this shock required a coping mechanism, since





Politicians have seized upon the word “equity” as a pivot to reanimate what they see as a stalled strategy for their redistributionist goals. An old, tired word is tossed out for a fresh new variant, with the meaning twisted to serve a new political shibboleth.

democracy *per se* can never be blamed (or blameworthy). Thus, there was a rush to label Brexit “antidemocratic” and blame shadowy tech influences for the outcome. It simply was not possible that a clear majority of Britons wanted out of the EU and voted fair and square to leave; something more sinister must be afoot. So rather than scapegoat democracy itself, and despite plainly losing a legitimate popular referendum to the Leave forces, politicians and media chose to double down and use language in consciously dishonest ways.

Orwell’s reference to “equality” as a meaningless word is another example of his canny foreshadowing of a future trend. Orwell lists it among words “used in variable meanings, in most cases more or less dishonestly.” It is precisely this corrupting dishonesty that weaponizes a word like “equality” away from its plain or widely accepted meaning. In the West, at least, the term means “the status of being equal” with respect to status, rights, and opportunities. This implies fair and equal *treatment* under law, and the right to pursue *opportunities* regardless of personal characteristics or the circumstances of one’s birth. But equality does not imply any guarantee of happiness or outcomes or a certain level of material wealth. It also does not imply a political solution to life’s unfairness, with respect to intelligence, looks, talent, or simple good fortune.

This is precisely why politicians have seized upon the word “equity” as a pivot to reanimate what they see as a stalled strategy for their redistributionist goals. An old, tired word is tossed out for a fresh new variant, with the meaning twisted to serve a new political shibboleth.

Both “equality” and “equity” share the Latin root “aequus,” meaning fair, even, or equal. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary still defines equity the old-fashioned way, as “fairness or

justice in the way people are treated.” But in today’s politics “equity” is a loaded word, so full of ideological connotations as to render its common definition obsolete. Consider its generous use by US vice president Kamala Harris, who made equity a cornerstone of her 2020 campaign. “There is a big difference,” she informs us, “between equality and equity.” In Harris’s telling, equity gives people from different backgrounds the “resources and support they need” to “compete on equal footing.” As a result, “equitable treatment means *we all end up at the same place*” (italics added).

Equity, then, is reimagined and redefined as a euphemism for equal outcomes—a significant shift from the suddenly outdated concepts of opportunity and fairness. Again, in the political reformulation of words one meaning is lost and a new one is imposed. Therefore, we are subjected to press releases from the Biden/Harris administration with grand pronouncements:

Today, President Biden signed an Executive Order on the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans. This is just the latest action taken by President Biden and Vice President Harris to tackle systemic racism and make investments to rebuild our economy and our social safety net so all people, including Black Americans, can thrive. *Already, the Administration has delivered generation-defining outcomes for Black Americans* (italics added). The Heritage Foundation explains this subtle but profound shift in usage from equality to equity in the Biden administration order:

“Equity,” by the way, appears 21 times, while that old American mainstay of “equality” doesn’t even make a cameo. And there lies an important rub.

Equity has now come to mean the functional opposite of equality. The latter means equal treatment to all citizens, such as the Constitution calls for in the clause of the 14th Amendment that deals with equal protection of laws. Equity means treating Americans unequally to ensure that outcomes are equalized—the old tried (and failed) Marxian standard.

The order defines the term equity, but it isn't forthright about whether it's equality of opportunity or outcomes. It says "‘equity’ means the consistent and systematic fair, just and impartial treatment of all individuals." Thus, everything turns on how administrators interpret the meaning of "fair" and "just."

It will likely be a "woke" interpretation, considering the definition's exhaustive inclusion of every victim category under the sun ("underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as black, Latino and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color"). This usual list even includes "persons who live in rural areas"—a nod, one supposes, to the left's new awareness of its vulnerability there. Vice President Kamala Harris was much more forthcoming and honest when she tweeted this on November 1: "Equality suggests, 'Everyone should get the same amount.' The problem with that, not everybody's starting out from the same place. So, if we're all getting the same amount, but you started out back there and I started out over here, we could get the same amount, but you're still going to be that far back behind me."

To understand the shift from equality to equity as an operative political phrase, we need look no further than the agenda being advanced. Kamala Harris seeks to redefine and amplify equity conceptually as part of a concerted effort to effect change in society through diction. Speech becomes political action. Equity is simply a recent and poignant example of how a plain, ordinary word becomes corrupted into one of Orwell's meaningless words and then repurposed. It is now laden with the weight of a distinctly political agenda. As with Orwell's barnyard animals, we are all equitable now—but some among us are more equitable than others.

Hayek's Mirage

While Orwell so thoroughly explained how words are stripped of meaning and implicitly redefined, economist and political theorist Friedrich Hayek's understanding of language helped explain the more explicit and outright commandeering of language we face today. Like Orwell, Hayek was prescient about the corruption of language to serve political ends—and in fact foretold what would become the modern political orthodoxy termed "social justice."

In the second installment of Hayek's three-volume book *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, he presents social justice as a concept so amorphous, and so fraught with peril for any legal system (i.e., a system at least ostensibly charged with producing civil and criminal justice), that its adoption as a goal for society necessarily misdirects even the most well-meaning goals. Social justice perverts an *individualized* legal concept into a politicized, amorphous, and wholly collective social concept. As such, it necessarily threatens freedom for individuals and perverts the law:

The classical demand is that the state ought to treat all people equally in spite of the fact that they are very unequal. You can't deduce from this that because people are unequal you ought to treat them unequally in order to make them equal. And that's what social justice amounts to. It's a demand that the state should treat people differently in order to place them in the same position.... To make people equal a goal of governmental policy would force government to treat people very unequally indeed.

Hayek's conception of social justice centers primarily around the material or economic distribution of wealth, termed "distributive justice." In his critique, any notion of distributive justice makes sense only within a context of centrally planned distribution of economic goods. In a market economy, by contrast, there is no process of distribution separate from production. But even the most well-meaning central planners, Hayek contends, cannot produce a socially "just" distribution of material goods.

Today's social justice movement, by contrast, (perhaps) focuses less on wealth and more on identity (race, sex, sexuality, gender, disability) and perceived ill treatment of marginalized groups. But in both cases the undefinable and unattainable goal of achieving social justice relies on state action. The term is used expressly to promote political measures, or as Hayek puts it, for the "conquest of public imagination":

The appeal to "social justice" has nevertheless by now become the most widely used and most effective argument in political discussion. Almost every claim for government action on behalf of particular groups is advanced in its name, and if it can be made to appear that a certain measure is demanded by "social justice," opposition to it will rapidly weaken. People may dispute whether or not the particular measure is required by "social justice." But that this is the standard which ought to guide political action, and that the expression has a definite meaning, is hardly ever questioned. In consequence, there are today probably no political movements or politicians who do not readily appeal to "social justice" in support of the particular measures which they advocate.

It also can scarcely be denied that the demand for “social justice” has already in a great measure transformed the social order and is continuing to transform it in a direction which those who called for it never foresaw. Though the phrase has undoubtedly helped occasionally to make the law more equal for all, whether the demand for justice in distribution has in any sense made society juster or reduced discontent must remain doubtful.

The expression of course described from the beginning is the aspirations which were at the heart of socialism.

Social justice, an all-encompassing concept which is both undefinable and unattainable, nevertheless is the animating feature of political rhetoric in 2022. Its ever-changing lexicon presents words as empty vessels to be filled with the latest political meaning, moving from jargon into outright propaganda. Words are stripped of meaning and redefined, but subtly and using subterfuge. By contrast, today’s social justice movement encourages the overt, active redefinition of words.

Consider the simple but loaded term “racism,” which in common parlance meant hatred for a particular race or an irrational belief in the inherent superiority or inferiority of a particular race. Just two years ago, Merriam-Webster’s dictionary reflected this widely held view:

a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

a: doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute its principles

b: a political or social system founded on racism, racial prejudice or discrimination.

But in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests across America following the killing of George Floyd by police in

Minneapolis, Minnesota, Merriam-Webster’s editors bowed to pressure from activists to change the entry to insert an overtly political additional definition:

the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another.

Not content to stop there, the US Anti-Defamation League goes a step further in its new definition of racism and gets to the heart of things by naming the oppressors:

the marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges White people.

Thus, with a few short words an entirely new edifice is constructed: racism is “systemic” and inescapable. One group executes and perpetuates racial oppression; its members cannot be above it or immune to it. All are guilty and in need of corrective action. Racism no longer is manifest as harmful actions or even harmful thoughts, but, instead, represents a wholesale social, economic, and political reality. Our entire society is rooted in racial hierarchy, a construct which benefits whites only and must be rooted out through an active political program. This starts with an outright redefinition of racism, down to the dictionary level as taught to schoolchildren. There is no pretense of natural evolution of language, but rather an insistence that words and definitions must change to satisfy our new enlightened understanding. Anyone who objects, or notices how the new definition tends to benefit one political party or movement, clearly stands in the way of racial progress through their unwillingness to accede to the new linguistic tools of antioppression; never mind if only a small minority demanded or agreed to the change.

This is Hayek’s unattainable mirage in action: social justice is achieved through antiracism, which requires new thinking and new words. Racism, once a sin of the individual heart, is repositioned as inherent and omnipresent in our society—

Like Orwell, Hayek was prescient about the corruption of language to serve political ends—and in fact foretold what would become the modern political orthodoxy termed “social justice.”



addressable only by political programs. Corruption of language is part of the agenda.

