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Politics, Technology, and Libertarianism

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Politics, Technology, and Libertarianism

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Introduction

The relationship between technology and politics is a pressing modern issue. Technology, while important, is one of many modes of political socialization. Parents, friends, religion, teachers, and a host of other factors all influence the formation of political beliefs. Most of these elements of socialization have been studied for years, but technology such as digital media is in its relative infancy.

Many studies have been conducted on aspects of digital media and one thing seems clear—individualism has emerged as key theme across the body of literature. Jackson (2009) finds that individualism is rampant in our popular culture. Unsurprisingly, Painter (2015) discovered that those who saw campaign related materials on Facebook engaged in more self-expressive behaviors than those who used traditional methods, such as campaign websites. Buente (2015) notes that young people and those with higher levels of education are more likely to utilize social media to obtain political information.

Not only have young people and the well-educated benefitted from social media, but so have the extreme elements of both political parties. This newfound individualism could potentially help libertarianism, as it has often been rejected as being outside of mainstream politics. Hong (2013) analyzed the Twitter accounts of members of Congress, where he uncovered that more extreme members benefitted the most from having an account. This, he found, was due to the fact that they could reach a wider audience by using their appeal as ideologues to solicit out-of-state contributions. Chadwick and Stormer-Galley (2016) opined that parties are being transformed from the “outside-in” (285). Takaragawa and Carty (2012) argued that campaigns are beginning to more closely resemble social movements. Finally, psychologists

(Iyer et al 2012) found that self-identified libertarians valued individual liberty more than any other moral category, while Jordan (2001) found a link between the Internet and libertarianism.

One of the main reasons that the Libertarian Party has failed to gain traction within mainstream politics is due to Duverger's Law, which will be discussed further in the aptly titled discussion section. In the meantime, it is important to note that libertarian leaning Republicans have had some successful results. Politicians, such as Ron and Rand Paul, have made inroads in carving out a libertarian wing of the Republican Party. Just recently, "in 2015 and 2016, for months at a time, the rise of libertarian-minded candidates sparked questions about whether a 'libertarian moment' had arrived. The high-profile presidential run of Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) rattled Democrats who worried about the shifting millennial vote" (Weigel).

Undoubtedly, libertarianism has a massive appeal amongst many millennial right-leaning voters. At one point during the pre-election polls in the run up to the 2016 presidential election, Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson "had the support of 26 percent" of young voters from ages 18-29 (Peters & Alcindor). For comparison, at the same time, future President Donald Trump had "hovered around 25 percent" for the same age bracket in most polls (Peters & Alcindor). This may be due to the fact that, for many young libertarian voters, social conservatism is viewed as a failure. There are many core "issues —abortion rights, LGBT rights, criminal justice reform—where the interests of millennials and those of the Libertarian Party seem to align" (Sasson). In other words, they saw a platform that aligned and potentially would address many of their deepest concerns.

A paradoxical question remains for libertarianism-How do you encourage ideals that produce strong individualism and personal choice, while still garnering enough of a consensus to

move forward with some kind of collective action? Since diversity of thought is encouraged more in libertarianism than almost any other ideology, developing an agreeable platform that everyone within the ideology can support has proven to be the biggest stumbling block in its advancement.

Political scientists may view libertarianism from an electoral success standpoint, which isn't especially beneficial since the Libertarian Party in America has struggled to find an identity on the mainstream political radar. Philosophers may view libertarianism from an intellectual standpoint and fail to show how it is put into practice. Taking each of these factors into account, a rather murky picture is created. To sift through it all, a fundamental question must be asked: How has technology helped or hindered the ability of individually focused libertarians to organize for collective action? While there are no simple answers, previous research offers a good deal of information to weigh in on the current situation and predict what may happen in the next few years.

Methodology

This analysis is multi-faceted, consisting of a two part literature review, a transition, and a discussion section. Part one focuses on the relationship between technology and politics in research. A brief transition will tie in more research on the interaction between online culture and libertarianism. Part two then shifts into scholarly literature on the practical, modern day implications of libertarian thought and different libertarian thinkers. Finally, the discussion brings everything together, including predictions on the future of libertarianism in right wing American politics.

This research method might be considered backwards compared to the prototypical view on the relationship between thoughts and how they produce action. By studying actions and then digressing to understand what thoughts might be behind them, this analysis will provide a unique perspective on how impactful modern technology may be on our political thought. All research that is used can be found on Google Scholar or in the BGSU library databases and consists of peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles. In conjunction with these sources, two books and numerous newspaper articles were also utilized.

