

PART 11: VALUES

All of this part may be skipped at first reading. Please return to read it sometime. To give the values and view of Republicans and Democrats, we need background to values in general.

Values 1: The Holy State, Collective Punishment, and the Individual

The two ideas below: have roots in human nature, especially as human nature is played out in states; were important in the foundation of states, including states such as Israel that influenced states in the West; and persist in modern states in various forms. All big states have a version of the ideas including China and India. Even Marxist states have (had) these ideas. I believe these ideas have roots both in our evolved human nature, especially in how we act on morality, and in how states work. Americans use the ideas as tools in self-interest, party politics, and getting what they wish as clients. That abuse does not mean the ideas are not independent forces in their own right that do direct how Americans act. Americans could not use-and-abuse ideas if ideas were not already important in their own right anymore than Americans could use-and-abuse ideas of fairness, civil rights, and the free market if they were not already forces.

Idea 1, A: We want the person, family, community, our groups in the state, and the state as a whole, to be holy. Even diehard Liberals, atheists, and academic doubters want those entities to be holy in terms of how they see holy.

Idea 1, B: For the vast majority of people, to be holy means to be right with God or with whatever we see as "bigger than me". If we want the state etc. to be holy, we must do what God says about persons, etc. See idea 2 part A below.

Idea 1, C: A modern democracy cannot favor any religion over any other, and it cannot base itself on the ideas of any one particular current religious group. It can accept that a particular religion, or religions, did influence its basic ideas in the past.

Ideas 1A and 1B are at odds with 1C.

Ideas 1A and 1B, the yearning for a holy state and the need to be right with God to get the holy state, set the stage for idea 2.

Idea 2, A: America inherited a common idea about God and the collective state. God is the patron of the state as a collective entity. Success and prosperity are signs of God's favor. Failure and poverty are signs of God's disfavor. We want God's favor. We want to be right with God.

God's immediate tools are the king, aristocracy, and priests. They should run the state as God wants it run, including, sometimes, taking from other, dominating others, and war.

The main point for Idea 2: God favors and punishes both individually and collectively. Traditionally in the religions that were used to found states, such as Judaism and Confucianism, collective punishment and reward is more important than for individuals. To be right with God and to do well, as individual people but more especially as a state, we have to expect collective punishment and reward, and have to be ready to mete out collective punishment and reward.

What matters is not moral right and moral wrong but God's wishes, God's Will. We hope God's wishes and morality coincide, or do not contradict, but, even if they do go along, that is not enough. What we worry about here is not morality but God's Will. God might wish something that is neither morally right nor wrong itself but we have to pay attention to what he wishes anyway, such as to respect the Sabbath, not eat pork, or participate in the Eucharist (Holy Communion). God's Will is like The Law in Jewish and Muslim religions and life.

When particular individuals in a family do something wrong, God punishes the whole family. When individuals do something right, the whole family gets rewarded. When enough individuals or families do something wrong, God punishes the whole state – sometimes it takes only one wrong individual to bring disaster. When enough individuals or families do things right, God rewards the whole nation. When leaders do something wrong, God gets angry at the whole nation. When leaders do what God wishes, God rewards the whole nation. If leaders or the people even tolerate some group within the state doing what God does not wish, such as worshipping idols, God punishes the whole nation. The leaders and the people must control the acts of nearly all the people, families, and groups in the nation. If the nation is suffering hard times, it is a sign of bad behavior by individuals, families, groups, or leaders. If the nation is prosperous and happy, it is only through God's grace and favor, and is a sign that individuals, families, groups, and leaders are following God's Will. The way to keep God's favor, and to win it back if it seems lost, is do what God says. We can find what God wishes from priests and old holy writings as interpreted by priests and Churches. According to some Conservatives and Republicans, states have fallen from doing as God says and so states have typical modern problems. The way to solve problems is to do what God says, as told us by self-appointed vicars of God, who wrongly call themselves Conservatives.

This idea of the collectivity is something like the image that Americans had of communist states in the Cold War and how Americans see cults. The original Star Trek TV show made fun of this idea in several episodes, of which one had "Landru" the computer running the collective.

