

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**

**1040**

Department of the Treasury—Internal Revenue Service  
**U.S. Individual Income Tax Return**

OMB No. 1545-0074

IRS Use Only—Do not write

For the year Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2012, or other tax year beginning on \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

**DON'T**

**HURRY**

**PEOPLE**

**AND DON'T TAKE  
THEIR STUFF**

**A LIBERTARIAN MANIFESTO**

**MATT KIBBE**

Form 1040 (2012) with various sections visible: Filing Status, Income, and Deductions.

<b>Filing Status</b>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Single	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Head of household (with qualifying person)
	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Married filing jointly (even if only one had income)	
	3 <input type="checkbox"/> Married filing separately. Enter spouse's SSN	
<b>Exemptions</b>	6 <input type="checkbox"/> Yourself	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Spouse	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dependent	
<b>Income</b>	7 Wages, salaries, tips, etc. Attach Form(s) W-2	7
	8a Taxable interest. Attach Schedule B if required	8a
	8b Dividend interest	8b
	9a Ordinary dividends. Attach Schedule B if required	9a
	9b Qualified dividends	9b
	10 Rents, royalties, or other income from state or local government	10
	11 Any received	11
	12 Business income or loss. Attach Schedule C-EZ	12
	13 (Loss) Attach Schedule D if required. If not required, enter -0-	13
	14 (Losses) Attach Form 4797	14
	15a IRA distributions	15a
	b Taxable amount	15b
	26 Moving expenses. Attach Form 3903	26
	27 Productive safety investments tax. Attach Schedule S	27
	28 Self-employed SEP, SIM, IRA, and qualified plan	28
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# **DON'T HURT PEOPLE**

**AND DON'T  
TAKE THEIR STUFF**

**A LIBERTARIAN MANIFESTO**

**MATT KIBBE**

*wm*

WILLIAM MORROW

*An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers*

# DEDICATION

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*For Terry, who's always there for me*

# EPIGRAPH

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*In the United States, where it has become almost impossible to use “liberal” in the sense in which I have used it, the term “libertarian” has been used instead. It may be the answer; but for my part I find it singularly unattractive. For my taste it carries too much the flavor of a manufactured term and of a substitute. What I should want is a word which describes the party of life, the party that favors free growth and spontaneous evolution. But I have racked my brain unsuccessfully to find a descriptive term which commends itself.*

—FRIEDRICH HAYEK, “WHY I AM NOT A CONSERVATIVE”

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# CHAPTER 1

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## RULES FOR LIBERTY

DON'T HURT PEOPLE, AND don't take their stuff. That's it, in a nutshell. Everyone should be free to live their lives as they think best, free from meddling by politicians and government bureaucrats, as long as they don't hurt other people, or take other people's stuff.

I believe in liberty, so the rules are pretty straightforward: simple, blindly applied like Lady Justice would, across the board. No assembly required.

To me, the values of liberty just seem like a commonsense way to think about political philosophy. The rules are easily understood, our aspirations for government are modest and practical, and our designs on the lives and behavior of others are unpresumptuous, even humble.

There is a renewed and heated debate about the future of America going on right now. Our government seems broken. What is the best way to get our mutually beloved country back on track? People are seeking answers. When you get past all the acrimony and all the name-calling, the question we are all debating is really quite simple: Do you believe in the freedom of individuals to determine their own futures and solve problems cooperatively working together, or do you believe that a powerful but benevolent government can and should rearrange outcomes and make things better?

More and more, the debate about how we live our lives and what the government's legitimate role is in overruling our personal decisions has become increasingly polarized, even hostile. The president is fighting with Congress. Democrats are fighting with Republicans. Conservatives are fighting with liberals. Libertarians are fighting with "neocons." Political insiders and career bureaucrats are pushing back against the wishes of grassroots Americans. And left-wing "progressives" are attacking, with increased vitriol, tea party "anarchists." It's enough to make your head spin, or at least make you rationally opt out of the whole debate as it is defined by all of the experts that congregate in Washington, D.C., or on the editorial pages of the most venerated newsheets of record.

Normal people—real Americans outside the Beltway—have better things to do. They should focus on their lives and their kids and their careers, their passions and their goals and their communities. Right?

Except that we just can't anymore. It seems like the decisions Washington power brokers make about what to do for us, or to us, or even against us, are having an increasingly adverse impact on our lives. Young people can't find jobs, and can't afford to pay off their student loans. Parents are having an increasingly hard time providing for their families. Seniors can't afford to retire, and their life savings seem to be shrinking for reasons that are not quite clear. And every one of us is somehow being targeted, monitored, snooped on, conscripted, induced, taxed, subsidized, or otherwise manipulated by someone else's agenda, based on someone else's decisions, made in some secret meeting or by some closed-door legislative deal in Washington, D.C.

What gives, you ask?

It seems like we have reached a tipping point where governance in Washington and your unalienable right to do what you think best for yourself and your family have collided. You and I will have to get involved, to figure out what exactly the rules are, and to set them right again.

I am not a moral philosopher and I don't particularly aspire to be one. That said, I have stayed at more than one Holiday Inn Express. That makes me at least smart enough to know what I don't know. So the rules that follow represent my humble attempt to boil down and mash up all the best thinking in all of human history on individualism and civil society, the entire canon of Judeo-Christian teaching, hundreds of years of English Whig, Scottish Enlightenment, and classical liberal political philosophy, way too much Friedrich Hayek and Adam Smith, a smattering of karma and Ayn Rand, and, if my editor doesn't excise it out of the manuscript, at least a few subliminal hat tips to *The Big Lebowski*. All of this in six convenient "Rules for Liberty."

What on earth am I thinking? My inspiration, in an odd way, is Saul Alinsky, the famous community organizer who was so influential on two of his fellow Chicagoans—Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Everybody's favorite leftist famously wrote thirteen *Rules for Radicals* for his disciples to follow. His book is "a pragmatic primer for realistic radicals" seeking to take over the world.

Alinsky actually dedicates his book to Lucifer. I'm not kidding.

*Lest we forget at least an over the shoulder acknowledgment to the very first radical: from all our legends, mythology and history (and who is to know where mythology leaves off and history begins—or which is which), the very first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom—Lucifer.*

What the hell was he thinking? Just for fun, Google "Alinsky" and "Lucifer" sometime and see for yourself the rhetorical knots his admirers tie themselves into trying to explain the dedication to the favorite book, penned by their cherished mentor. Did Alinsky really mean it? Who knows, but tongue-in-cheek or not, it seems to reflect the by-any-means-necessary spirit of the book.

So, how could I find inspiration here? It's no secret that many of us liberty-minded "community organizers" have expropriated some of Alinsky's tactical thinking in the defense of individual freedom. But I think there's a categorical difference between us and them. *Rules for Radicals* is not about principles; it is a book about winning, sometimes with wickedly cynical and manipulative tactics. The principles seem to be missing, or an afterthought, something to be figured out later, and dropped into the plan depending upon who ends up in charge. This cart-before-the-horse thinking seems to be consistent with the progressive mind-set. The rule of man instead of the rule of law, or the writing of a blank check for government agents empowered with great discretionary authority over your life. If we just suspend our disbelief and trust them, everything is supposed to turn out fine. Better, in fact.