Some complications include the lack of a full body of literature on technology and politics, along with the diversity of thought embedded within libertarianism. While traditional means of technological consumption (such as television and music) have existed for quite some time, social media is a relatively new form of technology. The 2008 presidential election was the first time most scholarly literature began to focus on social media, but it really wasn't until the 2012 presidential election that it became a focal point of research. Since libertarianism is very much based upon individual rights, the thinkers that it produces are very diverse in nature. This makes tying them together somewhat challenging, as even those who fall into the category often disagree on important points.

Admittedly, synthesizing such a wide-ranging project into one coherent analysis is no easy task. As such, each topic will be thoroughly broached, but the two parts could easily be made into separate analyses. Due to our current political climate and attitudes, however, it became imperative to dive deeper into these pressing issues to create a roadmap for future research. Hopefully, through the use of this unconventional methodology, future scholarship is inspired.

Literature Review

[Part One: Politics and Technology](#)

One of the key aspects in the relationship between technology and politics is individualism, especially amongst the American youth. In his book entitled *Entertainment & Politics: The Influence of Pop Culture on Young Adult Political Socialization*, David Jackson (2009) notes that young people are viewing politics in more “personalistic ways” (86). Due to this fact, it is very important to understand the role of popular culture on the individualism that is currently brewing in our political climate. Parents traditionally have played a key role in political socialization, but popular culture is one of the first influences outside of the parental sphere that impact young adults. Jackson highlights the influence of modern pop culture messages on the formation of an individualistic worldview, as he remarks:

Class distinctions are blurred or misunderstood, which is as expected in a postmaterialist culture. The legitimacy of institutions, the need for hierarchy, and respect for authority are mocked in much of popular culture. The individual’s needs and desires are paramount, whereas the community’s needs are neglected or overlooked. The popular culture emphasizes individual rights, not responsibility, family, friends, and community (154).

Clearly, critics say that a narrative is being pushed in modern popular culture. It is subtly embedded throughout a swath of material that society values. While not always explicit, it has permeated through a variety of traditional popular culture mediums.

One major element of modern popular culture is music. Music can now be downloaded and accessed song by song with the click of a finger, replacing the need to purchase whole albums or records. Rap and alternative music, which are most popular among young people, tend to be much more liberal than other genres of music. Classic rock also has liberalism embedded within it due its explosion onto the scene during the Vietnam War. Country and western music has been found to take on a new position that is distinct from the traditional conservative stances of old country. Toby Keith, for instance, takes the traditional conservative stance on war and foreign relations in his music, but he is actually a Democrat (Jackson 2009).

What consistently shows up across the spectrum is that politics have become very personal for young adults. Even the most conservative genre, country and western, has shown more elements of individualism and diversity of thought. Jackson comments that conservative white men seem to be the most at odds with the cultural shift, as “violence by nonwhites and female sexual power are perceived by conservative white males as attacks on the legitimacy of white male dominance of economic, social, and political life” (161). Clearly, they are at risk for disenfranchisement if they completely neglect the messages of rap and alternative music, as these genres have become the norm for youth in mainstream culture (this is ironic, as the historical connotations of rap and alternative have them firmly entrenched as a mouthpiece for counterculture).

The shift to a more individualist attitude has not been limited just to music, as social media has been one of the biggest drivers of personal expression. Facebook, in particular, is an important tool utilized to connect campaigns and the citizenry. In 2012, David Painter enlisted the help of 476 college students in his research study *Online political public relations and trust: Source and interactivity effects in the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign*. Two different conditions

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were asked of the participants, as some respondents were asked to perform a surveillance of candidate Facebook information and others were asked to use expression. Those who performed surveillance “were instructed to spend at least 5 min reading the information, viewing videos and activating hyperlinks to information on each Facebook page or campaign website, depending on their assignment” (804). Those who used expression “were instructed not only to view the information, but also to express themselves during the transaction” (804). Expression included actions such as “posting content on Facebook; ‘liking’ a post on a Facebook page or using a social media share button on a campaign website; forwarding information or videos to another person, or messaging the candidate or another person” (804). By utilizing two different conditions and recording responses to the stimuli, it became apparent that Facebook has become more effective than traditional campaign resources.