This whole idea is wrong regardless of how natural or common, or how deeply rooted in a religion that you follow. I don't explain why.

Idea 2, B: Although the idea of collective punishment prevails in both Testaments and in the Koran, the book of Ezekiel specifically repudiates the idea of collective punishment (and, by implication, reward).

Only an individual can be punished for his-her crimes. Innocent family members cannot be punished. It is not clear to me but it seems the nation as a whole cannot be punished except in the case where a leader or where many of the people break a specifically religious commandment such as to honor the Sabbath. To punish innocent individuals is itself a crime that angers God (and, somewhat paradoxically, might lead God to punish the whole nation). I believe the passages in Ezekiel are important in Western ideas of person, society, law, and state. Sadly, modern religious zealots, and people who inherited the idea of God acting on the whole, overlook these passages from Ezekiel and their importance. As I see Isaiah, passages in Isaiah also condemn collective punishment. As I see Jesus, he too would have denied simple collective punishment and would have stressed individual relations with God within the context of Jewish (Hebrew, Northern Israelite) institutions. I do not know what effect denying the validity of collective punishment has on ideas of Israel's (Jewish) relations to God by individuals, families, groups, congregations, a people, or a modern state.

A and B are at odds.

America inherited old strong ideas about God and the collectivity yet Americans also stress individual people. Individuals should be the source of action and the focus of law. Good things come of freedom for individuals. One way that America goes forward is to constantly reinterpret this contradiction to get the best of both individual and collective, and to feel graceful about making the two work together. To do that, we need good ideas based on a fairly realistic appraisal. Since the 1970s, neither Republicans nor Democrats have been able to make the two go together or to make us feel graceful about where we stand. As a result, we get anxious and do bad things.

The modern political versions of a holy state, and of collective punishment, reward, and grace are acted out through policies and their effects. Call all policies, programs, and institutions "policies". Failure is a sign of bad policies. Success is a sign of good policies. Policies are the instruments of God. We get policies from old holy texts such as the Bible, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and the sayings of Ronald Reagan, as interpreted by the correct Churches and priests, usually speech writers for politicians, lawyers, and TV pundits. We get policies from inspiration for our thinkers and leaders, who, hopefully, have read the old holy texts and have tried to contact the source of inspiration, that is, usually God. Policies are like big points of the Jewish and Muslim Law. Policies are both how we know God's Will these days and how we put it into practice. Adept good politicians are like Minor Prophets, the dream job of TV pundits.

Of course, each political Party, like each Church, claims to be the one-and-only direct pipeline to Grace and correct policies. "If a state is having trouble, it must adopt our policies. People can think up better policies often by going back to basic principles such as found in our basic writings and there alone." It would seem silly if a political Party said this outright because this claim is reserved for Churches (non-Christian Churches included) but Parties imply it and they have ways to say it indirectly.

Both Democrats and Republicans have to deal with the dilemmas that (1) they want a holy state but a modern democracy cannot be based on any specific religion and that (2) a holy state usually involves collective reward and punishment deep in its identity.

Republicans and Democrats differ somewhat because Republicans are alright with open claims about pipelines to God while Democrats are supposed to do all their business without reference to God or anything equivalent yet they have to reference something bigger that can bestow Grace and Inspiration. In their hearts, Democrats want policies based on holiness. They think success comes from holiness via good policies. Adept politicians do not make good policies; adept and good politicians inspired by holiness make good policies. Without the inspiration of holiness, normal people could not come up with solutions needed to solve problems such as the world economy, dying world ecology, and what to do with LGBTQ people. Many Liberals and many Democrats pray for America just like Conservatives and Republicans, or, as a Liberal, I do. Democrats think a failing state is not only a sign of greedy selfish short-sighted cruel Republican policies but the result of falling away from good human nature as God evolved it and falling away from holy policies as taught by Jesus and other great religions leaders. Usually Democrats cannot say any of this publicly.