We, on the other hand, start from first principles. The nice thing about the Rules for Liberty is that our values define our tactics, so there's no ends-justify-the-means hypocrisy. Liberty is right. Liberty is the basis for social cooperation and voluntary organizing. Liberty allows each of us to achieve what we might of our lives.

Liberty is good policy, and good politics. But good politics is a consequence, not the goal. "Liberty is not a means to a higher political end," wrote Lord Acton. "It is itself the highest political end. It is not for the sake of a good public administration that it is required, but for the security in the pursuit of the highest objects of civil society, and of private life."<sup>1</sup>

It's common sense. The Rules for Liberty are applied equally, without bias or discrimination, and

don't allow the moving of goalposts midgame. These rules don't permit gray-suited middlemen rearrange things for your special benefit, or against your personal preferences, arbitrarily.

Adam Smith, the Scottish moral philosopher widely considered the father of modern economic based his economic thinking on the mutually beneficial gains achieved from voluntary cooperation. But cooperation and exchange are based on mutually understood values. His most important work, foundation for all classical liberal thinking, is *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In my book *Hostile Takeover*, I briefly discuss Smith's influence on the work of Nobel laureate economist Vernon Smith. his inquiries into the ways that the rules of community conduct function in real life. The rules that allow for peaceful cooperation emerge, seemingly spontaneously, from human actions.

How do such social norms—the rules—emerge? The question is one that F. A. Hayek, also a Nobel laureate, spent the latter half of his professional career exploring. Both Vernon Smith and Hayek find the basis for their inquiry in Smith's *Moral Sentiments*:

*The most sacred laws of justice, therefore, those whose violation seems to call loudest for vengeance and punishment, are the laws which guard the life and person of our neighbor; the next are those which guard his property and possessions; and last of all come those which guard what are called his personal rights, or what is due to him from the promises of others.*

## 1. DON'T HURT PEOPLE

This first rule seems simple enough, and no decent person would hurt another unless the action was provoked or in some way justified. Free people just want to be left alone, not hassled or harmed by someone else with an agenda or designs over their life and property. We would certainly strike back and when our physical well-being is threatened—if our family, our community, or our country were attacked. But we shouldn't hurt other people unless it is in self-defense or in the defense of another against unchecked aggression.

Libertarian philosophers call this the Non-Aggression Principle (NAP). Don't start a fight, but always be prepared, if absolutely necessary, to finish a fight unjustly instigated by someone else. Here's how Murray Rothbard put it:

*The fundamental axiom of libertarian theory is that no one may threaten or commit violence (“aggress”) against another man’s person or property. Violence may be employed only against the man who commits such violence; that is, only defensively against the aggressive violence of another. In short, no violence may be employed against a non-aggressor. Here is the fundamental rule from which can be deduced the entire corpus of libertarian theory.<sup>2</sup>*

Justice, says Adam Smith, is based on a fundamental respect for individual life. “Death is the greatest evil which one man can inflict upon another, and excites the highest degree of resentment in those who are immediately connected with the slain,” he writes. “Murder, therefore, is the most atrocious of all crimes which affect individuals only, in the sight both of mankind, and of the person who has committed it.”<sup>3</sup>

We all agree that the first legitimate role of government force is to protect the lives of individual citizens. But things get more complicated when it comes to defending against “enemies foreign and domestic.”

In his 1796 Farewell Address, George Washington warned Americans not to “entangle our peace

and prosperity in the toils” of foreign ambitions, interests, and rivalries. “It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world.”

Our first president was hardly an isolationist, and his foreign policy views were guided, in large part, by common sense and pragmatism. One of his key considerations was the budgetary implications of overly ambitious foreign entanglements. “As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit,” Washington counseled. “One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace.”

You might interpret Washington’s skepticism, in a modern context, as warning against open-ended nation-building quagmires. Can we really establish a constitutional democracy in Iraq? Can we successfully mediate the violent disputes of warring factions in civil wars like the one going on today in Syria? Better yet, should we?

The principle of nonaggression means that we should only declare war on nations demonstrably seeking to do us harm. The men and women who volunteer for our military should not be put in harm’s way by their commander-in-chief without a clear and just purpose, without a plan or without an endgame. This is just common sense.

In an era in which our enemies are no longer just confined to nations, the other key question is the balance between security at home and the protection of our civil liberties, particularly our right to privacy and our right to due process. Massive expansions of the government’s surveillance authorities under the Patriot Act and recent amendments to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act have civil libertarians of all ideological stripes worried that the government has crossed essential constitutional lines.

Defending America against the unchecked aggression of our enemies is a first responsibility of the federal government, but respecting the rights of individual citizens and checking the power of unelected employees at the National Security Agency is an equally important responsibility. I start with Ben Franklin on this question. He said: “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

We should always be skeptical of too much concentrated power in the hands of government agents. They will naturally abuse it. Outside government, an unnatural concentration of power—such as the extraordinary leverage wielded by mega-investment banks or government employees unions—always in partnership with government power monopolists.

## **2. DON’T TAKE PEOPLE’S STUFF**

Life. Liberty. Property. While most of us are totally down with the first two tenets of America’s original business plan, the basis of property rights and our individual right to the fruits of our labor seems to be increasingly controversial. Do we have a right to our own stuff?

In our personal lives, taking from one person, by force, to give to another person is considered stealing. Stealing is wrong. It’s just not cool to take other people’s stuff, and we all agree that ripping off your neighbor, or your neighbor’s credit information online, or your neighbor’s local bank, is a crime that should be punished.

“There can be no proper motive for hurting our neighbour, there can be no incitement to do evil to another, which mankind will go along with, except just indignation for evil which that other has done to us,” argues Adam Smith. “To disturb his happiness merely because it stands in the way of our own to take from him what is of real use to him merely because it may be of equal or of more use to us,

to indulge, in this manner, at the expense of other people, the natural preference which every man has for his own happiness above that of other people, is what no impartial spectator can go along with.”<sup>4</sup>

But what if the stealer in question is the federal government? Is thieving wrong unless the thief is our duly elected representation in Washington, D.C., or some faceless “public servant” working for some alphabet-soup agency in the federal complex?

It seems to me that stealing is always wrong, and that you can’t outsource stealing to a third party like a congressman, and expect to feel any better about your actions.

In the real world, where absolute power corrupts absolutely, there are no good government thieves or bad government thieves. There is only limited or unlimited government thievery.

The alternative to outsourced government thievery is a world where property rights are sacrosanct, where the promises you make to others through contracts are strictly enforced, and where the rule of law is simple and transparent and treats everyone the same under the laws of the land.

Government is, by definition, a monopoly on force.<sup>5</sup> Governments often hurt people and take their stuff. That’s why the political philosophy of liberty is focused on the rule of law. Government is dangerous, left unchecked. Consider the way too many examples from modern history to see the murderous results of too much unchecked government power: communists, fascists, Nazis, radical Islamist theocracies, and a broad array of Third World dictators who hide behind ideology or religion to justify the oppression and murder of their countrymen as a means to retain power.