Previously, the first new media, campaign websites, provided a very important function by connecting citizens with the campaign. Painter indicates that this may no longer be the case, as “the influence of expression is differentially greater on social media sites that trigger higher levels of self-awareness, consciousness, and ego-involvement than on campaign websites primarily designed to fulfill information-seeking” (807). In other words, social media has provided a more personalized experience than the generalized information offered on traditional campaign websites. To sum it up, “these results suggest online platforms are effective channels for campaigns to use in building relationships with voters, especially when this communication takes place on social media sites and engages users in dialog or self-expression” (807). While using social media certainly can enhance political engagement, there are important differences between age groups and levels of education.

Due to the self-expressive nature of social media, it is unsurprising that there are age differences in regards to utilization of online content to form political beliefs. Wayne Buente studied a 2008 pre-election survey with 2,251 adult respondents, 1,655 of which were Internet users, to develop his scholarship on digital citizenship. He found that “young citizens were more likely to be informed online than older individuals” (280). Moreover, level of education was determined to play a crucial role in the development of political efficacy. Those who obtained higher levels of education were more likely to gain information from online sources than their less educated counterparts (Buente 2015). It is also suggested that entertainment may be easier for citizens to locate online and that it has started to overtake news as the preferred method of obtaining political information. Despite this apparent shift, however, Buente found that the advent of the Internet has not impeded the growth of an informed citizenship and could potentially improve it.

Not only has the use of Internet and social media potentially benefitted the citizenry, but it also offers a new platform for lesser known and ideologically extreme candidates to get their names out. Sounman Hong’s 2013 study, *Who benefits from Twitter? Social media and political competition in the U.S. House of Representatives*, analyzed the impact of social media on a number of different factors. First, the Twitter accounts of 195 House of Representatives members were studied and “the exact date of their first Twitter posts, the number of followers, users followed, and the number of posts (‘tweets’) made at the time of data collection” were obtained (Hong 466). Then, information on campaign finance was collected and only individual contributions were analyzed since the study was aimed at the influence of Twitter and not PACS. Finally, an ideological scale was utilized to differentiate between members (Hong 2013).

Through these methods, Hong unearthed some interesting findings. Most notably, he discovered that “social media tends to identify the more salient ideas more easily (e.g., new ideas or ideas no one has ever talked about for some reason) and is thus more likely to benefit political extremists” (470). In sum, social media has provided a new platform for more ideological members of Congress to enhance their visibility. It has also increased their out-of-state contributions due to the fact that others empathize with their ideological position, even if they are not direct constituents of the member (Hong 2013). This is an important shift to note, as the House has stricter leadership control than the Senate does, so it has been harder in the past for those with more extreme positions to expand their base and gain visibility. Through social media, they now have a means of widening their base of support.

Due to this explosion of social media and its ability to garner support for more ideological members, parties are being transformed in ways that have not been seen before. Some recent scholarship has suggested that parties may be dying off. Chadwick and Stromer-Galley (2016) argue against this idea, opining:

In fact, given the interactive effects we see between digital media, changes in citizens’ engagement repertoires, and parties’ organizational practices, the reverse may be true. In some cases, parties are renewing themselves from the outside in. Citizens are breathing new life into the party form, remaking parties in their own changed participatory image, and doing so via digital means. The overall outcome might prove more positive for democratic engagement and the decentralization of political power than has often been assumed (285).

Put another way, while it may appear that the party system is dying off, it is really undergoing a structural change due to digital media. Examples of the heavy influence that digital media played in the campaigns of Howard Dean, Ron Paul, and Barack Obama were cited as evidence. “Party-as-movement” has taken over the political system, which has enabled candidates to buck tradition, hierarchy, and even party loyalty when necessary (287). In recent years, this has especially been visible in the Republican Party, as “the populist anti-elitism of their message and campaign ethos gels with the skepticism toward political authority among the web-enabled Tea Party grassroots. This energizes conservative supporters but causes intense managerial difficulty for the party’s organizational elite in the Republican National Committee (RNC)” (287). This phenomenon could even be seen in the American left wing during the 2016 election, as far left candidate Bernie Sanders “raised \$20m in January” 2016 and “received a record 3.25 million individual contributions, more than any other candidate for the president” (Yuhas). While support may be growing stronger, parties are currently perplexed at how to synthesize their support into one coherent platform. Finding a strong, singular message that resonates with an increasingly diverse constituency has become the new challenge that parties are tasked with facing.