Even beyond radical redefinitions, social justice requires brand-new words to express brand-new concepts—and to break with the “old,” oppressive language of two years ago. The transgender movement stands out for its rapid success in creating entirely new words which are quickly added to our vocabulary. Among the most widely used is “cisgender,” an amalgamation of the Latin prefix “cis—” derived as “on this side of”—and “gender,” a term which until the last few decades was used mostly in the context of grammar. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary added this brand-new word only in 2017. But even “transgender” is a fairly new term, replacing the older “transsexual” in the 1970s. Transgender people, in keeping with their prefix, cross over and go beyond their assigned birth sex in a variety of ways. Cisgender people, by contrast, stay on their side of the sexual aisle, so to speak—remaining identified with their assigned genitalia and chromosomes. Embedded in cisgender is the implication that those who do not consider changing genders are making a conscious choice to remain as they are, which in turn implies one’s sex is chosen rather than biologically determined. Thus cisgender represents an important conceptual shift: those identifying with their birth sex, an overwhelming statistical majority, now have a specific label for their identification to match the older trans identification. “Cis” is no longer an assumed default status with no need of explanation or nomenclature. And while trans activists surely cheer this, theirs has been a concerted effort to change language for political ends rather than any natural evolution.

This phenomenon is even more pronounced with trans pronouns and acronyms, where terminology changes are

imposed so quickly that they almost seem to be aimed at demoralization of the benighted older generations. “LGBT,” for example, is now “LGBTQQIP2SAA”: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit (2S), androgynous, and asexual. With new letters, new genders, and new sexualities added to the trans vocabulary frequently, the effect is disorienting even as presented by proponents of simple equality and fairness in language:


Some languages, such as English, do not have a gender neutral or third gender pronoun available, and this has been criticized, since in many instances, writers, speakers, etc. use “he/his” when referring to a generic individual in the third person. Also, the dichotomy of “he and she” in English does not leave room for other gender identities, which is a source of frustration to the transgender and gender queer communities.

This push to remake English grammar in service of the trans movement produces a dizzying array of new pronouns:

HE/SHE	HIM/HER	HIS/HER	HIS/HERS	HIMSELF/HERSELF
zie	zim	zir	zis	zieself
sie	sie	hir	hirs	hirsself
ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
ve	ver	vis	vers	verself
tey	ter	tem	ters	terself
e	em	eir	eirs	emself

Along with pronouns, a host of new and quite precise nouns is required to distinguish the flowering of newly recognized sexualities:

aromantic, alloromantic, agender, asexual, sex-repulsed, cupiosesexual, greysexual, greyromantic, omnisexual, demiboy,



Social justice, an all-encompassing concept which is both undefinable and unattainable, nevertheless is the animating feature of political rhetoric in 2022. Its ever-changing lexicon presents words as empty vessels to be filled with the latest political meaning, moving from jargon into outright propaganda.



demigirl, transfeminine, transmasculine, bigender, allosexual, heteronormative, amatonormative, polysexual, pangender, compulsory heterosexuality, abrosexual, gender non-conforming, ceterosexual, demiromantic, biromantic, autosexual, heterosexual, gay, lesbian, queer, LGBTQ+, bisexual, and pansexual. The point here is not to mock or shake our heads at these unfamiliar words, but rather to understand the new trans lexicon as an overtly political imposition of language. Even the most ardent trans advocate does not really expect average people to adopt and keep up with all the new terms; they are weapons wielded to demand respect for and acquiescence to the new sexual landscape. Writers and speakers, especially older people, who fumble with the bewildering new rules can be attacked as misgendering or disrespecting trans people. *The goal of the new language is not better communication or greater understanding, but to impose a new way of thinking about our most basic human biology and identity.* On the linguistic end of this campaign, at least, English speakers were never asked if they agreed to this.

If Hayek was correct about the mirage of social justice, a top-down imposed attempt at linguistic justice is equally fraught with peril. Hayek imagined economics, like language, as a *cosmos*—ordering itself and changing over time but not deliberately designed by humans. It is a self-ordering system. The drive toward *taxis*, or organized arrangement, comes from agencies or people outside the linguistic order—exogenous and imposed. Social justice language is a clear example of the latter. By corrupting language, it attempts to create a mirage of justice which is undefinable, unattainable, and ultimately cynical in its (real) goal of political control.

Woke CEOs and Central Bankers

The imposition or corruption of language for political gain certainly is not limited to the traditionally left-wing arenas of academia or think tanks or social justice organizations, however. In 2022 the use of woke language, in service of unquestioned progressive goals (diversity, inclusion, equity, social justice, fighting climate change, etc.), is fully embraced even by the historically conservative worlds of big corporations and banking. And this embrace goes beyond lip service to causes or platitudes in press releases by expressly reshaping the policies pursued by those companies and banks.

Many of the largest tech and retail companies in the world, for example, publicly supported the Black Lives Matter movement and pledged billions in funding to its cause. With this support comes vague and open-ended language, as with

this missive from the Walmart CEO to employees concerning a new center for racial equity being created by the retail giant:

We will seek to advance economic opportunity and healthier living, including issues surrounding the social determinants of health, strengthening workforce development and related educational systems, and support criminal justice reform with an emphasis on examining barriers to opportunity faced by those exiting the system.

Two questions arise: First, is the job of Walmart to sell retail goods for a profit or to cure racial injustice in the world? Second, why has the company departed from any time-honored definition of racism? Why create a “center” with goals unrelated to its core business? Surely the best way for Walmart to combat racism in society is to hire and promote blacks or enrich black owners of its stock through higher profits. Why does Walmart, one of the biggest and most politically powerful corporations on the planet, rush to embrace the wildly overbroad language of systemic racism and sinister “barriers to opportunity”? The true barrier for most is poverty, which is far better addressed by economic opportunity—like a job at Walmart—than kowtowing to the linguistic demands of social justice.

One woman’s clothing company called “Spanx,” whose decidedly unwoke business model (like the girdle manufacturers of yesteryear) centers around making its wearers appear slimmer, trots out several buzzwords in this social media post:

Today, we’re using our social platforms to reiterate that we are committed to being a better ally to fight systemic racism. We will actively practice anti-racism through awareness and education, self-introspection and action.

This use of “systemic” effectively eliminates any possibility that a member of an oppressor group might *not* be racist as an individual, because racism is all around us *as a system*—like the proverbial goldfish, we are swimming in it yet not even aware of the water. This implies or even demands an obligation for everyone, regardless of one’s own personal lack of racist prejudice, to combat the problem. “Ally” is code for a progressive in good standing, a member of the oppressor identity class who at least holds the correct left-wing views and conforms to the current linguistic vogue. “Anti-racism” likewise requires the active participation of all, at the very least to become educated and aware (unlearn and recognize our problematic views) and then act. Merely not being racist, or not acting racist, is not enough under the new language surrounding race. *The imposed words contain their own admonitions and exhortations.*

Of course, big corporations have an economic interest in being seen as socially conscious from a publicity perspective,

The Fed may be independent of presidents and Congress, but it is not at all immune from the broader political, social, and cultural pressure to advance an allegedly egalitarian agenda.

as it presumably helps their bottom-line profitability in the long run. The old adage “do well by doing good” certainly is at work here. But something profound has shifted, especially among the younger corporate workforce that tends to dominate marketing departments and run social media accounts. Younger workers are so steeped in the progressive worldview they no longer see blatantly political corruptions of language as political at all—caring about climate change, for example, is simply what a good person does. Those who don’t care, or worse yet challenge the orthodoxy of climate change politics, are simply retrograde and beyond redemption. Likewise, anyone who might deny the loaded and quite political assertion that America is a deeply racist country, uniquely born out of subjugation, is utterly incomprehensible, and clearly a bad person. Climate “deniers” (likening them to Holocaust deniers) and racists are not wanted as customers. They can buy their groceries and shapewear bodysuits somewhere else.

Central bankers too, like their corporate counterparts, have immersed themselves in the new top-down language of the progressive imposers. This may seem unlikely. Monetary policy for decades was that most staid and inscrutable corner of economics, a boring specialty even among the most wonkish professional economists. Former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, nicknamed “the Undertaker” for his reserved demeanor by novelist Ayn Rand during his time in her social circles, was the old archetype of a central banker. He was infamous for his opaque “Fedspeak” at public hearings, uttering lots of dense words but essentially saying nothing (market players hung on his every pronouncement and he wanted to avoid misinterpretation). His boring appearances and testimony during the 1990s, always technical and dry, suggested anything but progressive or politicized ambitions for monetary policy.

The Fed, after all, has a purely economic function: to promote a strong US economy through its control over the dollar and domestic monetary policy. Its dual mandate from Congress is to foster economic conditions that achieve both stable prices and maximum sustainable employment. We are reminded constantly about its vaunted nonpolitical and nonpartisan independence, which requires its governors to act without regard to politics or outside influence.

Yet today’s central bankers, including and especially those at the US Fed, cannot escape the demands of progressive language czars. The Fed may be independent of presidents

and Congress, but it is not at all immune from the broader political, social, and cultural pressure to advance an allegedly egalitarian agenda. That environment has a new vocabulary, one that central bankers are readily adopting.

Consider this recent announcement from the US central bank:



Federal Reserve
@federalreserve

...