We get bad results when we repress (1) the secret desire for a holy state, combined with the fact that the values for democracy came out of Christianity and Western political culture, and (2) repress conflict between collectivity versus individual. The bad results affect Republicans, Democrats, and their children although Republicans are more likely to point them out for Democrats:

(1) It is a self-contradiction. You can't be honest about what your values are. You can't be honest about where your values came from or why you hold those values. Contradictions hurt. They make people feel bad and make people do bad things. They cause people to take out bad feelings on neighbors.

(2) People seek sets of values that they can hang on to and that might remotely help give some security and help explain (rationalize and enable) how they wish to act. People cover up their contradiction and pain as best they can. People pick an issue to crusade about so as to feel better. People become overly active politically. People join cults. People study Eastern religions but do not really understand them.

(3) People react against the apparent public values and the religion from which the values came. In this case, people react against formal Christianity, against White male European culture, and against some really good values.

Accepting the idea of a holy state, and even accepting its roots in one particular religion such as Western European Protestant Christianity, does not resolve the issue between collectivity and individual. In fact, it often makes the issue worse because the idea of collective punishment then has force. If you believe God watches over America, then you have to accept collective punishment and reward, yet few Americans would accept those, at least in public.

When business people took over from aristocrats and became the base of new Republicans, they took over the ideas old Liberal economists, from Adam Smith. This economic dogma became part of the new dogma of the new aristocracy. It became new Republican dogma that free enterprise leads to the best outcome. Autonomous individuals acting without regard to morality lead to the best for all. This view is

like denying the idea of collective punishment. The state should do as little as possible. People should not act through the state if they can help it but should act on their own as much as they can. People should not seek redress of grievances through the state if they can help it but should act on their own as much as they can. People should have full freedom of choice. The market should be fair so that it can be free and so lead to the best outcome. God does not collectively punish or reward the state but does so through free individuals and the free market.

Yet Republicans also act like “Mercantilists”, much as the old aristocrats had done. They retain the idea of collective punishment and reward, and retain the aristocratic view that they are the only authority that can speak for God. They use the state as a tool of their interests. Because their interests represent God’s interests, they use the state to make sure we do what God wishes as represented in the interests of Republicans. They want the state to intervene to help business. They want the state not to help workers, small farmers, small business, ethnic groups other than their own ethnic group, or any group that they don’t like and so is not Godly enough. In addition, they want the state to hurt the groups; the state can use the idea of collective punishment as tacit justification for hurting them. They want to limit true freedom of choice even as they appear to promote freedom of choice. They want the state to help limit choice. They want the state to not make the market more free but to help business often by making the market less free. They want the state to act as the collective instrument of God as they see the Will of God.

This is a contradiction in values. It leads to all the problems given above. Republicans blame Liberal ideas for mental problems, sin, chaos, and breakdown of society, but Republicans suffer from similar contradictions that lead to the same problems.

“If a few Blacks are wrong, then all Blacks are wrong, and we have to scourge them all to keep a Godly happy America. If a few Whites are wrong, then all Whites are wrong, and we have to chastise them all so God will reward Black people with our rightful prosperity. If one woman gets uppity, then all women will catch the fever, and the country will go to hell; stop Hilary now. If we let one endangered species die out, then all species will soon die out and the Earth will be only a stinking ash heap. For the state to allow even one abortion is to commit mass murder by the billions; and God already has punished us with all our troubles. If we let some damn philanderer lead the nation, then that shows how far we have not come yet, and we can’t wonder that all men get it in their heads that abusing women is a fun part of the game.”

I see little chance that Republicans or Democrats will be honest about these issues let alone come up with good ideas that allow thoughtful reasonable sane people to think along with Republicans and Democrats and that allow us to act on the basis of their good ideas. Work on it yourself.

Values 2: The Common People Go Along

Likely since the beginning of class society at least 6000 years ago, class relations have favored the upper classes more than the lower classes, and often class relations benefit upper classes even when lower

classes suffer. Why do lower classes go along and why do lower classes so often identify with the upper classes? Why do the poor go along with the rich and love the rich? Which reason is strongest depends on the culture, society, and situation. The reasons are both different and similar in England, America, Germany, Japan, China, and Thailand. The reasons are similar and different for England in 100 CE (AD), 300, 1100, 1650, and 2018. The reasons are similar and different for farmers, rural dwellers who do not farm, urban workers, urban small business people, and the upper middle class. I do not give a general theory of why the poor go along with the rich and love the rich.