Since parties are being transformed from the outside in, it is unsurprising that there has been a rise in campaigns as social movements. This idea of campaigns turning into social movements was studied extensively by Stephanie Takaragawa and Victoria Carty (2012) in their research on the 2008 elections. They argued that one groundbreaking aspect of President Obama’s 2008 candidacy was the removal of bureaucracy from his ground game. He utilized resources that had not been available in prior presidential elections and it yielded groundbreaking discoveries. Specifically, his “Facebook page had three million supporters, and his Facebook

application had 61,000 active users who shared news, blogged, and posted speeches and videos” (79). Compared to today, these numbers seem incredibly small. At any rate, young voters swarmed the polls and the organization of the campaign mimicked a social movement, which resulted in young people turning out at their highest numbers since 1972 (73-74). Takaragawa and Carty also noted that word of mouth and passing information along via social media are becoming increasingly popular amongst millennials. By utilizing social networking sites, the “personal and political” became blurred and, as a result, “new media” has been altered the way that collective identities are formed (85).

Transition

At this point, it has become pretty clear that individualism is the brainchild of the increasingly complex relationship between technology and politics. What has yet to be proved, however, is the relationship between libertarianism both individualism and technology. Thankfully, there is research on the subjects.

In a study entitled *Understanding Libertarian Morality: The Psychological Dispositions of Self-Identified Libertarians*, psychologists broke down the values of libertarians and compared them to their liberal and conservative counterparts. The research consists of responses from 11,994 self-identified libertarians on the website *Yourmorals.org* between 2007 and 2011 (Iyer et al 2012). Admittedly, asking people to self-identify as libertarians means that the sample may not be entirely representative of the population as a whole. Amongst this group of self-identified libertarians, a series of questions were asked to determine moral concerns of libertarians, their connectedness and levels of empathy with others, and whether they were more emotional or cerebral. The results were unsurprising, as libertarian responses were considerably distinct from

the conservative and liberal responses. Like liberals, libertarians did not score high on moral concerns such as “ingroup, authority, and purity” (8). Like conservatives, libertarians showed lower levels of sympathy for “moral appeals from groups who claim to be victimized, oppressed, or treated unfairly” (8). In fact, the only moral concern that they scored highly on was individual liberty. Iyer and company noted that there was a distinct “libertarian valuation of logic and reasoning over emotion. Libertarians may enjoy thinking about complex and abstract systems more than other groups, particularly more than conservatives” (13). Again, the libertarians come out as unique. They are not as emotional as liberals, but also utilize abstract thinking more often than conservatives. In sum, libertarians were found to have: “a high degree individualism, a low degree collectivism, and generally report feeling less bonding with others, less loving for others, and less feelings of a sense of common identity with others” (19).

Libertarianism has also shown to be highly connected to the rise of technology. Tim Jordan (2001), who authored *Language and libertarianism: The politics of cyberculture and the culture of cyberpolitics*, finds that the internet is built and catered towards individualism. He states: “Nearly everyone begins each journey into cyberspace as an individual. Alone in front of the computer screen people confront their singularity before building a sense of others in the electronic world” (7). This individualism shows up in more ways than one, but it is especially prevalent in cyberpolitics. In fact, it seems to be conducive with libertarianism. Jordan writes that “it is no surprise that the political ideologies that most emphasize individual liberty and the right to self-government have been powerful on the Internet; libertarianism and anarchism” (8). Specifically, Jordan analyzed the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), which is a major civil rights group. He found that this group “has developed a libertarian view rooted in the belief that a functioning free market of, in particular, ideas but also goods operates in cyberspace” (9).

Taking the high levels of individualism, along with the libertarian ideals embedded within cyberspace, it seems apparent that libertarianism has grown as a result of the Internet.

Now that libertarianism has been connected with both technology and individualism, the next logical progression revolves around the implications of libertarianism. Due to the abstract nature of its thinkers, collective action has proved to be difficult. By understanding the distinction between its theoretical and practical results, along with the differences between some of its closely and loosely affiliated thinkers, a better grasp of what divides libertarians might be attained.