Nov. 8 conference will explore how gender influences economic, financial outcomes over individual's lifetime. Special emphasis will be placed on evidence-based strategies that promote a more inclusive economy as nation moves into post-pandemic recovery (2/3):



federalreserve.gov
Gender and the Economy Conference
economic Conference

3:32 PM · Oct 25, 2021 · Twitter Web App

9 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 15 Likes

Here we see a host of undefined and undefinable buzzwords relating to the (assumed, undefined) problem of economic inequality between the sexes in the US economy. “Gender” substitutes for the more definable “sex,” even though the real thrust of the conference is to address issues relating to women. And the laughably vague “evidence-based strategies” implies alternatives like “wishful strategies” or “unproven strategies.” “Inclusive,” an overused shibboleth word among woke cognoscenti, is here used to mean “more inclusive for women,” which excludes half of the population. This is an overtly political conference, held to further feminist concerns rather than monetary policy concerns.

One panel of American academics at the 2019 European Central Bank (ECB) conference for central bankers considered the question of gender (sex) in economics seminars—again applying a feminist lens to their role in banking:

Gender and the Dynamics of Economics Seminars

A distinctively aggressive culture pervades the seminars at which economists present their work. This study



codes the interactions between speakers and their audiences at several hundred seminars and shows that women speakers have a greater share of their seminar time taken up by audience members and are more likely to be asked questions that are considered hostile.

Another highly politicized issue, namely climate change, is also now part and parcel of central bank messaging campaigns. The supposed risks of unchecked carbon emissions and rising temperatures—two areas where Wharton and Harvard finance PhDs might not be expected to possess expertise—are now part of the “nonmonetary policy steps” central banks around the world must consider:

While governments are in the driving seat when it comes to climate policies, within our mandates we as central bankers and supervisors have a key role to play. Let me be clear: we are acting in the pursuit of, not in spite of, our mandates. This is our duty, not an option.

And this new role comes with new pious language:

The growth of sustainable finance (the integration of environmental, social, and governance criteria into investment decisions) across all asset classes shows the increasing importance that investors attribute to climate change, among other nonfinancial considerations.... Sustainable finance can contribute to climate change mitigation by providing incentives for firms to adopt less carbon-intensive technologies and specifically financing the development of new technologies. Channels through which investors can achieve this goal include engaging with company management, advocating for low-carbon strategies as investor activists, and lending to firms that are leading in regard to sustainability. All these actions send price signals, directly and indirectly, in the allocation of capital.

What, exactly, is “sustainable” finance in this context? Does it mean business practices and corporate governance that will allow the planet to remain habitable another one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand years? And what does “less carbon-intensive” mean for billions of shivering or sweltering or starving or simply fossil fuel reliant denizens of the planet right now? More importantly, how did environmentalism become part of a central bank’s mandate?

These departures from traditional monetary concerns at the expense of the economy have not gone unnoticed, even by former US Treasury secretary and onetime Harvard University president Lawrence Summers:

“We have a generation of central bankers who are defining themselves by their wokeness,” Summers, who is now a professor at Harvard University, said on Wednesday. “They’re defining themselves by how socially concerned they are.... We’re in more danger than we’ve been during my career of losing control of inflation in the U.S.”

The shift in language among central bankers mirrors their shift in focus, from purely economic and monetary matters into openly political movements. Central bankers, in keeping with the movements they embrace, have adopted the nomenclature (and agenda) of the woke.

Why Corrupted Language Matters

Across the West we are bombarded by what author Ken Smith called “junk English”:

Junk English is much more than sloppy grammar. It is a hash of human frailties and cultural license: spurning the language of the educated yet spawning its own pretentious words and phrases, favoring appearance over substance, broadness over precision, and loudness above all. It is sometimes innocent, sometimes lazy, sometimes well intended.

Corrupted language, in fact, is rarely innocent or well intended. It is frequently pretentious and takes unearned license. It feigns academic pretense, even when at its most base level of jingoism. It is loud, demanding, and has a very simple and obvious purpose: to achieve ideological or political ends. Corrupted language often veers into propaganda.

How and why language changes over time is enormously complex and obviously well beyond the scope of any essay. But when change is imposed by design, in furtherance of an agenda, we should strive to recognize it—regardless of whether we agree with that agenda. We should study and understand the distinction between the natural evolution of language over time and the imposition of politicized diction or usage through coordinated and intentional efforts.

Social scientists of all disciplines, not just linguists, should care about the corruption of language since it shapes our understanding of all human interactions. It is an important subject for interdisciplinary study, and could yield new knowledge in economics, political science, sociology, law, and philosophy. Laypeople similarly should care about the

There is no clear dividing line between language and action, between our thoughts, words, and acts. All are interrelated, and those seeking to impose language understand this.

corruption of language to better understand its role in political manipulation.

In economics, particularly the Austrian school, language is an important subfield of praxeology and “not simply a collection of phonetic signs.” Thus it represents “an instrument of thinking and acting,” as Ludwig von Mises termed it. Language is an important component of an individual’s means-ends reasoning, important in Austrian methodology. Economic axioms and logical deductions made from them require precision and agreement in language. And we can see a parallel between imposed language and economic interventionism, versus evolved language and laissez-faire policies. Hayek posits that markets are spontaneous and evolve, requiring no bureaucracy or elite central planners. Economists would benefit from considering a similar conception of planned versus spontaneous language.

Philosophy surely ought to demand precise language, particularly in epistemology. Justifications for knowledge claims rely on truth, evidence, and belief. These concepts in turn require common language to express and define them. We might think of words and phrases in philosophy like units of measurement or force in the physical sciences. An inch is an inch, a gallon is a gallon, gravity is gravity—but as we have seen, “democracy,” “justice,” and “equity” are far less precise. Relatively static definitions and meanings, which evolve only slowly over time, give coherence to philosophy.

In law, the question of evolution versus corruption is akin to the differences between common law and positive (statutory, legislative) law. Law, like language, has a process. Common law develops from a natural evolutionary process—rooted in custom, tradition, and notions of fairness, while bound up with local and temporal attributes. Historically, legal justice is specific and individualized, not general and societal. Positive law, by contrast, is designed by a central authority. It can change radically and dramatically overnight; a new law can be imposed immediately and result in very different forms of justice than previously obtained. For lawmakers, judges, and lawyers, words are the brick and mortar of their profession. And just as “justice” itself has become one of Orwell’s meaningless words, our entire legal system and legal doctrines rely on potentially corrupted language.

Even mathematics, that most objective science with its own numerical and symbolic language, cannot be explained conceptually without using words. And we should not imagine that imposed language is only a phenomenon in more left-leaning social sciences and academic departments as opposed to physical sciences and math.

Ultimately, imposed language attempts to control our *actions*. When we broadly consider politically correct or woke worldviews—i.e., an activist mindset concerned with promoting amorphous social justice—the linguistic element is straightforward:

Political correctness is the conscious, designed manipulation of language intended to change the way people speak, write, think, feel, and act, in furtherance of an agenda.

Words are just a means to an end, the end being actual changes in how we live our lives. Those changes flow first from our thoughts (and even how we formulate our thoughts), then to our issued words (spoken or written), and ultimately to our actions. The examples provided in this essay make this clear; there is no clear dividing line between language and action, between our thoughts, words, and acts. All are interrelated, and those seeking to impose language understand this.

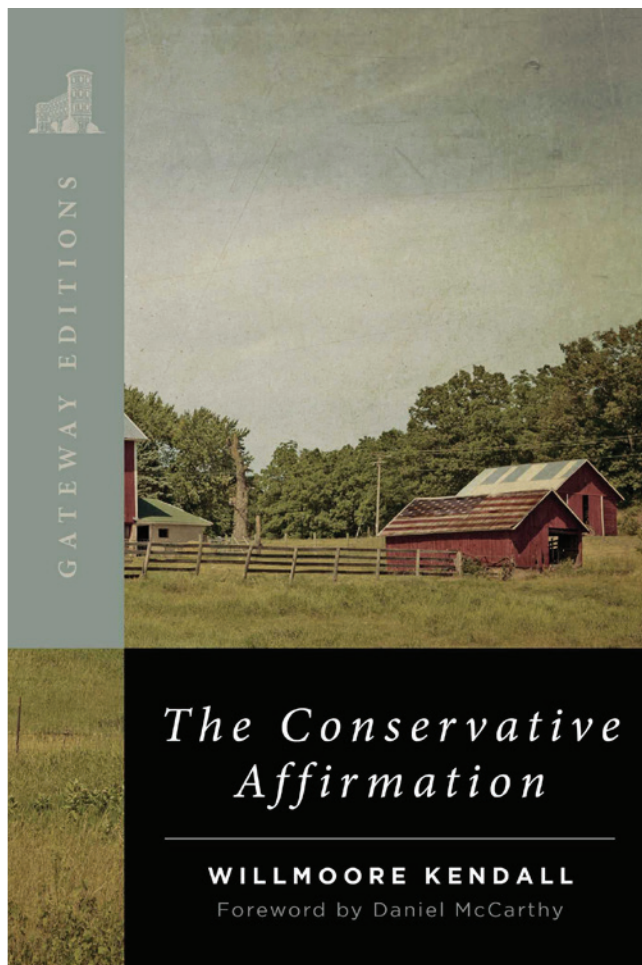
Who owns and controls language? Ideally, governments, politicians, academics, think tanks, journalists, religious leaders, or elite institutions should not possess this tremendous power. Like market processes, language should evolve without centralized design or control. Only this natural evolution, across time and geography, can reveal the preferences of actual language speakers in any society. Evolution is just; evolution is efficient. But language is an institution, and like any institution, it is subject to corruption and even capture by those with political agendas. This essay urges greater awareness and understanding of the distinction between evolution and corruption, between spontaneous linguistic changes and the imposition of language to serve an agenda. ■■■

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DESTRUCTIVE EGALITARIANISM?