All of these “isms” are really just about the dominance of government insiders over individuals and the arbitrary rule of man over men. Unlimited governments always hurt people and always take their stuff, often in horrific and absolutely unintended ways. The architects of America’s business plan were keenly aware of the dangers of too much government and the arbitrary rule of man. James Madison states it well in *Federalist* 51:

*But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.*

Government should be limited, and it should never choose sides based on the color of your skin, who your parents are, how much money you make, or what you do for a living. And it should never ever choose favorites, because those favorites will inevitably be the vested, the powerful, and the ones who know somebody in Washington, D.C.

That’s why our system is designed to protect individual liberty. “[I]n the federal republic of the United States,” Madison writes, “all authority in it will be derived from and dependent on the society; the society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests, and classes of citizens, that *the rights of individuals*, or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority. In a free government the security for civil rights must be the same as that for religious rights.”

### 3. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Should you wait around for someone else to solve a problem, or should you get it done yourself? Liberty is an individual responsibility. The burden always sits upon your shoulders first. It is this inescapable accountability that stares you in the mirror every morning. If it didn’t get done, sometimes there’s no one to blame but yourself.

Free people step up to help our neighbors when bad things happen; no one needs to tell us to do that. We defend, sometimes at great personal sacrifice, what makes America so special. Freedom works to make our communities a better place, by working together voluntarily, solving problems from the bottom up.

This is the “I” in community. Communities are made up of individuals and families and volunteer groups and local organizations and time-tested institutions that have been around since long before you were born. All of these things work together to solve problems, build things, and create better opportunities. But notice a pattern that should be self-evident: Families are made up of free people. So are churches and synagogues, local firehouses and volunteer soup kitchens, and the countless community service projects that happen every weekend. All of these social units, no matter how you parse it, are made up of individuals working together, by choice. It does take a village, but villages are made up of people choosing to voluntarily associate with one another.

I was introduced to the philosophy of liberty by Ayn Rand. I found her work compelling because it focused on individual responsibility. Do you own yourself and the product of your work, she asked, or does someone else have a first claim on your life? I thought the answer was obvious.

Rand’s critics love to attack her views that individuals matter, and that you have both ownership and a responsibility for your own life. They usually set up a straw man: the caricature of “rugged individualism” and the false claim that everyone is an island, uncaring of anyone or anything, willing to do anything to get ahead.

“Ayn Rand is one of those things that a lot of us, when we were 17 or 18 and feeling misunderstood, we’d pick up,” Barack Obama tells *Rolling Stone*. “Then, as we get older, we realize that a world in which we’re only thinking about ourselves and not thinking about anybody else, which we’re considering the entire project of developing ourselves as more important than our relationships to other people and making sure that everybody else has opportunity—that that’s a pretty narrow vision. It’s not one that, I think, describes what’s best in America.”<sup>6</sup>

Of course it isn’t, Mr. President. In Obama’s simplistic configuration, there is only the “narrow vision” of the individual, and the seemingly limitless wisdom of the collective. Progressives and advocates of more government involvement like to suggest that there is a dichotomy, or at least a direct trade-off, between individual liberty and a robust sense of community.

It’s easy to kick down straw men, I suppose, but the real question stands: Can governments require that people care, or force people to volunteer? It seems like such a silly question, but some seem to think the answer is “yes.”

Some people just don’t see the link between individual initiative and the cohesion of a community. Justice means treating everyone just like everyone else under the laws of the land. No exceptions, no favors. “Social justice,” as best I can tell, means exactly the opposite. It means treating everyone differently, usually by redistributing wealth and outcomes in society by force.

The term “social justice” was first coined by the Jesuit philosopher Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio, who argued, “A society cannot exist without an authority that creates harmony in it.” Someone needs to be in charge, he assumed, and someone needs to direct things. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt quoted Taparelli in a speech in 1932, to help justify the extraordinary, and often unconstitutional actions taken by his administration to consolidate power in the federal government: “[T]he right ordering of economic life cannot be left to a free competition of forces. For from this source, as from a poisoned spring, have originated and spread all the errors of individualist economic teaching.”<sup>7</sup>

Forty years later, John Rawls would expand on this idea in his influential book *A Theory of Justice*. “Social and economic inequalities,” he asserted, “are to be arranged so that they are to be of the greatest benefit to the least advantaged.”

greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society.”<sup>8</sup>

Can you mandate compassion? Can you outsource charity by insisting that the political process expropriate the wealth of someone you don't know to solve someone else's need? Austrian economist F. A. Hayek, ever quick to spot the logical flaws of his ideological opponents, said that social justice was “much the worst use of the word ‘social’ ” and that it “wholly destroys” the meaning of the word it qualifies.<sup>9</sup>

The process of getting to the “right” outcomes, the properly reengineered social order, is never well defined. But the social justice crowd is convinced that some people just know better. They are certain that some people are better trusted with the power to rearrange things. As former U.S. representative Barney Frank used to say: “Government is what we call those things we do together.”<sup>10</sup>

If you don't believe in individual liberty, things get complicated quick. “Social justice,” the seeming opposite of plain old justice, requires someone to rearrange things by force. It's all about power, and who gets to assert their power over you. The rules are always situational, and your situation is always less important than the situations the deciders find themselves in. Someone else's values, defined by someone else's values, gets to decide.

Of course, if someone else is in charge, we always, conveniently, have someone else to blame. Not left free, we might just wait around for someone else to take care of it. We might not step up. We might not get involved. We might outsource personal responsibility to a third party, paid for with someone else's hard work and property.

Without liberty, any sense of community that binds us might just unravel.

#### **4. WORK FOR IT**

Liberty is a weight.

If you have ever tried to do something you've never done before, or tried to start a new business venture, or created new jobs and hired new workers, you know exactly what I'm talking about. That's the weight. The same is true for people who step up to solve a community problem or serve other folks in trouble. How about peacefully petitioning your government for a “redress of grievances,” a right guaranteed by the First Amendment, only to be met by federal park police with preprinted “shutdown” signs and plasticuffs?

These are all acts of risk taking, an attempt to serve a need or disrupt the status quo. These are acts of entrepreneurship. And it's all hard work.

But work is cool, too, and even some Hollywood superstars seem to get it. “I believe the opportunity looks a lot like hard work,” Ashton Kutcher told the audience of screaming teenagers at the 2013 Teen Choice Awards in Hollywood. “I've never had a job in my life that I was better than. I was always just lucky to have a job. And every job I had was a stepping-stone to my next job, and I never quit my job until I had my next job. And so opportunities look a lot like work.”<sup>11</sup>

Have you ever had to work for something, pushing against the disinterest and apathy of everyone around you? Maybe you were laughed at, but it didn't really matter. You were out to prove yourself right. To create something. To achieve something. Entrepreneurs often fail, take their lumps, and move forward to disrupt the status quo. We don't know what we don't know, but entrepreneurs have the extraordinary judgment to see around the next corner.