[Part Two: Libertarianism](#)

On the political right, the rise in individualism has created an interesting dynamic between conservatism and libertarianism. In Gerald Russello's (2012) piece, *The Tea Party and the Future of the Libertarian-Conservative Alliance*, it becomes apparent that tensions between conservatives and libertarians are diminishing and common goals are being established. Russello writes, "The heat of the culture wars of the 1980s has lessened, and the conservative and libertarian members of the Tea Party share a desire to reduce the size and reach of government. An important issue that both conservatives and libertarians may find common ground on through the Tea Party is military intervention" and "defense spending" (42). In regards to military intervention and defense spending, this traditionally has been the biggest area of disagreement between the two camps. Surprisingly, however, the Republicans struck down a military program that was favored by their own leadership in the House (Russello 2012). While libertarians have long seen military intervention and defense spending increases as expanding the size of government, a growing number of conservatives have started to agree. This is a big shift from the

Reagan years, where the Republicans were considered hawkish towards foreign policy issues (Russello 2012). Even though Russello notes the potential fusion of these beliefs, he is also skeptical that a collective action problem may arise. He states that “the question remains, however, whether the Tea Party or its supporters can consolidate their gains and carry forward their program without becoming merely another faction of the Right” (43).

At the same time, even though a potential partnership between libertarians and conservatives is not out of the question, numerous factions still exist. In their piece entitled *The Libertarian Right and the Religious Right*, Keckler and Rozell (2015) break down the anatomy of the American political right wing based upon Pew research. Six different categories emerged and, due to the overlap between some of the categories, were represented in the form of a Venn diagram: 1) Non-ideological moderates (20%), 2) Establishment Republicans (14%), 3) Christian Right (14%), 4) Moderate Traditionalists (11%), 5) Libertarian Right (8%), and 6) Independent Libertarians (7%) (94). While the numbers may seem small for the libertarians, it is noted that their influence has only been increasing in recent years. Keckler and Rozell remarked:

The runup to the 2012 election showed a historically low 40 percent of the population believed the government should ‘promote traditional values’; this had been a majority position for last twenty years and represents a drop of 17 percentage points in just four years. Meanwhile, the public is highly skeptical about the capacity of government to do anything at all, and there have been marked increases in support for decreasing spending on both domestic and military spending (96).

Essentially, public opinion has been shifting away from the traditional conservative bloc and towards a more libertarian position. Even in the Christian Right, a focus on issues such as

religious exemptions to the Affordable Care Act and homeschooling show a marked shift in strategy (Keckler & Rozell 2015). Thus, a new position may be forming between the Libertarian Right and Christian Right with the onset of the Tea Party, which utilizes natural rights as a means to achieve a libertarian end. The future of the Tea Party is uncertain, however, as Keckler and Rozell warn: “the more individualist iteration in which the collaboration currently appears can achieve this end at the national level remains in doubt, and it would then face the challenge of maintaining this commitment in the face of the complexities—and temptations—of actual governance” (97). Clearly, they are skeptical that collective action can be achieved with the current alignment of the American right wing.

While it remains to be seen whether Christians and Libertarians can forge an alliance on the Right, understanding some key differences between libertarian thinkers (such as their economic and moral views) may provide insight into a potential collective action problem. Sorting through these differing views and trying to find a pathway forward will not occur until the discussion, but summarizing their key positions will provide a baseline to work from.

For many, Murray Rothbard’s (1973) book *For A New Liberty* has essentially become the standard bearer for radical libertarianism, as it masterfully synthesizes the most important libertarian beliefs into one coherent message. Rothbard starts off his work by essentially stating that the American Revolution and libertarianism are synonymous. For him, the revolutionaries and figures such as John Locke provided a framework of liberty that came to be known as classical liberalism. Classical liberalism entails that freedom is one unit, with personal and economic liberties being equally paramount to the development of a just society. Early on, according to Rothbard, the Jeffersonian Democrat-Republicans in America espoused these beliefs. The party was soon divided, however, on the issue of slavery. Rothbard states: “Slavery, [Politics, Technology, and Libertarianism](#) | [Thomas Joseph Perry](#) Page 15 of 27

the grave antilibertarian flaw in the libertarianism of the Democratic program, had arisen to wreck the party and its libertarianism completely” (9-10). Using the examples of the American Revolution, along with the abolition movement against slavery, Rothbard lays the groundwork for his message. That is, the idea that coercion should be eradicated swiftly and forcefully, not gradually. He scathingly remarked that to “prefer a gradual whittling away to immediate abolition of an evil and coercive institution is to ratify and sanction such evil, and therefore to violate libertarian principles” (18).