DAVID GORDON REVIEWS

The Conservative Affirmation
By Willmoore Kendall
Regnery, 2022
(Originally published in 1963)
Ixi + 362 pp.



Willmoore Kendall was the most important political theorist of the brand of conservatism associated with William F. Buckley Jr.'s *National Review* during the 1950s and 1960s. To some of us, this will be not altogether a positive recommendation, but as Daniel McCarthy suggests in his excellent foreword to this reissue of Kendall's book, Kendall had a powerful intellect, and the "populism" that he championed makes it likely that he will become an intellectual voice for the revolt against elite dominance which has characterized the American right wing in recent years. In his criticism of the elites and emphasis on the political wisdom of the American people, Kendall shows interesting parallels and differences with the thought of Murray Rothbard, and that is what I shall concentrate on in this review.

According to Kendall, the elitist intellectuals of the Left favor a revolution in support of a principle that "looks to the overthrow of an established social order. The principle in question is the *egalitarian* principle—not the equality principle of the Declaration of Independence which 'holds' merely that all men are created equal.... The egalitarian principle says that men are not merely created equal, are indeed not created equal at all, but rather ought, that is have a right, to be *made* equal. That is to say equalized, and equalized precisely by governmental action, so that if they end up other than actually equal—in political power, in wealth, in income, in education, in living conditions—no one shall ever be able to say that government has spared any effort that might conceivably have made them equal" (emphasis in original).

Kendall sees Abraham Lincoln as a source of this destructive egalitarianism. In a review of Harry Jaffa's *Crisis of the House Divided*, Kendall says, "As for the status of Abraham Lincoln vis-à-vis the Signers [of the Declaration] and Framers, Jaffa's Lincoln sees the great task of the nineteenth century as that of affirming the cherished accomplishment of the Fathers by *transcending* it. Concretely, this means to construe the equality clause as having an allegedly unavoidable meaning with which it was always pregnant but which the Fathers apprehended



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only dimly” (emphasis in original). Kendall fears that Jaffa’s reading of the equality clause might lead to “a political future the very thought of which is hair-raising: a future made up of an endless series of Abraham Lincolns, each persuaded that he is superior in wisdom and virtue to the Fathers.” Perhaps in reaction to Kendall’s review, Jaffa in his later work changed his interpretation of the equality clause so that Lincoln became the faithful expositor of the Fathers.

It is at this point in Kendall’s argument that populism enters the scene. The American people do not want the radical egalitarianism of the elites, and, Kendall argues, this is shown particularly in congressional resistance to the egalitarian proposals of the executive branch, which is often dominated by leftist elites entrenched in bureaucratic agencies. The conflicts between the branches “all involve matters of policy which ... bear very nearly indeed upon the central destiny of the United States—on the kind of society it is going to become (‘open’ or relatively ‘closed,’ egalitarian and redistributive or shot through and through with great differences in reward and privilege, a ‘welfare state’ society or a ‘capitalist’ society); on the form of government the United States is to have (much the same as that intended by the Framers or one tailored to the specifications of egalitarian ideology).”

This is a decisive point of contact with Rothbard, who also takes the side of “populism” against the leftist elites. In an article published in the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report* in January 1992, he says, “The reality of the current system is that it constitutes an unholy alliance of ‘corporate liberal’ Big

Business and media elites, who, through big government, have privileged and caused to rise up a parasitic underclass, who, among them all, are looting and oppressing the bulk of the middle and working classes in America. Therefore, the proper strategy of libertarians and paleos is a strategy of ‘right-wing populism,’ that is: to expose and denounce this unholy alliance, and to call for getting this preppie-underclass-liberal media alliance off the backs of the rest of us: the middle and working classes.”

There is an objection that supporters of populism need to confront, and Rothbard has a better answer to it than Kendall. The objection is that the fact the majority of the population supports a political position does not by itself show that the position is morally justifiable, and this remains so even if the majority reflects what Kendall calls “the deliberate sense of the community.” Kendall’s response would be to deny that he equates political morality with majority support. He supports natural law and regards the American people, historically shaped by the traditions of the Christian West, as in their wisdom the best judges of how to apply the precepts of natural law, which are, after all, not self-executing, to the concrete circumstances of the day.

Unfortunately, Kendall has what from a Rothbardian perspective is a defective understanding of natural law. Following Leo Strauss, whom he calls his greatest teacher, Kendall understands ancient natural right, with its stress on the city-state, as a principal instrument in promoting virtue among citizens, and contrasts it with individualism,

conventionalism, and relativism, which deny natural law. He locates John Locke firmly in the latter camp, thus failing to consider the position that Lockean self-ownership and property rights provide an objective basis for natural law as applied to politics. Locke's individualism, far from being a corruption of classic natural law, is an improvement on it, so far as politics is concerned.

Had Kendall accepted this, he could have avoided what seems to me a serious mistake in his thought. He rightly says that a society need not, and ought not to, regard all questions as unsettled. If, for example, radicals today propose to abolish what they call the “hierarchical” family and to bring into question the distinction between men and women, we are not required to respond to them on their own terms but can ignore them. As Kendall finely says, criticizing the view he opposes, “Whatever the private convictions of the society’s individual members concerning what Plato teaches us to call the important things—that is, the things with which truth is primarily concerned—the society itself is now by definition educated to a national religion of skepticism, to the idea that all questions are open questions, to the suspension of judgment as the exercise of judgment par excellence.... It can, to be sure, tolerate all expression of opinion that is predicated upon its own view of truth; but what is it to do with the man who steps forward to urge an opinion, to conduct an inquiry, not predicated on that view? What is it to do with a man who with every syllable he utters challenges the very foundations of society? What can it say to him except, ‘Sir, you cannot enter into our discussion, because you and we have no common premises from which discussion between us can be initiated?’” Kendall is here describing how the Left viewed Joseph McCarthy, but though Kendall of course rejects their position, he accepts their view of how people should respond to a challenge to society’s public orthodoxy.

Unfortunately, reflecting what I take to be his statist view of natural law, Kendall argues that dissenters may not just be ignored but may be forcibly suppressed. Rothbard’s resolution of free speech issues into questions of property rights avoids the extreme to which Kendall is driven: you are free to say what you want on your own property but not, lacking the permission of the owners, on that of others.

In his relentless campaign against the “open society,” Kendall misunderstands John Stuart Mill, whom he takes to be the



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foremost proponent of the position he wishes to combat in what I can only call a fantastic way. He says that “Mill’s freedom of speech doctrine has its very roots in dogmatic skepticism—in, that is to say, denial of the existence, at any particular place and at any moment in time, not only of a public truth but of any truth whatever unless it be the truth of denial itself.” If I may be “dogmatic,” Mill definitely did not deny the existence of objective truth, and I suspect that Kendall’s failure to understand this is an example of a besetting sin among political theorists. Kendall was a pupil of the great philosopher R.G. Collingwood at Oxford, and Kendall’s references to F.H. Bradley and José Ortega y Gasset suggest that he was widely read in philosophy, but like many of his fellow political theorists, he appears unaware of most work by analytic philosophers. Had he studied Mill in the context of analytic philosophy, he would have quickly discovered that the position he foists on Mill is a travesty.

It is also necessary to say that as with a number of his colleagues at *National Review*, Kendall’s apocalyptic calls for a global crusade—involving the use of nuclear weapons if needed—against world communism have not aged well. Though he was right in his uncompromising condemnation of the evils of communist totalitarianism, it does not follow from this condemnation, as Kendall wrongly thought it did, that a noninterventionist foreign policy needed to be abandoned. And though he is again right that there are situations in which one ought to risk death to avert conquest by a tyrannical regime, one gets the impression that this CIA operative relished the prospect of ending his life in such sacrifice a little too much.

Despite his mistakes, Kendall is usually insightful and provocative. ■■■

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ON SECESSION AND SMALL STATES

by Ryan McMaken



Ryan McMaken is a senior editor at the Mises Institute and editor of the *Mises Wire* and *Power and Market*. He has a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in public policy and international relations from the University of Colorado. He was a housing economist for the State of Colorado. He is the author of *Commie Cowboys: The Bourgeoisie and the Nation-State in the Western Genre* and the recently published *Breaking Away: The Case for Secession, Radical Decentralization, and Smaller Polities*. McMaken is a cohost of the *Radio Rothbard* podcast, has appeared on Fox News and Fox Business, and has been featured in a number of national print publications including *Politico*, *The Hill*, *Bloomberg*, and the *Washington Post*. This article is adapted from his talk delivered at the 2022 Supporters Summit in Phoenix, Arizona.

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The international system we live in today is a system composed of numerous states. There are, in fact, about two hundred of them, most of which exercise a substantial amount of autonomy and sovereignty. They are functionally independent states. Moreover, the number of sovereign states in the world has nearly tripled since 1945. Because of this, the international order has become much more decentralized over the past eighty years, and this is largely due to the success of many secession movements.

The new states are smaller than the ones that came before them, however, and this all reminds us that there is a basic arithmetic to secession and decentralization in the world. Since the entire surface of the world—outside of Antarctica, of course—is already claimed by states, that means that when we split one political jurisdiction up into pieces, those new pieces will necessarily be smaller than the old state from which they came.