“What distinguishes the successful entrepreneur and promoter from other people is precisely the fact that he does not let himself be guided by what was and is, but arranges his affairs on the ground

his opinion about the future,” says the great free market economist Ludwig von Mises. The entrepreneur “sees the past and the present as other people do; but he judges the future in a different way. . . . No dullness and clumsiness on the part of the masses can stop the pioneers of improvement. There is no need for them to win the approval of inert people beforehand. They are free to embark upon their projects even if everyone else laughs at them.”<sup>12</sup>

Entrepreneurship can be a lonely business. It’s hard work. Entrepreneurship is knowing that a particular problem won’t be solved unless you solve it.

Part of being an entrepreneur is ignoring the naysayers, and staying fixed on a singular goal, looking around the corner of history and envisioning a better future. Working for it means responding to customer demand or creating solutions to still-unknown demands, seeing something that others can’t see but still wondering if you will fail.

Do you think our founding entrepreneurs were anxious when they put their “John Hancocks” on that parchment? They pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor for a principle—that people should be free—utterly ignoring their slim odds of success.

It’s not so easy creating jobs, hiring new workers that become your extended family, and then lying awake at night wondering if you will make payroll on Friday. But that’s what working for it is all about.

Work is hard.

But the upside of work is so awesome. It’s all about the infinite potential that sits right around the next corner. You can go get it. You are free to work in pursuit of your own happiness, to associate with whomever you like, to take care of loved ones as your first priority, and to join in voluntary association with your neighbors, or your countrymen, in common cause, to make things better. Or not. It is up to you.

For all of the debate about “the rich” paying their fair share, the real question we are arguing about in America is not about the proper redistribution of the diminishing spoils between rich and poor. Every country throughout history has had its privileged class, usually favored and protected by government cronies. The real question is more fundamental: Are we still a country where anyone can get rich, where there are no government-enforced class distinctions that prevent the poor from climbing the economic ladder?

Jonathan Haidt, a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, suggests that there is a good dose of karma in a book I coauthored in 2010, *Give Us Liberty*. “It is the Sanskrit word for ‘deed’ or ‘action,’ and the law of karma says that for every action, there is an equal and moral commensurate reaction,” he writes in the *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>13</sup> “Kindness, honesty and hard work will (eventually) bring good fortune; cruelty, deceit and laziness will (eventually) bring suffering. My opposition to Wall Street bailouts for the irresponsible and politically gamed rules that punish hard work? “Capitalist karma, in a nutshell,” Haidt concludes.

CALL IT WHATEVER YOU like. Liberty defends “the minority,” the opportunity to work for it, the “underclass” with absolutely no political pull, the unconnected, and the rights of every single individual to make it. Liberty is color-blind. Liberty is a merit-based system, and it blindly measures all of us based on the content of our character.

Why would anyone want to live life any other way but free?

## 5. MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Free people live and let live. Free people don't have any great designs on the freedoms of other people, and we expect them to return the favor. I figure I have enough on my plate just keeping myself straight, protecting the people I love, getting my work done.

How I live my own life, and how I choose to treat others, matters. How I achieve my goals defines who I am and who I will be on the day I die. As best I can, the hows and whats in my life hopefully reflect my core principles.

But is it really any of my business to mind the business of the millions of other people working on their own dreams? I don't think so. I don't have to accept their choices or their values. But as long as they tolerate mine, as long as they don't try to hurt me or take my stuff, or try to petition the government to do it for them, why should I care?

Certainly other people will disagree with my live-and-let-live attitude. But the real question is about the proper role of government in limiting my personal decisions, or dictating my values, or the practice of my religion, or the redefinition of cherished social institutions, which have been developed and defended by people coming together in common cause.

Society should never be absorbed or distorted by the state, argues Ben Rogge, the late, great libertarian professor at Wabash College. "Society, with its full network of restraints on individual conduct, based on custom, tradition, religion, personal morality, a sense of style, and with all of its indeed powerful sanctions, is what makes the civilized life possible and meaningful." Still, he argues we do "not wish to see these influences on individual behavior institutionalized in the hands of the state. As I read history, I see that everywhere the generally accepted social processes have been made into law, civilization has ceased to advance."

*I, Ben Rogge, do not use marijuana nor do I approve of its use, but I am afraid that if I support laws against its use, some fool will insist as well on denying me my noble and useful gin and tonic. I believe that the typical Episcopal Church is somewhat higher on the scale of civilization than the snake-handling cults of West Virginia. Frankly I wouldn't touch even a consecrated reptile with a ten-foot pole, or even a nine-iron, but as far as the Anglican Church is concerned, I am still an anti-anti-disestablishmentarian, if you know what I mean.<sup>14</sup>*

Can the political process better arbitrate the definition of time-tested social mores? It seems like a ridiculous question to ask about 535 men and women who can't even balance the federal budget. Would we hope that they weigh in on the things that really matter to us personally?

I remember when the George W. Bush administration implemented its faith-based initiative as part of a campaign of "compassionate conservatism." Whatever its good intentions, this program effectively began the process of politicizing faith-based community service. It was no longer about individuals volunteering their time and money to solve problems. By 2008, this federal program became a competitive scrum for federal grants to well-connected "faith-based" organizations. Under Barack Obama, the program was renamed and repopulated with interests and organizations to better promote his administration's priorities.

Wouldn't it be better not to set up a new program that will inevitably become politicized and corrupting everything it touches?

Consider the definition of marriage. Why does the federal government have an opinion about marriage? Why do government bureaucrats and politicians have a right to have an opinion about, and control over, the most important personal relationship in my life? Why would we want the federal government, with all of its competing agendas and interests other than your own, involved? I think it

a really bad idea, and the fact that I had to get a license to get married to the love of my life felt somehow degrading to my most sacred bond.

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I was young and idealistic when Terry and I got engaged. At the time I had made my careful, researched, impeccably principled arguments about not demeaning the sacred bond between us, and how getting the government's approval was wrong. I lost, of course. We got the government's license on the government's terms. And we got married. Let's just say that I respect my wife's authority and her grandma's authority over my life far more than I resent the federal government's claimed but illegitimate right to dictate the terms of my personal relationships.

So yes, even I compromise on principle.

Do to others what you would have them do to you. This, of course, is the Golden Rule, and you can find iterations of it throughout the New Testament of the Bible. I would like other people, and the government, to stay out of my personal business. I plan to return the favor.

## 6. FIGHT THE POWER

Lord Acton, the great classical liberal political philosopher, famously warned that “power tends to corrupt” and “absolute power corrupts absolutely.”<sup>15</sup> “The chief evil is unlimited government,” argued F. A. Hayek, “and nobody is qualified to wield unlimited power.”<sup>16</sup>

This too seems like common sense, and Americans have a healthy distrust of big, obtrusive government that seems genetically encoded in our DNA. Our system of constitutional checks and balances, and adversarial and separate branches of government, is intended to limit monopoly government power.