Probably the most widely accepted doctrine within libertarianism is the “non-aggression” principle, which Rothbard uses as the central theme of his book. The “non-aggression” principle states that “no man or group of men may aggress against the person or property of anyone else” (27). Thus, slavery was considered to be intrinsically evil because it violated property rights, or the right of a person to be secure in themselves. Yelling “Fire!” in a crowded theater, Rothbard argues, should not be restricted because free speech is only a relative right; rather, it is criminal because it violates the private property rights of others in the theater (52). Essentially, he ascribes to the belief that individuals have an absolute right to be secure in their persons and goes on to apply it to numerous other aspects of life. Whether it be education, roads, courts, foreign policy, or critiquing the ever-popular Keynesian theory of economics, Rothbard consistently believes that the rights of the individual are incontrovertible. His beliefs are best summed up as follows:

And, indeed, what is the State anyway but organized banditry? What is taxation but theft on a gigantic, unchecked, scale? What is war but mass murder on a scale impossible by private police forces? What is conscription but mass enslavement? Can anyone envision a

private police force getting away with a tiny fraction of what States get away with, and do habitually, year after year, century after century? (293-294)

This argument continues to be the bedrock of radical libertarianism and anarcho-capitalism, as it provides a consistent philosophy that can be applied across all aspects of life. Moderate libertarian thinkers tend to diverge from Rothbard, however, on the issue of how to implement these ideals. Some, like Rothbard, want sweeping change and scoff at others who argue for gradualism. Others, however, realize that government is needed in some limited capacity to retain order and that the free market has limits.

While Rothbard advocated for an economy that is free from virtually all government and coercion, Fredrick Hayek took a more moderate approach to libertarianism. Hayek acknowledged some limitations to laissez-faire economics by admitting that market failures existed and government occasionally needs to step in when it occurs. João Rodrigues (2012), in his scholarship entitled *Where to Draw the Line between the State and Markets? Institutional Elements in Hayek's Neoliberal Political Economy*, noted that these limits can be classified as inner and outer limits. Inner limits are known as market failures, such as “public goods” or “externalities,” which require state intervention to remedy (1017). Rodrigues further expands upon this, explaining:

Hayek views the market as a necessarily incomplete mechanism of coordination and provision insofar as it needs a set of background conditions to be enforced by the state.

Otherwise, it will be incapable of providing certain goods and services, without which no viable market society can exist (1017).

Outer limits involve state or non-market entities guiding the economy via “shared ethical principles” that are claimed to be essential for the functioning of markets (1029). Two arguments on outer limits were specifically put forward. Rodrigues first opines that “Hayek considers that the market might not be entirely conducive to the emergence of ‘reliable knowledge,’ although the market badly needs it for its proper functioning, the state should support institutions for the purpose of ensuring that such knowledge is available” (1023). Furthermore, he states: “This reinforces the idea that the state must possess impartial expert knowledge about the workings of the sectors to be regulated, and about the likely net effects of the particular measures being proposed if it is to be effective” (1024). Essentially, Hayek realized that an outer limit of the market was lack of knowledge. Additionally, some knowledge that is attainable is inaccessible, which could make it difficult for markets to function. Hayek, therefore, realizes that the state has the ability to remain neutral and obtain knowledge that is unavailable within markets. If used properly, the state potentially could help markets function properly.

While Hayek recognized limitations in human knowledge and reason, he failed to provide a reason for these limits. According to David Dietman (2015), who authored *F. A. Hayek's Missing Piece: Christianity*, Hayek failed to understand how essential Christianity is in the West. Dietman, just like Rodrigues, remarks that Hayek made concessions and recognized the limitations of the free market. Most notably, Hayek argued that “human beings have limited reason and knowledge, such that it is impossible to ever possess enough information to succeed in any plan to consciously control a society” (89). Clearly, he believes that human nature is flawed. Hayek even goes on to quote Lord Acton, stating, “‘higher law above municipal codes is the highest achievement of English thought’” (92). What he seems to be saying here is that there

is more to the story than just the laws that we have on the books, but he never specifies what that entails. Dietman scolds him for this, arguing:

Hayek essentially ignores the biblical and Augustinian roots of the idea of a law higher than human law, and likewise lacks a robust theory of natural law (and, consequently, of justice) as is found in Aquinas (and in the works of Hayek's Thomist contemporary, Jacques Maritain). Indeed, St. Augustine captures Hayek's one great political insight and does it better than Hayek. As Augustine writes in *City of God*, 'Without justice, what else is the state but a great band of robbers?' (92).