During the decolonization period following the Second World War, dozens of new states were formed out of the territories of the old empires they left. This meant the new status quo had a larger number of smaller states. The same thing occurred after the end of the Cold War. As the Soviet Union collapsed, it left fifteen new smaller states in its wake.

So, in the current world, secession—when successful—is an event that reduces the size and scope of states. It reduces the territory and the populations over which a single central institution exercises monopoly power.

Secession and State Size as Two Sides of One Coin

So, if we're going to talk about secession, then, it's also important to explicitly address the issue of what is the correct size of states. Is smaller better?

Until the day comes that a majority of the population wants to abolish all states, it makes sense to look to ways that will reduce the power of states, localize that power, and take at least some of it out of the hands of some of the most powerful ruling state elites.

Now before we go further, I know my audience here, so there's no need to come up to me afterward and say, "Well, states are bad, so the correct size of states is that they don't exist at all." I get it. I agree that's the end goal. Moreover, political communities don't have to be states at all. They could be other types of nonstate polities. But that's all for another speech.

For now, we'll stick to talking about states, as we are already saddled with living in a world composed of states right now. Until the day comes that a majority of the population wants to abolish all states, it makes sense to look to ways that will reduce the power of states, localize that power, and take at least some of it out of the hands of some of the most powerful ruling state elites.

And the reason we have to address the issue of the size of states is because many people do believe that bigger is better. They believe that larger states are essential for economic success, for peace, and for trade. Also, many people think that state size doesn't matter at all. They think every problem of conflict within a political jurisdiction can be solved with democracy. Just let people vote, and there is no need for people to have political independence or a separate polity of their own. People who believe *that* are going to heartily oppose secession.

And, of course, states' agents themselves will oppose it because states want to be big. Being big and getting bigger is an important goal of every state. It's a major part of what we call state building. States want to consolidate power, annex territories, and increase their taxable population. What we want is the opposite of that. We want state unbuilding. State demolition.

For many in the public, however, the idea that bigger is good, or at least that size doesn't matter, has its limits. For example, most people already have in their minds some upper limit as to the "correct" size of states. To see this, simply ask a person if he or she wants to live under a single global state.

Most people—not all, but I would suggest a sizable majority of people worldwide—would be opposed to this. Most people, just from casually observing the world, suspect that placing global governing power in the hands of some distant elite from another culture, from a different continent, and who uses a different language might not actually produce a desirable result.

On an instinctive level, then, many people recognize that something more local is necessary. Partly because of this instinct, radical decentralization in the form of many diverse polities has been the *norm* throughout human history. Even in the days of the Roman Empire, which viewed itself as having *universal* jurisdiction, the Romans never subjugated the Persians, the tribes of northern Europe, the Chinese, or the kingdoms of sub-Saharan Africa. The Romans didn't even *know* about the Americas. The world has always been politically decentralized.

Yet, ignoring this, many people continue to insist that adding a new country to the large group of already existing countries would somehow bring on anarchy. Here's the thing, though: the world is already in a state of anarchy. Everyone who's read a serious book on international relations already knows this. It's already accepted fact that the international system is anarchic. There is no final arbiter of law or policy internationally. There is no global monopolist.

So *creating* anarchy is hardly a danger. It's already there.

How many independent polities should there be? How big should they be? That's probably the harder question we must overcome with many people.

After all, thanks to status quo bias, many people seem to credulously believe that we've somehow magically arrived at exactly the correct number of states and they're all of the "right size." The UN has explicitly said as much. Among the international elites, it's basically been dogma, since 1945, that the world's existing borders as currently drawn shall never be moved or changed. There are exceptions, but "approved" secession—as in the case of Kosovo's de facto

secession—is only encouraged by the establishment when that secession serves the interests of certain great powers and their allies.

So just to get started when we're going to engage in the thankless job of pushing secession, we have to make the case that smaller and more numerous states are better for the world. From the perspective of enhancing freedom and free markets, we can see three key ways that smaller and more numerous states are better. But let's also look at the empirical evidence while we're at it.

1. Smaller States Allow for More Choice and More Opportunities for Exit

The first reason that smaller states are beneficial is that they offer more opportunities for exit. This, in turn, makes states more inclined to respect property rights.

Lew Rockwell summed this principle up in 2005 in a great article called “What We Mean by Decentralization.” Rockwell writes:

Under decentralization, jurisdictions must compete for residents and capital, which provides some incentive for greater degrees of freedom, if only because local despotism is neither popular nor productive. If despots insist on ruling anyway, people and capital will find a way to leave.

This is most fully realized, of course, by the type of decentralization that results from secession. As Murray Rothbard put it in 1977: “Secession ... means greater competition between governments of different geographical areas, enabling people of one State to zip across the border to relatively greater freedom more easily.”

Now, of course, ideally you wouldn't have to physically relocate to escape despotism. But we don't live in an ideal world. We have to work with what we have, and the fact is governments like to abuse rights. So the question is, Do we want governments that are huge and control vast swathes of land and that require us to move thousands of miles to escape them? Or do we want something smaller where exit is easier, albeit still not without cost? And, of course, keep in mind that in a world with only one state and no secession, there is no escape at all.

We've seen this issue of “exit” in the modern world, of course. It's true in countless refugee situations, where the most oppressed people are only able to save their own lives by fleeing across an international border. We saw it in Venezuela over the past decade, when Venezuelans, desperate for food, had to escape across an international

BREXIT



Do we want governments that are huge and control vast swathes of land that require us to move thousands of miles to escape them? Or do we want something smaller where exit is easier, albeit still not without cost?

border just to get basic necessities. Thank goodness that border was there and limited the reach of the Venezuelan regime. Exit was possible. If only the Venezuelan state were even smaller and the people of that region had even more options for bordering states into which to exit and escape.

Historically, as well, we know this concept of exit has been an absolutely key factor in how the West rose to achieve the highest standards of living the world has ever known. As the historian Ralph Raico has noted in his essay “The European Miracle,” the fact that Europe has been so decentralized throughout its post-Roman history—in contrast to the huge empires of the East—meant that entrepreneurs and capital could indeed escape across Western Europe's countless borders in a highly decentralized world. This was especially

the case in Europe's Middle Ages, and as historians Nathan Rosenberg and L.E. Birdzell Jr. note in their book *How the West Grew Rich*, it was in these highly decentralized Middle Ages that the institutional groundwork was laid for Europe's economic miracle.

Similarly, historian Jean Baechler showed this in his research, and he concluded, "The first condition for the maximization of economic efficiency is the liberation of civil society with respect to the state."

So how did this liberation occur which led to the success of markets in Europe? Baechler tells us: "The expansion of capitalism [in Europe] owes its origins ... to political anarchy." That is, to the existence of a large number of small states, without any overriding imperial state power. Not since Rome has Europe been unified under a single government, and that has meant more freedom and more economic growth.

One reason this works is that in a region or world of small states, it is more difficult to even attempt autarky, so for a private entrepreneur, moving one's capital from one place to another does not cut off one's access to markets outside the borders of a small jurisdiction. Small states and principalities have always experienced big incentives toward doing business with surrounding areas. It means more trade. It means more efficient markets.

Opponents of secession and breaking up states are often opposed, however, on the grounds that smaller states will throw up trade barriers and be more inclined to violate rights. The reasons for this assumption are unclear, but this is a common objection.

On the contrary, small states want to attract capital, and it shows. This is why efforts to impose a single global minimum tax tend to meet the most resistance from smaller countries, like Ireland and Hungary, as they do today. Having lower taxes is a major way that small states attract wealth.

Moreover, in modern times, the empirical evidence supports the idea that small states tend to be more open to free trade, more open to a free flow of labor, more open to lower taxes.

For example, Sergio Castello and Terutomo Ozawa conclude in their study on small states that in a world of specialized and growing trade

small economies naturally grow more trade-oriented in both exports and imports.... Ceteris paribus, small nations thus become more trade-focused than large ones.

Economist Gary Becker in 1998 noted, "Since 1950 real per capita GDP [gross domestic product] has risen somewhat faster in smaller nations than it has in bigger ones." Becker concluded that