Notice that the goal is not electing better angels to benevolently wield power *for the right reasons*. There is some confusion about this, a difference that Hayek addresses eloquently in his most important essay on political philosophy, “Why I Am Not a Conservative”:

*[T]he conservative does not object to coercion or arbitrary power so long as it is used for what he regards as the right purposes. He believes that if government is in the hands of decent men, it ought not to be too much restricted by rigid rules. Since he is essentially opportunist and lacks principles, his main hope must be that the wise and the good will rule—not merely by example, as we all must wish, but by authority given to them and enforced by them. Like the socialist, he is less concerned with the problem of how the powers of government should be limited than with that of who wields them; and, like the socialist, he regards himself as entitled to force the values he holds on other people.<sup>17</sup>*

Remember that, in the European context, “liberal” means pro-freedom. “Conservative” means something more like what we would call *progressive*.

So there are rules. But the architects of this model always understood that accountability rested in the hands of the customers: American shareholders who have a right, and an obligation, to check the bad management decisions made in Washington, D.C. Our representatives work for us, and we should have the right to review their job performance and fire underperformers.

The challenge of knowing what it is that our public officials are up to has always been the biggest barrier to accountability. Quite often, busy people with jobs and families and all sorts of personal dreams and pursuits just couldn't get good, timely information about what our representation—o

employees—were up to behind the cloistered halls of the marble Senate office buildings and windowless federal agencies. What were they doing in there? We would usually find out about big decisions, made for the benefit of someone else's parochial interests, after the legislation was signed, sealed, and delivered.

So normal Americans were too busy, and the barriers of entry into our participatory republic were too high for us to know. But the insiders, and the well-heeled interests that wanted a special deal, or a subsidy, or a carve-out, or an earmark, or an exemption, always showed up in Washington, hat in hand. Why? Because the return on the investment made cozying up to Washington is a very profitable "business" proposition. Public choice economists refer to this perverse incentive structure as the "concentrated benefits" of D.C. power players versus "dispersed costs" incurred by anyone paying taxes.

In other words, you get screwed. This isn't a Republican versus Democrat thing. It's more about who manages to get a seat at the table first. Typically, you won't find your chair available when things really matter.

This process, more than anything else, explains all of the bailouts and debt and seemingly mindless expansion of government into our personal and economic lives.

The answer, today, is to fight the power. Government goes to those who show up. The old dismal calculus of big government is being undermined by the Internet, the decentralization of knowledge, the breakup of the old media cartel, social media that lets us easily connect with other concerned and newly activated citizen shareholders. The democratization of politics is shifting power away from insiders, back to the shareholders.

But you still have to step up and take personal responsibility. No one's going to do it for you. You can't proxy-vote your shares in America's future to some third party. If you don't like the direction your country is taking, if you don't like the dominance of D.C. insiders, senators-for-life, and super-lobbyists who get special access to the West Wing, it's time to take a look in the mirror.

The burden of individual responsibility means that sometimes there's no one else to blame but yourself.

Before you convince yourself that it's impossible to change things, think about Samuel Adams, or Mahatma Gandhi, or Lech Walesa or any other lonely activist that has done the undoable through peaceful resistance to government power.

Before you tell yourself, after years of fighting, that it's just too hard, think about the price Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. paid for his willingness to step up.

This burden, the weight of liberty, is what has driven a small minority, those special few freedom fighters over history, to buck the status quo, often at extraordinary personal costs. Those who step up in an act of lonely entrepreneurship, and fix "unfixable" problems even as the anointed experts "laugh at them." Would you be willing to risk your life, your fortune, and your sacred honor for the principle that individuals should be left free, provided that they don't hurt people and don't take their stuff?

# CHAPTER 2

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## YOU CAN'T HAVE FREEDOM FOR FREE

IN 1977, I BOUGHT my first Rush album. I was thirteen. The title of the disc was *2112*, and the fold-out jacket had a very cool and ominous red star on the cover. As soon as I got it home from the store, I carefully placed that vinyl record onto the felt-padded turntable of my parents' old Motorola console stereo. The moment I dropped the stylus, and that needle caught the groove, I became obsessed with Rush. I got obsessed with Rush like only thirteen-year-old boys can get obsessed. I turned up the volume as loud as I thought I could get away with, and I rocked.

Mom was not nearly as pleased as I was with my new discovery. I know it sounds cliché, but she was surely the most patient woman in the world. Barbara Kibbe's youngest son was what the best peer-reviewed academic journals on parenting refer to as "a handful."

My highly anticipated jam session didn't last very long that day. Mom shut it down.

So I turned down the stereo, sat down, and began to read the liner notes inside the album's cover jacket. One of the things lost in today's era of digital downloads is the ritual of reading the lyrics and the commentary that used to be an essential part of what you were buying when you purchased new music. The notes gave context and understanding to the music and helped you connect with the musicians who created the songs you listened to.

"With acknowledgement to the genius of Ayn Rand," read the text inside the cover of *2112*. What an odd name, I thought. Who is Ayn Rand?

"2112" is a song cycle that tells the story of a futuristic, tyrannical society where individual choice and initiative have been replaced by the top-down control of an autocratic regime, where all decisions are guided by "the benevolent wisdom" of the Priests of the Temples of Syrinx. The Priests boast that they've "taken care of everything" using the awesome power of their "great computers" to bestow equality on all mankind. They lord over a "nice, contented world."

In the plot of this dystopian tale, one of the "common sons" approaches his controllers with a new discovery: a guitar, an instrument that could change things for the better by providing inspiration and music. Could this "strange device" be a vehicle for individual expression? He naïvely thinks that his controllers will care, will be open to new beauty, new innovation, and more creative freedom. "There's something here that's as strong as life," he tells them. "I know that it will reach you." Instead of hearing him out, the Priests crush his newly found instrument under their feet, crushing his spirit in the process. "Forget about your silly whim," the troublemaker is told. "It doesn't fit the plan!"

In the 1970s it was virtually impossible to find out about new music and different genres that didn't fit the one-size-fits-all mold of commercial pop. Everything on the radio was Top 40, predetermined to be what you wanted to hear by some nameless, gray-suited music executives. Everything was very top-down, and choices and information typically flowed just one way, leaving alternatives undiscovered, unheard by consumers, crushed by the silence of ignorance. You just didn't know what you didn't know. So the experts chose for you, and in 1977 they had selected, for me, really awesome songs like Andy Gibb's "I Just Want to Be Your Everything," Barbra Streisand's "A Star Is Born," and Captain & Tennille's "Muskrat Love." The insipid disco version of the *Star Wars* cantina bar song, by Meco, sat on the top of the *Billboard* charts for two weeks, subjecting me and

otherwise discerning people to its cruel torture on an endless rotation.

Until I found Rush, that is. I actually discovered the band as I was walking past the recreation center at my high school. Some cool kid was playing *All the World's a Stage*, a live album by Rush released soon after *2112*. Of course, the record store didn't have that album when I finally convinced my mom to drive me there, so I settled for the one with the cool, ominous red star, the only Rush album in stock. There were very few choices in the days of bricks and mortar—no “long tail” of the Internet that gave people the freedom to buy the music they wanted, when they wanted—and vinyl shelf space that should have held my much-wanted record instead offered up Andy Gibb, Barbra Streisand, and Captain & Tennille. I don't honestly remember, but I have little doubt that there were stacks and stacks of *Star Wars and Other Galactic Funk* by Meco.

*All the World's a Stage* by Rush? It didn't fit the plan.