The lack of a natural law baseline in Hayek's work makes him much more of a secular libertarian than a Christian libertarian. This is interesting to note, as the natural law and religion are often a divisive issue amongst libertarians.

Milton Friedman and C.S. Lewis became increasingly libertarian throughout their respective lives. Friedman flirted with Keynesian early on in his life and was very pro-interventionism during the Cold War (Ebenstein 2014), while a younger Lewis "acknowledged that in a fully Christian society 'we should feel that its economic life was very socialistic'" (Gillen 2009, 262). As time went on, though, both espoused increasingly libertarian views. For Friedman, the shift can be seen specifically in his views on military intervention and other social issues. For Lewis, his later writings reflected a shift in ideology.

C.S. Lewis is known for being one of the most influential Christian writers of the 20th century. While he was known for his penchant to avoid political stances in his writing, according to Steven Gillen's (2009) *C.S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom*, a "'Christian Libertarian'"

undertone is quietly embedded within his writing (272). Lewis was certainly no fan of proletarianism, as he quipped:

‘They are convinced that whatever may be wrong with the world it cannot be themselves. Someone else must be to blame for every evil.... They have no feelings of fear, guilt, or awe. They think, from the very outset, of God’s duties to them, not their duties to Him. And God’s duties to them are conceived not in terms of salvation but in purely secular terms—social security, prevention of war, a higher standard of life’ (263).

This kind of response certainly differentiates him from thinkers like Hayek. Essentially, Lewis agrees that humans are limited, but argues that the remedy is found in God and the natural law. Hayek, as found in Dietman’s (2015) work, never came to the conclusion that God was the reason why human knowledge was limited.

Not only was Lewis wary of proletarianism, but he also had a disdain for collectivism. He remarked that “‘the State exists to promote and protect the ordinary happiness of human beings in this life’” (263). In a sense, “Lewis’ views were congruent with those of Hayek” in regards to economic control (264). While he maintained his Christian morals on social issues, he also recognized that the state should (for the most part) stay out of moral issues, even if they were intrinsically immoral or evil (Gillen 2009). In one of Lewis’ later works entitled “Is Progress Possible? Willing Slaves of the Welfare State” (1958), he stated “‘I believe a man is happier, and happy in a richer way, if he has ‘the freeborn mind.’ But I doubt whether he can have this without economic independence, which the new society is abolishing’” (264). Clearly, Lewis is advocating for freedom of thought, which he believes can only be achieved by having freedom in the economic sphere. Furthering this point, he remarks that “‘economic

independence allows an education not controlled by Government; and in adult life it is the man who needs, and asks, nothing of Government who can criticize its acts and snap his fingers at its ideology” (264). Overall, Lewis seems to have formed a body of arguments over his lifetime that were compatible with the views of secular thinkers such as Hayek.

Similarly, Milton Friedman had connections to Friedrich Hayek. In fact, Lanny Ebenstein (2014) argues in *The Increasingly Libertarian Milton Friedman: An Ideological Profile* that Friedman’s “transition from moderate liberal to more libertarian views” was influenced by “his reading of and friendship with Friedrich Hayek” (85). Early on, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, he “was Keynesian in his approach to the causes of and cures for inflation” (83). Regarding his Congressional testimony during the time period, Friedman himself remarked, “I had completely forgotten how thoroughly Keynesian I then was” (84). As late as 1962, he believed “that there could potentially be a wide area of government services and activity” (86). According to Ebenstein, Friedman seems “to have been radicalized during the late 1960s and 1970s” (87).

While Friedman was an opponent of the military draft early on, it certainly took him more time to recognize conservative failures in foreign policy. Ebenstein notes that “he made opposition to the draft a major part of his policy reform agenda and served on the presidential commission that recommended ending the draft” (87). Even though Friedman had a strong stance on the draft, he “seems to have supported military containment of the Soviet Union during the 1960s” (87). Specifically, Friedman stated that, “the threat from the Kremlin requires us to devote a sizable fraction of our resources to our military defense” (87). Then, in the 1990s, Friedman had an interview in which he stated “I’m anti-interventionist,’ and ‘I’m sure we spend

more money on armaments than we need to” (88). Both of these sentiments, opposing the draft and military intervention, are strongly supported by most libertarians.