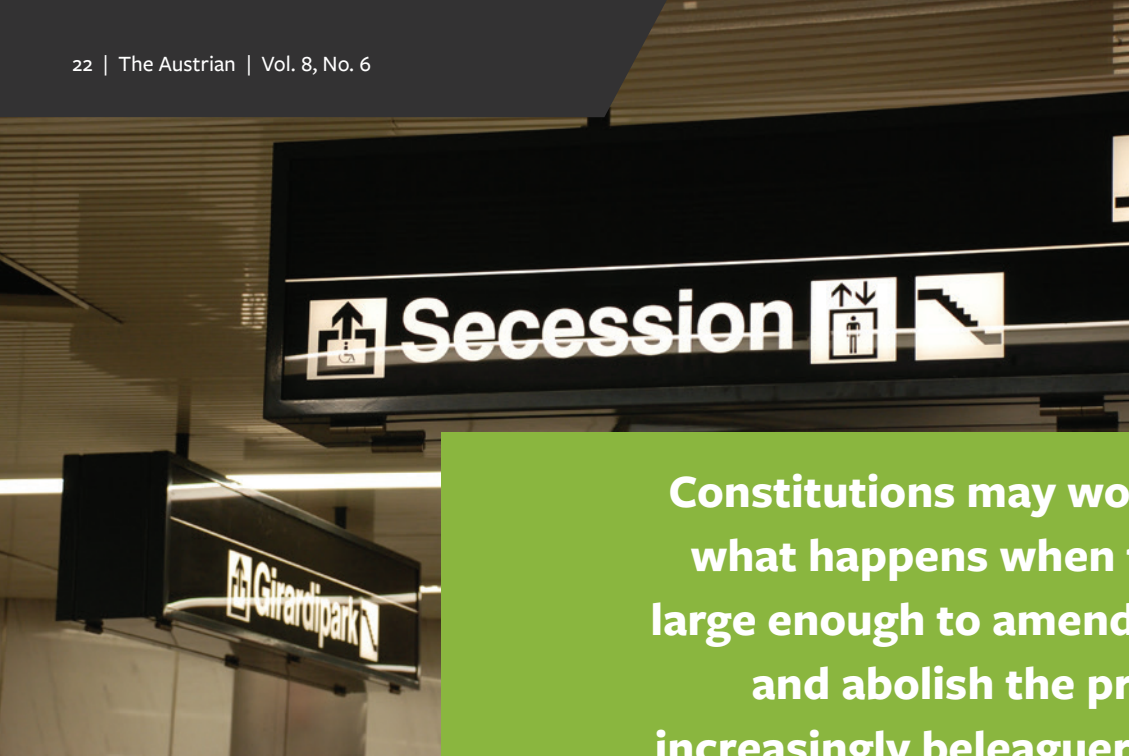
the statistics on actual performance show that dire warnings about the economic price suffered by small nations are not all warranted.... Smallness can be an asset in the division of labor in the modern world, where economies are linked through international transactions. Of the fourteen countries with populations over 100 million, only the US and Japan are wealthy.

William Easterly and Aart Kraay conclude from their own study on small states: "Controlling for location, smaller states are actually richer than other states in per capita GDP.... Microstates have on average higher income and productivity levels than small states, and grow no more slowly than large states."

So it turns out Rothbard was right when he suggested that small states are more likely to embrace free trade. As he wrote in the 1990s, this was also due to sociological reasons:



Small states and principalities have always experienced big incentives toward doing business with surrounding areas. The means more trade. It means more efficient markets.



Constitutions may work for a time, but what happens when the majority gets large enough to amend the constitution and abolish the protections for the increasingly beleaguered minority? The losers become permanent losers.

A common response to a world of proliferating nations is to worry about the multitude of trade barriers that might be erected. But, other things being equal, the greater the number of new nations, and the smaller the size of each, the better. For it would be far more difficult to sow the illusion of self-sufficiency if the slogan were “Buy North Dakota” or even “Buy 56th Street” than it now is to convince the public to “Buy American.” Similarly, “Down with South Dakota,” or “Down with 55th Street,” would be a more difficult sell than spreading fear or hatred of the Japanese.

In other words, bigness brings delusions of self-sufficiency, and it is actually large states that more often turn to protectionism and economic nationalism and control. Small states know that exit is easier for their residents, and thus these small states must be more responsible to capital to attract wealth.

2. Reducing the Size of States Offers a Solution When Democracy and Constitutionalism Fail

A second benefit of small states is that they offer a solution when constitutions and democracy often fail to protect minority rights.

We often encounter the argument that the size and scope of states don’t matter so long as there are elections and there are words written on parchment somewhere saying that the government—cross my heart and hope to die—will not violate our rights.

It’s great if that works for a time, but it quite often fails.

In reality, neither constitutions nor elections protect minority rights when minority groups are a permanent minority or minority interests diverge sufficiently from the interests of the ruling majority. We see this frequently with ethnic and linguistic minorities. Ludwig von Mises himself understood this when he wrote that

the situation of having to belong to a state to which one does not wish to belong is no less onerous if it is the result of an election than if one must endure it as the consequence of a military conquest.... At every turn the member of a national minority is made to feel that he lives among strangers and that he is, even if the letter of the law denies it, a second-class citizen.

Similarly, problems exist for ideological minorities, especially on issues where there is little room for compromise. For example, consider a state where about half the population thinks abortion is a basic human right and the other half thinks abortion is a grave violation of human rights. We can see a problem here, even in an allegedly decentralized political system like the United States. The Supreme Court has told the states to set their own policies, yet both sides continue to call for *nationwide* laws forcing their own preferred policies on the entire nation. Confederations only work when people in one region are willing to tolerate the “deviations” of the people in other regions. But much of the time, the impulse to impose uniform national policy on everyone within a state’s borders is inexorable, and without breaking states up to match regional preferences, the only choice losing minorities have is to turn to violence or simply accept their status of powerlessness.

In cases like this, democracy and constitutionalism offer no answer. Parchment guarantees of rights can be ignored by judges. We see it all the time. Elections are won by majorities. Constitutions may work for a time, but what happens when the majority gets large enough to amend the constitution and abolish the protections for the increasingly beleaguered minority? The losers become permanent losers.

In other words, over the long term, the ruling majority coalitions tend to win. And if you're not a part of that coalition and it doesn't serve your interests? You're out of luck. Because Mises understood this, he supported the idea of local self-determination via secession and other types of decentralization. In *Nation, State, and Economy* he wrote: "No people and no part of a people shall be held against its will in a political association that it does not want."

And in *Liberalism* he writes:

Whenever the inhabitants of a particular territory, whether it be a single village, a whole district, or a series of adjacent districts, make it known, by a freely conducted plebiscite, that they no longer wish to remain united to the state to which they belong at the time, but wish either to form an independent state or to attach themselves to some other state, their wishes are to be respected and complied with.

This is significant because Mises was a democrat. He thought democracy often worked. But he also recognized that without the safety valve of secession and a process to dismantle states and change their borders, it can lead to a loss of self-determination and basic human rights. Moreover, Mises specifically acknowledged that breaking states up into smaller pieces is a means of avoiding civil wars and revolutions.



We can see this issue illustrated with a thought experiment.

Suppose that in twenty years, some groups of elites in eastern Asia suggest it would be a great idea to form a confederation of states from the region: the United States of East Asia (USEA). It would include China, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. This new union could be put together to facilitate free trade, free migration, and to generally increase economic prosperity and peaceful multilateralism. How should the governance of this organization be organized? Systems of democratic representation present an obvious problem: the Chinese themselves would easily outvote all the other countries on a regular basis. Even if South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Japan all voted together as a block, their relatively small population sizes could not possibly allow them to veto pro-China measures pushed by a majority of Chinese voters. Because of China's size, any other members of the confederation would quickly realize that the USEA is really just a union dominated by China most of the time.

Sure, we could attempt a bill of rights or a senate with equal representation to temper these effects, but over the long term, state institutions have a way of favoring the largest groups and most numerous groups. Eventually the Japanese and the Koreans would want to leave this union. But if secession is not allowed? Then what? Endless civil wars are a likely outcome. It's a prescription for disaster.

Along these lines, Rothbard often supported secession as a matter of national liberation. He considered the American Revolution—a secessionist cause, of course—to be among the world's first wars for national liberation. He said the same about the secession of the new republics from the Soviet Union and the breakup of Czechoslovakia. And he supported all this in contradiction of the dominant elite narrative. At the time, the US foreign policy establishment and its friends in the national media actually opposed the breakup of the Soviet Union. Why? Because *New York Times* writers and Bush administration hacks were devoted to mass democracy rather than local self-determination. Although the Latvians would continue to be horribly outnumbered by ethnic Russians in the imagined new democratic USSR, we were told the USSR's new democratic constitution would somehow allow a million Latvians to make their voice heard in the midst of one hundred million Russians. The real threat, the official narrative went, was that Europe was being "convulsed by nationalism" and that national minorities required large, powerful states to keep them in line. Taking a page from Mises, Rothbard instead insisted:

In short, every group, every nationality, should be allowed to secede from any nation-state and to join any other nation-state that agrees to have it.

Large states are playgrounds for despots and dictators, while small states provide far fewer opportunities for ambitious politicians to spread their mayhem beyond their local communities.

3. Limiting the Power of Aggressive States

Finally, a third reason for opposing large states is that large states tend to be the most dangerous ones. On this, Rockwell writes: “Tyranny on the local level minimizes damage to the same extent that macro-tyranny maximizes it.... If Hitler had ruled only Berlin, [and] Stalin only Moscow,” the history of the world may have been considerably less bloody. Large states are playgrounds for despots and dictators, while small states provide far fewer opportunities for ambitious politicians to spread their mayhem beyond their local communities.

But we don’t have to take Lew’s word for it. The highly influential political scientist Hannah Arendt has discussed how only larger states can hope to be truly totalitarian. She notes that a number of states in Europe at the time had pushed totalitarian ideas but, outside the Soviet Union, none managed to actually achieve the goal. She writes:

Although [totalitarian ideology] had served well enough to organize the masses until the movement seized power, the absolute size of the country then forced the would-be totalitarian ruler of masses into the more familiar patterns of class or party dictatorship. The truth is that these countries simply did not control enough human material to allow for total domination and its inherent great losses in population. Without much hope for the conquest of more heavily populated territories, the tyrants in these small countries were forced into a certain old-fashioned moderation lest they lose whatever people they had to rule. This is also why Nazism, up to the outbreak of the war and its expansion over Europe, lagged so far behind its Russian counterpart in consistency and ruthlessness; even the German people were not numerous enough to allow for the full development of this newest form of government. Only if Germany had won the war would she have known a fully developed totalitarian rulership.

But even if we’re not talking about something as terrible as totalitarianism, the fact remains that larger states are more able to monopolize more people, more wealth, and more resources with minimal transactions costs. This makes larger states more able to carry out truly abhorrent crimes.