It was as if these faceless record executives entrenched in the Music Industrial Complex were goading me to revolution. Why did music have to suck so bad? Why did everything have to sound the same?

As it turns out, I was hardly alone in feeling this way. In the mid-1970s, several years before I would discover *2112*, the members of Rush were battling their own record label for control of the artistic direction. What kind of music would the band make? Would anyone buy it? The band wanted to pursue its own creative path, even if it didn't fit with someone else's conception of “good” music. Mercury Records wanted something more “commercial.” They wanted Rush to sell more records, anything else. “There was a great deal of pressure on the band at that time,” says Alex Lifeson, the band's guitarist.

If you follow any genre of music, how it evolves and mutates, you have already heard this story a thousand times. It is the clash between tradition and innovation, and the creative destruction that drives individuals to challenge the status quo. Record-label executives always get squirrely when some difficult-to-manage artist creates new music that deviates from the norm. Even Miles Davis, the great jazz trumpet innovator of the 1950s, eventually would disavow the new creative directions he and his most important collaborator, saxophonist John Coltrane, took jazz in the 1960s. Perhaps challenged by his protégé, Davis himself redefined the genre again in the late 1960s, after Coltrane had passed at a tragically young age. Jazz critics would later attack Davis for his groundbreaking masterpiece *Bitches Brew*, released in 1970, as “commercial crap that was beginning to choke and bastardize” jazz standards.<sup>1</sup>

The inherent discomfort the established conventional wisdom has with musical innovation is captured perfectly, and hysterically, in the 1984 movie *Amadeus*, when Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II tells a young Mozart that the “Non più andrai” march from his 1786 opera *The Marriage of Figaro* has “too many notes.”

“Cut a few,” Joseph advises, “and it will be perfect.”

Incredulous, Mozart asks: “Which few did you have in mind, Majesty?”

Too far. Too individualistic. Too extreme. Too many notes. You just know it's going to happen, the labels and the name-calling, the defensiveness, when the protectors of the status quo feel threatened by change and principled disruption.

When it comes to innovation, sometimes the customer is always right. But other times an innovator shakes up market perceptions and upsells buyers on a better product—a new idea that you didn't even know you needed until someone else figured it out for you. This process of creative disruption—standing on the shoulders of your intellectual forefathers all the while challenging them and their best work—seems to be where the good stuff in life comes from. And it can only happen if people are free

Free to succeed. Free to fail. Free to speak their minds and disagree with the experts. Free to choose. Think about the horseless carriage, handheld computers, or the MP3 files on your iPod that replaced CDs, that replaced cassettes and eight-track tapes, and yes, that even replaced vinyl.

This disruption seems particularly true in music. Music and freedom just seem to go together, just like the word “bacon” belongs in any sentence that includes the phrase “proper meal.” I can’t prove it, but you just know that it’s true.

Back in 1977, such profound insights eluded me. I was still wearing black concert tees and wondering who the heck Ayn Rand was, when I stumbled upon a used copy of her novella *Anthem* at a neighborhood garage sale. I took it home and read it without putting it down once. What an awesome book it was, about a dystopian society where the word “I” had been erased by an oppressive, collective “We.”

*It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down upon a paper no others are to see. It is base and evil. It is as if we were speaking alone to no ears but our own. And we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone. . . .*

*Our name is Equality 7-2521, as it is written on the iron bracelet which all men wear on their left wrists with their names upon it. We are twenty-one years old. We are six feet tall, and this is a burden, for there are not many men who are six feet tall. Ever have the Teachers and the Leaders pointed to us and frowned and said: “There is evil in your bones, Equality 7-2521, for your body has grown beyond the bodies of your brothers.” But we cannot change our bones nor our body.*

*We were born with a curse. It has always driven us to thoughts which are forbidden. It has always given us wishes which men may not wish.*

Despite insurmountable odds, the good guys, the “cursed” ones, the ones who begin to start the sentences with the word “I,” persevere. I connected with the struggle to be free—different, independent, responsible for my own successes and failures.

I immediately set out to find *The Fountainhead*, which was listed in the front pages of my date dog-eared paperback copy of *Anthem* as one of the “other novels” by Rand. No mention of *Atlas Shrugged*, which hadn’t even been conceived of when my now-cherished copy of *Anthem* went to press. Imagine how long it took me to find a copy of *The Fountainhead*. Back in the day, you couldn’t just log into your account on Amazon.com and find it, or the multitude of other books related to it. I looked in any bookstore, at every opportunity. It was difficult to find. But I was obsessed.

Neil Peart, the drummer and lyricist for Rush, was also obsessed with Ayn Rand at the time of his band’s career-defining struggle with their record label. He started off reading *The Fountainhead* because “all the smart kids used to carry that around” in high school.<sup>2</sup> Peart “introduced her writing to us,” says lead singer and bass guitarist Geddy Lee. “We all liked the book *Anthem*, which is the thing that kind of inspired 2112.”

The band had toured relentlessly in support of their last album, *Caress of Steel*, but the record had been trashed by music critics (a trend that would go on for decades).

Without the music industry press on Rush’s side, album sales were disappointing. For the next album, company headquarters wanted something conventional, something that would sell. “I felt this great sense of injustice that this mass was coming down on us and telling us to compromise, and compromise was the word I couldn’t deal with,” recalls Peart. “I grew up a child of the 60s and I was a strong individualist and believed in the sanctity of: ‘you should be able to do what you want to do, you

know, without hurting anyone.’ ” Artistic integrity, for Peart and his bandmates, had crashed headlong into the expediency of the moment.

Instead of following the rules, instead of recording an album that conformed to the expected, Rush made *2112*. At a time when successful pop songs ran about three minutes long, a twenty-minute song cycle about totalitarian oppression on a far-away planet was hardly what that sales team at Mercury Records had in mind. “We got angry and thought, okay, if this is our last shot we are going to give everything and we’re gonna do it our way,” recalls Peart. So Rush did it their way, giving it everything they had in them.

After discovering *Anthem* and *The Fountainhead*, by the time I turned fifteen I had read all of Ayn Rand’s fiction and many of her nonfiction works, such as her anthology, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, in which she recommends the works of the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises.<sup>3</sup> I somehow found a copy of *Human Action*, Mises’s comprehensive treatise on economics, and began to read it. I didn’t really know what I was doing, and maybe I understood a fraction of what I was reading, but I don’t ever try to tell a teenager what he can’t do. I was, after all, obsessed.

As you might imagine, wearing black AC/DC concert tees, listening to Rush and Led Zeppelin and the Stones, and quoting Ayn Rand and Ludwig von Mises to anyone who would listen turned out to be the worst possible strategy for meeting girls in high school. Thanks to the stagflation of the Carter presidency and the minimum wage, I could not find a job in Grove City, Pennsylvania, when I turned sixteen. My schedule was clear! My lack of social skills, a job—and dates—provided plenty of time to read things normal kids don’t.