Additionally, his fervent belief in laissez-faire economics represents a major libertarian position. Friedman “decried current welfare and social programs” which he found to “have the ‘negative effect of creating a different kind of culture and a different kind of human being’” (91). Moreover, he came to accept a monetary policy that had long been advocated by libertarians. Friedman acknowledged “later in life” that he would “like to abolish the Fed” (92). Couple these policy positions with two other major propositions, the legalization of drugs and pushing for school vouchers, that Friedman made during his lifetime and a coherent libertarian ideology seems to be formed (Ebenstein 2014). Friedman himself even stated: “My contribution to the libertarian cause has not come on the level of values...but rather by empirical demonstration,...by advancing the science of economics and showing the relevance of those advances to the policy of economics” (93).

Discussion

How has technology helped or hindered the ability of individually focused libertarians to organize for collective action? Obviously, the question is loaded. Technology certainly seems to be tied to both individualism and libertarianism, but it does not operate solely on those terms. To understand the full implications of technology on individualism and libertarianism, similar projects would have to be conducted on how technology impacts conservatism, liberalism, socialism, and the like. Only then would the impact be seen on a larger scale.

Undoubtedly, though, this is a good start. Technology is a driving force behind individualism, as it allows for endless amounts of information to be composed and shared in

more efficient ways than ever before. For groups that have historically been outside of the mainstream, such as anarchists and libertarians, there is now a way to connect with one another and share ideas. In a sense, this is a double-edged sword. It may give rise to extremism, but it also may help expand political participation to groups who have had no voice in the past. Thus, the societal climate is ripe for outside forces, such as libertarians, to come in and exert influence.

At this point in time, however, libertarian influence seems relegated to the Republican Party. The Libertarian Party in America, while being the third biggest party, is still unable to apply much pressure on the two major parties. Some of this may be their own doing, but Duverger's law may provide the best explanation for their failings. As one of very few steadfast laws in political science, Duverger's law states "that when single-member districts get just one legislative seat – as in the United States – and the winner takes that seat, two parties tend to dominate" (McCutcheon). Essentially, third parties are at a major disadvantage since the U.S. has a winner-take-all, plurality system. If the U.S. were to move to a ranked-choice system, as utilized in many European countries, then third parties might have a better shot. As it currently stands, however, this is not the case.

Even within the Republican Party, there are some major difficulties in the application of these ideals. As Ron and Rand Paul have seen, it is very difficult to retain all of your ideological purity and become a major player in a mainstream party. Both have had unsuccessful runs for president, even when the time seemed ripe for their emergence. While Ron has faded into the political sunset upon his retirement, Rand has made some progress in expanding the constituency of the GOP. He spoke at an Urban League conference in Cincinnati in 2014, where he discussed "his support for restoring the voting rights for felons and other criminal justice reforms"

(Wartman). Events like this, along with other speaking engagements in predominantly

Democratic strongholds, show that he is laying the groundwork for a potential movement. While it did not help propel him to victory in the 2016 Republican presidential primaries, it certainly could benefit both him and other libertarian-oriented Republicans in Congress as they seek to gain more influence.

Due to the difficulties that libertarianism has faced in garnering widespread support, it would be prudent for libertarian leaning Republicans to follow the model of Hayek over that of Rothbard. Hayek recognized that there are limits to the free market, but he still advocated for the main principles embedded within libertarian economic thought. While one must admire the passion and fire of Rothbard's arguments, his call for radicalism over gradualism is certainly less practical than Hayek's message. At the same time, however, Hayek's lack of an explanation for limitations in knowledge seems like an intellectual cop-out as well.

Lewis' approach of tying human limitations to a natural law which supersedes humanity could be the missing link. Lewis is also masterful in how he separates his private beliefs from his public views, as he speaks out against legislating morality even if he personally opposed an issue. Religious people today could learn much from Lewis, as he avoided politics and tried to live out his beliefs. If more Christian Libertarians emerge in the mold of Lewis, then collaboration with Secular Libertarians like Hayek would become more promising, as they could focus on the issues which unite (instead of those which divide) them. These unifying issues could include the non-interventionism and opposition to the draft that Friedman argued for. If unification and the ability to overcome collective action problems ever occur, libertarians could be transformed into a powerful voting bloc composed of a wide array of adherents.

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