The Problem of International War

So we’ve seen three advantages of using secession to reduce the size and power of states. But we’re still likely to hear one big objection to breaking up today’s states into smaller states. That is the possibility of any remaining large states subjugating small states. It’s a frequent refrain: “Sure, secession sounds nice in theory, but if we reduce the power of the US government, or any other Western states, then China will step in and conquer the world.”

To this objection there are several answers. One is that small states are always free to enter into voluntary defense pacts, just as they *always* have been. States with similar interests, cultures, and languages can do this with relative ease, and have done so.

Moreover, assumptions that large states will always dominate in international relations are based on the mistaken notion that larger states (in terms of GDP and current access to military resources) are necessarily the more powerful ones. More accurately, however, it is wealthier states and blocs of states—not necessarily the larger states—that tend to be at an advantage in terms of military deterrence. In his innovative research, China expert Michael Beckley, for example, notes that the biggest variable here is actually GDP *per capita*, not overall GDP. And this helps explain why we can find many cases of smaller states successfully deterring and defeating larger states. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, both Japan and the United Kingdom repeatedly defeated and humiliated the much larger China. GDP and military manufacturing statistics alone would also suggest that the Soviet Union—three times the geographic size of the US and with an immense weapons industry—should have outlasted the United States.

The GDP measure also suggests that Israel is the weakest military power in the Middle East. Clearly, that is not the case. The Israeli case is instructive because it shows us that small states, rather than having to become big themselves, can simply free ride on larger states—as the State of Israel has managed to long exploit American wealth and taxpayer revenues without giving up its own independence.

Moreover, the possibility of nuclear deterrence diminishes the need for immense and expensive conventional forces, as—again—demonstrated by the State of Israel. Deterrent defense capability can thus be obtained even by Switzerland-sized states.

I go into some detail on this in my new book, *Breaking Away*.

So, for example, were the United States to break up into smaller pieces, there is no reason to assume the new, smaller successor states would be at the mercy of larger states. There is every reason to assume that the new American states would be just as unified on foreign policy as they are now—which is to say almost totally in lockstep.

Unfortunately, no matter what might be said about small states and international relations, many will cling to the idea that—because of alleged foreign threats—virtually nothing could justify secession.

There is, of course, nothing new about this attitude. For centuries, states have justified their growth, strength, and taxation on the grounds that all that is necessary to protect against foreigners. It is a common habit to downplay concerns about the preservation of rights against abuses by one's *own* state in order to focus on a perceived threat—however unlikely—from *foreign* states.

This was, after all, the dominant posture during the Cold War. Concerns about American freedoms were put on hold in the name of fighting the Communists. Conservatism's standard bearer, William F. Buckley, said as much when he declared,

We have got to accept Big Government for the duration—for neither an offensive nor a defensive war can be waged, given our present government skills, except through the instrument of a totalitarian bureaucracy within our shores... [We must endure] large armies and air forces, atomic energy, central intelligence, war production boards and the attendant centralization of power in Washington.

In other words, accept everything the central government wants to do to you. To do anything else is to invite conquest from the Commies. Or else the Commies win.

Yet, real-world experience suggests that fortune favors the decentralized in terms of wealth, freedom, and economic development. And on a moral level, decentralizing is always the right thing to do.

It is for these reasons that Rothbard supported what he called “universal rights, locally enforced.” As an adherent of natural rights, Rothbard believed rights are certainly



universal. Yet he also understood that their enforcement must be local. As Rockwell explains, these two concepts—universalism and localism—are frequently in tension. But, Rockwell concludes,

if you give up one of the two principles [i.e., universal rights and local control] you risk giving up liberty. Both are important. Neither should prevail over the other. A local government that violates rights is intolerable. A central government that rules in the name of universal rights is similarly intolerable.

Experience has already shown—since at least as early as the Middle Ages—that the Western world has always embraced and benefited from some degree of radical political decentralization. We would benefit from much more of it today. ■■■





Mises Institute Celebrates 40 Years



The Mises Institute began with a man and a vision. Lew Rockwell, after serving as editor for Ludwig von Mises at Arlington House, recognized both the civilizational importance of the ideas of Mises and the Austrian school, as well as the very real danger of those ideas fading into history. With the approval of Margit von Mises; the support of great Misesians like Murray Rothbard, Henry Hazlitt, F.A. Hayek, and Judge John Denson, and the encouragement of many others, the Institute became a reality forty years ago.

This October, the Mises Institute was honored to be joined by friends and family from around the world as we celebrated not just the 40th anniversary, but Lew Rockwell, the man responsible for it. This unforgettable event was two days of powerful talks and panels featuring James Grant, Patrick Newman, Peter Klein, Daniel Lacalle, Rahim Taghizadegan, Joseph Salerno, Thomas DiLorenzo, Tom Woods and Paul Gottfried. Ryan McMaken debuted his new book, *Breaking Away: The Case for Secession, Radical Decentralization, and Smaller Polities*.





We've only reached this anniversary because of people like you, who have supported the Institute and our mission for forty years. Thank you for your trust, and for understanding the importance of our cause.

As Jeff Deist noted in his Saturday night address:



We win by serving truth, but also beauty. We cannot separate the two or have one without the other.

We win by placing economics squarely at the vital center of understanding all human social cooperation, a discipline that helps us understand the beauty of that cooperation and the ugliness of state power.



We win with a focus on the long term, not the short run.

We win by building better elites and better institutions.

We win by going out unapologetically and forcefully into the world.



Did you see the British SAS soldiers at the aforementioned queen's funeral? Their motto is "Who Dares Wins."

The future belongs to confident people. Let that be us.





Lew Rockwell Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award

“You are the gold standard man,” remarked Ron Paul as he presented Lew Rockwell with the Lifetime Achievement Award, a solid-gold medal with an image of the Institute impressed on the back. The three hundred people at the black-tie dinner gave a rousing standing ovation and many hurrahs.

Jeff Deist remarked that this award was being given in honor of everything Lew has done to help revive the Austrian school. For placing Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard at the forefront of that school. For making the great works of Austrian economics free online. For supporting dissident scholars over the years. For creating a platform where secession, anarcho-capitalism, and private law could be discussed openly. For creating an intellectual home for thousands and thousands of people from all around the world. That we all gathered in Phoenix to celebrate forty years of the Mises Institute speaks to the success of Lew’s vision.

Lew accepted the award and shared the remarkable story of his acquaintance with Mises and his transformation into a defender and champion of the Austrian school.

He was completely surprised!

Until Ron Paul put the ribbon around my neck, I had no idea of what was happening. In fact, it took a minute or two for me to fully understand.

I dedicate this medal to Mises and Rothbard, and to all Institute Members.





Hunter Hastings Awarded the Entrepreneur of the Year Award

For two years, Hunter Hastings has worked tirelessly to build E4B, Economics for Business. This program is designed to help average people learn how to be more successful in their business lives. The E4B platform seamlessly merges Austrian economics and business insights and makes them accessible to nonspecialists. By making key insights digestible and freely available, E4B supports people who want to become better entrepreneurs and who want to create value for their fellows.

Before starting on E4B, Hunter had a successful career in marketing, and he is doing this for us as a labor of love. We encourage everyone to check out Economics for Business (economics4business.com).



Victor Chor Awarded the Inaugural Young Founders Award

Hunter Hastings said, “There is truth and there is beauty in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs come up with better solutions. That is what entrepreneurs are devoted to better than any policy, whether it be fiscal or monetary or anything else. E4B is devoted to that value proposition.” Victor Chor, a young entrepreneur, exemplifies this standard, and the Institute awarded him the inaugural Young Founders Award for creativity, innovation, commitment, and determination in building and expanding his business. Victor’s company, InfinaCore, has brought a portable, wireless universal power bank (the P4) to market that is making charging our many devices easy and fast, no matter where we are. Congratulations, Victor!











M eet a few of our graduates from Mises University who attended the 40th anniversary gala in Phoenix. They were wonderful promoters and ambassadors of our MU program, an event they all say changed their lives.



Connor Mortell
Florida State University

Connor Mortell is a graduate of Mises University 2021 and 2022. He attended the Supporters Summit 2021, Tampa Mises Meetup 2022, Orlando Mises Meetup 2022, and Rothbard Graduate Seminar 2022, and he has served as a summer research assistant to Jeff Deist.

“The Mises Institute is undoubtedly the most impactful organization in my life and quite frankly the most important organization there is. While there are countless resources I have benefited from, I can say with complete certainty that the most valuable resource I’ve experienced has been the people. I have never walked away from a person at the Mises Institute without having overwhelmingly gained value in my life.”



Liam Metzger
*Timberline High School
(Lacey, WA)*

Liam Metzger is a graduate of Mises University 2021 and 2022. He attended AERC 2021, Supporters Summit 2021, and AERC 2022.

“As a young libertarian, it was very difficult to find people as passionate as I am about libertarianism. The Mises Institute has given me a lot of hope for the future, especially because we live in such a complex and uncertain time. The amount of resources the Institute has given me so that I can further my education and intellectual development has been monumental to my growth. At this point, it’s like the Mises Institute is a home away from home.”



Lucas Pagani
*Faculdade Autônoma de Direito
(FADISP)*

Lucas Augusto Gaioski Pagani is a graduate of Mises University 2015.

“The Mises Institute represents my inspirations of how to be a scholar, how to pursue liberty, and how to fight for a better future. My time at Mises University helped me to see the Austrian school in many different ways, as well as how to be a scholar and how to inspire the young to a better future.”