I graduated from high school not knowing what I wanted to do. I wasn’t particularly interested in going to college, but at my father’s insistence I applied to a number of schools. Sumner Kibbe was obsessed—obsessiveness being an apparently hereditary trait—and I didn’t typically get away with saying “no.” I ultimately chose Grove City College for one simple reason: It was the cheapest. I was able to pay my tuition by clearing trees and washing dishes for the college (students were exempt from the minimum wage that had been such a barrier to my earlier entry into the workforce). I set out as a biology major, but I was bored with it. I was barely scraping by with my classwork. I was not reading Adam Smith and other “classical liberal” philosophers that I had discovered reading Mises, and that was far more interesting. I never imagined that I could pursue a degree (let alone a career) consistent with the ideas I was learning about outside the classroom. I just didn’t know there were others who thought like I did, had read what I was reading.

It seems so ridiculous to admit today, but as an incoming freshman at Grove City College, I was utterly unaware of the fact that the head of the economics department, Dr. Hans Sennholz, was one of a handful of economists who had earned his Ph.D. from Ludwig von Mises. *Human Action* was the required text for Econ 301. I walked past that department every day on my way to the science classes I was not really interested in, but I just didn’t know. Talk about a “knowledge problem.”

I didn’t figure any of this out until a late-night argument with a friend, Peter Boettke.<sup>4</sup> We were in the same fraternity, and we were of course debating just how limited “limited government” should be. I know what you’re thinking. Nerd. Really big nerd. Wikipedia defines a nerd as “a person, typically a male, described as being overly intellectual, obsessive, or socially impaired. They may spend inordinate amounts of time on unpopular, obscure, or non-mainstream activities, which are generally either highly technical or relating to topics of fiction or fantasy, to the exclusion of more mainstream activities.” There were few girls at the ADEL house that night, but at least they were spared an intense discussion on the proper role of government in a constitutional republic. As our argument wound down, Pete suddenly stopped to ask me, “Why aren’t you an economics major?”

I didn't know.

~~It's remarkable how my life changed that night. I switched to economics and philosophy, and my grades immediately went from C's and D's to A's and B's. (My wife, Terry, whom I started dating around the same time, was given full credit for the miraculous turnaround in my academic performance by my parents. She was an engineer, like Pops, so she was "smart." She never disabused them of this belief. Like I said, she's a smart girl.)~~

My veil of ignorance was lifted, and I was quickly exposed to a body of ideas and community of people united by the values of individual freedom and the limitless potential of people when offered the chance to strive, seek, and achieve. It seemed like there were dozens, maybe hundreds of people who were thinking about liberty, individualism, and the power of ideas, just like me. Dr. Sennholz, who by that time had developed a close mentoring relationship with Dr. Ron Paul, a newish congressman representing the 14th District of Texas, also became my intellectual mentor. He introduced me to the Foundation for Economic Education, in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, and the Institute for Human Studies and eventually the Center for the Study of Market Processes, both at George Mason University.

I went to GMU for graduate studies in economics, again at Pete Boettke's urging. In 1984, Citizens for a Sound Economy was founded out of the Austrian economics program at George Mason, and Dr. Paul became the founding chairman. As a graduate student at Mason, I was loading trucks at UPS to pay the tab. I took a 50 percent pay cut to join CSE in 1986, but I was thrilled. I was going to get paid to fight for freedom. How cool was that?

I went on to other things, but came back to CSE in 1996. CSE became FreedomWorks on July 2, 2004. I became president of FreedomWorks that day.

Back in 1976, Neil Peart, the drummer and lyricist for Rush, was thinking about his future and pursuing his dreams. He penned the dystopian lyrics to "2112" thinking about *his* individual freedom. "I did not think of politics and I did not think of global oppression," he recalls. No, he was thinking about himself. "These people are messing with me!" He and the rest of the band found their inspiration in *Anthem*, the same novella that had turned me on.

"You can say what you want about Ayn Rand and all the other implications of her work, but her artistic manifesto, for lack of a better term, was the one that struck home with us," says Geddy Lee. "It's about creative freedom. It's about believing in yourself."

Fans agreed. Despite its not-ready-for-pop-radio format, *2112* reached number 61 on the *Billboard* pop album charts, the first time the band had cracked the Top 100. Which is the only reason I was able to find a copy in the record stacks among the multitudinous pressings of "Muskrat Love."

Creative freedom aside, the brief note inside the sleeve of *2112*, the one hat-tipping Ayn Rand, set the world of music experts—the critics—afire with ideological rage. H. L. Mencken once described a historian as "an unsuccessful novelist,"<sup>5</sup> referring to the propensity of some historians to make it up as they go along. Similarly, you might characterize music journalists as frustrated musicians that show their bitterness on youth. That was certainly the case with Barry Miles, a music critic writing for England's *New Music Express*, who had a philosophical ax to grind in his trashing of Rush that had nothing to do with the quality of the music they made.

It was right out of a scene in *The Fountainhead*, where self-styled architectural critic and committed hater of intellectual achievement Ellsworth Toohey decides to destroy the young architect Howard Roark with words. On page 7 of the March 4, 1978, issue of *NME*, the headline read "Everyone Feeling All RIGHT (Geddit?)" As someone who reads the music press, this ranks as one of the most hateful hit pieces on a band I have ever seen. The problem, it seems, was the source of the

band's ideas. Neil Peart is quoted, arguing that his band is "certainly devoted to individualism as the only concept that allows men to be happy, without somebody taking from somebody else."<sup>6</sup> The article gave short shrift to Rush's music. No, this was a hit piece and a clumsy vehicle for a hack journalist to express uninformed disdain for Neil Peart's developing libertarian ideology:

*So now I understood the freedom they are talking about. Freedom for employers and those with money to do what they like and freedom for the workers to quit (and starve) or not. Work makes free. Didn't I remember that idea from somewhere? "Work Makes Free." Oh yes, it was written over the main gateway to Auschwitz Concentration Camp.*

"You have to have principles that firmly apply to every situation," the story quotes Peart again, saying. "I think a country has to be run that way. That you have a guiding set of principles that are absolutely immutable—can never be changed by anything. That's the only way."

"Shades of the 1,000 Year Reich?" observes a very bitter Miles, darkly.

"This journalist," recalls guitarist Alex Lifeson, "wrote it up like we were Nazis, ultra-right-wing fanatics."

Really? Auschwitz? Shades of the Third Reich? Nobody likes being called a Nazi—except, I suppose, Nazis. For the rest of us, it is a conversation stopper, one of the deepest insults one can hurl like "racist." A "Nazi" is more than a "national socialist" or even a "fascist." No, a "Nazi" is a cold-blooded mass murderer.

Of course, "individualism" as described by Ayn Rand or Neil Peart or anyone else for that matter is the very antithesis of national socialism or any ideology that enables a government act of mass murder. I think the accusers who smear others with Nazism know that, and the real purpose is to stigmatize their philosophical enemies. Saul Alinsky, the radical community organizer from Chicago, said it best in *Rules for Radicals*.

Rule number 5: "Ridicule is man's most potent weapon."

Rule number 13: "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it."

Well, the *New Musical Express* certainly personalized it: Both of Geddy Lee's parents had been teenage prisoners held at Auschwitz. "I once asked my mother her first thoughts upon being liberated," Lee told a reporter for *JWeekly* in 2004. "She didn't believe [liberation] was possible. She didn't believe that if there was a society outside the camp how they could allow this to exist, so she believed society was done in."<sup>7</sup> The article goes on:

*In fact, when Manya Rubenstein looked out the window of a camp building she was working in on April 15, 1945, and saw guards with both arms raised, she thought they were doing a double salute just to be arrogant. She did not realize British forces had overrun the camp. She and her fellow prisoners, says Lee, "were so malnourished, their brains were not functioning, and they couldn't conceive they'd be liberated."*

*It is easy to see why Manya Rubenstein had given up on civilization. She and future husband Morris were still in their teens—and strangers to one another—when they were interned in a labor camp in their hometown of Staracohwice (also known as Starchvitzcha), Poland, in 1941. Prisoners there were forced to work in a lumber mill, stone quarry, and uniform and ammunition manufacturing plants.*

*From Staracohwice, about an hour south of Warsaw, Manya and Morris, along with many members of both their families, were sent to Auschwitz. Eventually Morris was shipped to Dachau*

in southern Germany, and Manya to Bergen-Belsen in northern Germany. Thirty-five thousand people died in Bergen-Belsen from starvation, disease, brutality and overwork, according to information from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Another 10,000 people, too ill and weak to save, died during the first month after liberation.

His parents' heroic struggle against Nazi genocide really defined Geddy Lee's upbringing in Toronto, and their experiences were discussed openly. "These were the things that happened to them during the most formative time in their lives," he says. "Some people go to horseback riding camps, my parents went to concentration camp."

Can you imagine his reaction to Barry Miles's ad hominem "Nazi" smears against the band in 1978? "Just so offensive," says Lee, in his typical, understated way.

Ayn Rand, like Geddy Lee, had firsthand knowledge of just how deep such smears can cut. Born Alissa Rosenbaum, Rand was growing up in St. Petersburg, Russia, when the communists took power in 1917. Her Jewish family "endured years of suffering and danger" after her father's small business was confiscated. She wanted to be a writer, but saw no hope for that under a new government regime where the freedom to express opinions, to question authority, to think for yourself, was prohibited. With the help of her family, she fled communist Russia for the United States, arriving when she was twenty-one years old.

"To free her writing from all traceable associations with her former life," observes Stephen Coates, "she invented for herself the name Ayn Rand and set out, like the hero of [*Anthem*], to make a new life for herself, in freedom."<sup>8</sup>

The critics never really warmed up to Rand's work, just like they never really warmed up to Rush's music. More than their art, I suspect it was their combative individualism that really irked the critics. As Gore Vidal noted in his contemptuous review of *Atlas Shrugged*, the book was "nearly perfect in its immorality." For Rand—as for Rush—there was a price to be paid for pursuing her chosen path in life. Challenging the status quo, and the freedom to do so, all came at a price. Freedom, for them, was not free. There was a downside, and it might have been easier to give in and comply with the expectations of others.

But the upside to freedom is so much better. Fans, customers hungry for something else, found Rush just like they found Rand.

The critics may have resented their work, but fans, customers hungry for something else, found them. It is said that *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand's magnum opus, is the second-most influential book in American history, a distant second to the Bible.<sup>9</sup> According to the Recording Industry Association of America, *2112* has sold more than 3 million copies since it was released, a triple-platinum record. Overall, Rush has sold some 40 million records, and the band ranks third, behind the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, for the most consecutive gold or platinum studio albums by a rock-and-roll band.

And it all started with *2112*. It started with a willingness to stand on principle when the easier path was compromise. It started, incidentally, "with an acknowledgement to the genius of Ayn Rand." The band took off, fueled by music fans looking for something different, something inspired by disruptive innovation and creative freedom.

My personal tastes in music, like the books I was reading, eventually branched out to many different genres. I got into the Grateful Dead. If you don't get the Dead, you likely never saw the band live. There was a profound sense of community between the players onstage and their audience. Jerry Garcia, the iconic lead guitarist for the Dead, often spoke of his musical influences, including jazz, bluegrass, and blues. As a player, Garcia was very immersed in American musical traditions, and his

opinions led me to Miles Davis and John Coltrane, and even bluegrass.

I particularly liked the spontaneous nature of the Dead's jams and the way Coltrane's quartet would explore the outer bounds of jazz structure. There were very few rules to guide, but plenty of room for individuality and exploration. The resulting interplay between musicians, sometimes leading, sometimes following, was a perfect metaphor for the peaceful cooperation of individuals working together towards a common goal greater than the sum of its parts. The music seemed analogous to the free association between individuals in a civil society, the interplay between institutional rules and creative disruption that Hayek and his protégés would dub the "spontaneous order." My music interests, in a sense, tracked my expanded understanding of the ideas of freedom.

I really didn't revisit my early obsession with Rush until 2010, when an insurgent Senate candidate named Rand Paul began playing the band's "Spirit of Radio" at campaign events. He's a big fan, turns out.

"I grew up in a libertarian family," the now well-known senator from Kentucky told me when I had a chance to sit down with him in 2013. "Ayn Rand was on a lot of different bookshelves. I read Ayn Rand when I was seventeen. I was probably a Rush fan before that, but I already knew of Ayn Rand. So to me the serendipity was that I actually liked this band that knew about Ayn Rand. I remember reading the lyrics to *2112* and then reading *Anthem* and saying this is basically *Anthem* in music."

As it turns out, the lawyer for Rush's record label is not, apparently, a big fan of Rand Paul. Robe Farmer, general counsel for the Anthem Entertainment Group Inc. in Toronto, issued the following statement in response to the candidate's musical choices at events: "The public performance of Rush music is not licensed for political purposes: any public venue which allows such use is in breach of its public performance license and also liable for copyright infringement."

The warning was issued after a reporter from *The Atlantic* pressed the issue.<sup>10</sup>

Okay, so maybe the band just doesn't like politics. Maybe they respect their fans enough not to choose sides. Maybe, as their song "Tom Sawyer" goes, "His mind is not for rent, to any god or government."

Or maybe it really sucks being called a Nazi. Maybe the hate cuts deep when it's so personal, so unfair, so offensive. Maybe they just want to do their work.

Ever since that ridiculous, slanderous, and, yes, hurtful article was published—just as their hard work as musicians was starting to pay off—it seems that the band members have had to answer the same question, over and over: "Are you guys really ultra-right-wing lunatics?"

In 2012, Neil Peart was giving a rare interview to *Rolling Stone* to talk about the band's new album *Clockwork Angels*. He's not a talker, and typically "doesn't like all of the hoopla." But he really wanted to talk about his latest work. Of course, the question came up again. Do you *really* like Ayn Rand?

He says:

*For me, it was an affirmation that it's all right to totally believe in something and live for it and not compromise. It was as simple as that. . . . Libertarianism as I understood it was very good and pure and we're all going to be successful and generous to the less fortunate and it was, to me, not dark or cynical. But then I soon saw, of course, the way that it gets twisted by the flaws of humanity. And that's when I evolve now into . . . a bleeding heart Libertarian. That'll do.<sup>11</sup>*

*That'll do. I'm a bleeding heart libertarian, OK? You can almost hear the resignation in his voice. Can we talk about my work now?*

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