Mitchell Robson
University of Chicago

Mitchell Robson is a graduate of Mises University 2020. He attended the Birmingham Mises Meetup 2021, Medical Freedom Summit 2021, Ron Paul Revolution: A Ten-Year Retrospective 2021, and Birmingham Mises Meetup 2022.

“To me, the Institute is a fundamentally conservative project. However, instead of the ‘progressivism driving the speed limit’ flavor of conservatism, I see that the Mises Institute seeks to conserve our country’s rich tradition of praxeologically grounded antistatism embodied by Old Right figures like Frank Chodorov and H.L. Mencken.”



Jovan Tripkovic
University of Wyoming

Jovan Tripkovic is a graduate of Mises University 2019.

“For me, the Institute represents a beacon of freedom in an ocean of totalitarian ideologies and government-funded institutions. In addition to being one of the most prominent think tanks in the nation, the Institute took upon itself the role of a university. In the time of cancel culture and academic totalitarianism, the Institute’s mission to educate students and the public is timely, virtuous, and necessary.”



Anthony Cesario
Loyola University, New Orleans

Anthony J. Cesario is a graduate of Mises University 2021 and 2022. He attended AERC 2021, Supporters Summit 2021, AERC 2022, Rothbard Graduate Seminar 2022, and he was a 2022 Summer Research Fellow.

“I am extremely grateful for the opportunities to attend these various events and further develop my understanding of economics. I highly value how accessible the online resources are and love getting to meet like-minded people at all the events. If it weren’t for the Mises Institute, my passion for economics may have never been ignited!”



Eric Rivera
University of Texas of the Permian Basin

Eric Rivera is a graduate of Mises University 2021 and 2022.

“Mises U has been very special for me because it is an event where I was in the rare fraternity of commonly held beliefs. The people I have met have formed a network to support Austrian economics in all its branching endeavors. Mises U is a unique and intense academic experience. It allows students to dive deep into Austrian economics with the field’s best educators and representatives. I am forever grateful that the Institute’s generous donors make it possible every year.”

Special thanks to Steve and Cassandra Torello for providing scholarships for these students to attend.



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- Invites to private VIP receptions
- Reserved VIP seating at events
- Receives all Mises publications
- Your name is displayed at the Mises Institute
- Invitations to Chairman's Gold Club and Society receptions

LIBERTARIAN SCHOLARS CONFERENCE NASHVILLE

After weathering the global pestilence of covid tyranny and a two-year hiatus, the Mises Institute reconvened the Libertarian Scholars Conference in September 2022, in the booming Music City.

Daniel McCarthy, editor of the renowned *Modern Age*, opened the conference with a spectacular keynote address. McCarthy took the audience through an expansive history of American right-wing political thought. Despite the “strong philosophical points of disagreement between populist libertarians, strict Rothbardian libertarians, [and] integralist[s],” McCarthy sees an opportunity for a renewed collaboration. He pointed to “weakened and discredited” Beltway libertarian and neoconservative institutions and a rising “grassroots libertarianism” that hungers for “an alternative to the Gary Johnsons, the Bill Barrs, and the other hopeless washed-up Republicans that were characteristic of the Libertarian Party’s nominations for a long time.” More importantly, he reminded us of the “tremendous danger that is posed to us right now by a newly aggressive Left ... that is not only statist,” but fascist, which co-opts private industry rather than nationalizing it outright. McCarthy expressed the great need for conversations, friendships, and unity between libertarians and conservatives to oppose the leftist threat, and invited attendees to revisit collaboration more earnestly.

The Libertarian Scholars Conference is the premier forum for emerging scholarship in the free market tradition. Young scholars and junior faculty have the unique opportunity to present radical scholarship in a friendly, open environment, as well as to develop their ideas through constructive criticism and Q&As with attendees. All presenters participate in panels, and receive feedback on their drafts from their fellow panelists—a priceless opportunity for a young scholar! This year, the LSC had 118 attendees, of which forty-four presented research, thirteen of them students. Research topics ranged from free market philosophical thought to revisionist history and critiques of public policy around the world, with papers covering free will, free market policy in Chile, police unions, fast-fashion garment factories, the Canadian Arctic fur trade, civil asset forfeiture in Alabama, and private cities, to name just a few! As always with the LSC, the air was laced with the ferment of radically free intellectual discourse and collaboration.

We look forward to gathering in Nashville again in September. Make plans to present a paper and attend next year’s Libertarian Scholars Conference.

Special thanks to Alan Claypool, Brian Maynard, and James McMahon for sponsoring this event. ■■■





BREAKING AWAY

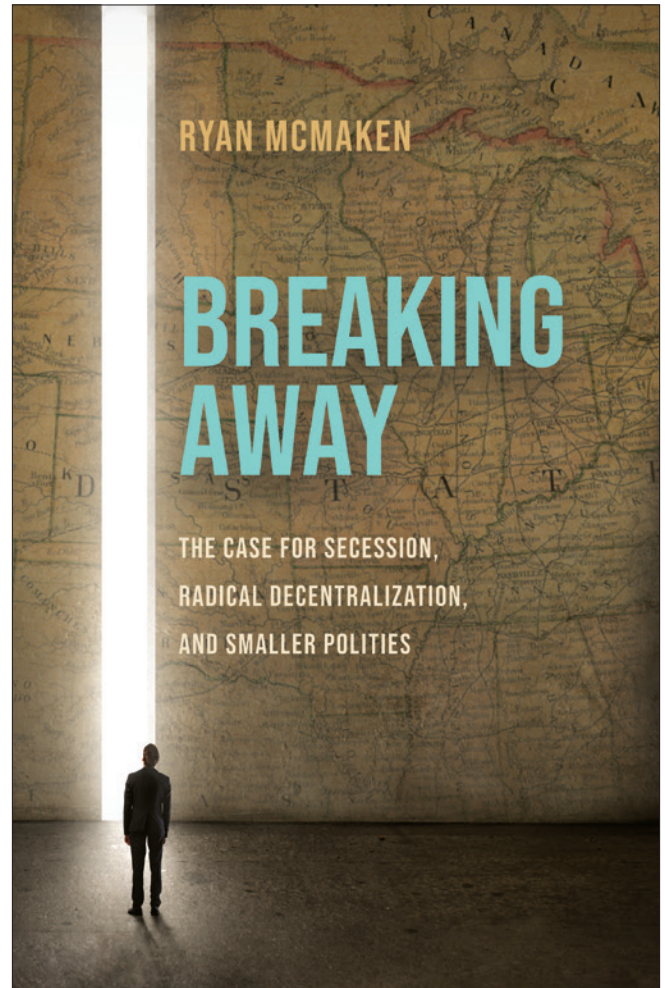
RYAN McMAKEN

Since 1945, the number of independent countries in the world has almost tripled. This was made possible by dozens of secessionist movements, which led to the creation of new sovereign states in the decades following the Second World War and again after the end of the Cold War. We’ve seen this even in Western Europe, where Norway and Iceland seceded from larger states in the early twentieth century, and decolonization involved many cases of successful secession in Africa and Asia.

Yet modern opponents of secession continue to ignore all of this, insisting instead that states must never, ever be dismembered and that “democracy” must be substituted for true local self-determination. These people tell us that nationalism and localism are the *real* problem, and that we must support large, powerful, untouchable states instead.

Murray Rothbard saw through this ahistorical agenda, and instead proposed the idea of “universal rights, locally enforced.” Rothbard understood the value of small, locally controlled government institutions, and that the protection of human rights often requires secession and other types of radical decentralization. Moreover, with this view, Rothbard was keeping alive what the *laissez-faire* liberals—such as Thomas Jefferson, Ludwig von Mises, and many European old liberals—knew: that the best way to fight state power is often to break states up into smaller pieces.

Ryan McMaken’s new book, *Breaking Away*, considers secession and political decentralization as a broad tradition, going beyond the American Civil War and examining many successful historical cases from around the world. It also analyzes the moral foundations of decentralization as laid out by Rothbard, Mises, and other liberal thinkers. This is a book about secession and radical decentralization as global and modern phenomena. ■■■



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An audio edition is under
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In Memoriam

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New York, NY

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Auburn, AL

James "Jim" M. Wolfe (1951–2022)

James "Jim" M. Wolfe (1951–2022) was a small businessman from Pasco, Washington, and an enthusiastic supporter of liberty. Jim majored in economics at Washington State University, and upon the death of his father in 1977, he became the owner and CEO of Wolfjohn & Associates, a Pasco firm specializing in irrigation. He was a hi-fi systems enthusiast, and he loved flying, white-water rafting, cats, and libertarian politics.

Jim was a favorite of many staff members at the Mises Institute, always showing up at our office or at one of our conferences with a smile. He will be remembered for his kindness and generosity.



The Real Economics Hour with Jeff Deist

Jeff Deist now hosts his own weekly radio show! Money Talk 1010AM, heard across the growing Tampa Bay and central Florida markets, is home to a great lineup of financial shows. Jeff goes live with *The Real Economics Hour* every Thursday morning from 9–10 a.m. eastern, with hard-hitting analysis and the best Austrian school economists as guests.

The show repeats in the evening and on Saturdays, and includes commercials for Mises Institute events and programs. Floridians can listen live at WHFS 1010 on their AM dial, and people anywhere can stream the show via moneytalk1010.com. Tune in for a unique look at the week's economics and political events from a hard-core Austrian perspective.



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*Rothbard Graduate Seminar
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*Libertarian Scholars Conference
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