We can gain intuitive insight by thinking about why ordinary people still follow the English Royal Family or, in Thailand, follow the Thai Royal Family and the English Royal Family. Americans have never had royalty yet they follow the English Royal Family. We can get insight by thinking why lots of people of all levels follow movie stars and singing stars. I leave you to glean these particular insights. Maybe they are the charismatic (inspired, holy) leaders that give the nation Grace.

The upper classes use the fact that the lower classes follow them to advance the agenda of the upper classes. The upper classes use the devotion of the lower classes to keep the lower classes down and to take much from them. Liberals often cite this fact. It can cause a lot of trouble. I believe it has caused much trouble in America since President Reagan and will continue to do so.

The upper class use of lower class devotion is not always as bad as it seems. Sometimes the agenda of the nation as a whole overlaps the agenda of the rich and powerful. Sometimes the rich and powerful can seek the good of the nation even when it does not coincide exactly with their own, as happened in America in the 1950s and 1960s.

Because the lower class and middle class are devoted to the upper class and look to the upper class for leadership, when the upper class does not provide adequate leadership then the upper class effectively betrays the lower class, middle class, and the nation. Especially when the upper class puts its own class interests ahead of the nation as a whole, then it betrays the nation. We can understand when a smaller less powerful group puts itself ahead of the nation because we don't expect that group to do better and we don't look to that group for leadership. When the upper class does it, as they have since in America since Reagan and in England since well before Thatcher, then we should feel betrayed. The fact that the middle class and lower class do not feel betrayed by the upper class but instead blame others despite vesting leadership in the upper class is an amazing fact that is outside the scope of this essay.

Before the 1970s in the United States, the not-upper-classes did not usually take their cues from the rich and powerful and the not-upper-classes had distinct clear agendas of their own to pursue despite what the rich and powerful wished. Beginning in the 1970s, many working class and middle class Americans began to accept what the rich and powerful told them about what was good for the nation, and began to accept reworked Conservative ideas as a rationale for following the rich and powerful. The rich and powerful used reworked Conservative ideas as a rationale for why the not-upper-classes should follow them, and used altered ideas from economics; and the not-upper-classes "bought it". I think the people who bought the new line did so not mostly because they were dupes but because they sensed it was to

their advantage at the time and in the short run. I suspect they regret it now with stagnation of income and a growing class separation of classes. Much of the shift toward use of Conservative ideology to uphold upper class leadership and power was along ethnic and political lines so that non-Black (White and Asian) groups tended to buy the leadership of the rich and powerful while Blacks and old Liberals did not. If it helps ease the Conservatives conscience: rich people, Whites, and Asians, the Blacks and old Liberals were not more rational, insightful, and sensible than the rich and powerful. I go into this shift a bit more later but it is appropriate to mention it here.

Values 3: Conservatives Accuse Liberals of a Bad Thing

Conservatives (including Republicans) assert that, whenever Liberals (including Democrats) call into question institutions, and especially deep institutions such as the law, we do not get a beneficial rethinking of society but instead we get chaos that quickly turns to evil. Trying to make sense in the Liberal way is a guarantee of nonsense, chaos, and pain. It is one thing for a few elite silly academics to assert the Death of God or assert that the American Constitution is nothing but a ploy for the rich to maintain control. It is another thing if those kinds of ideas spread generally. When normal people are not guided by tradition and stable ideas, crazy ideas run wild, and people believe them. Then people act on them and usually act badly. Even when normal people don't believe explicit versions of the ideas, such as that there is no person and there is no causality, they believe crazy versions of the ideas passed to them by third-rate thinkers such as there is no real morality and no real responsibility, all morality is relative, you are responsible only to your limited self, and you can have a full relation with God without also belonging to His Church. Then people do not support the minimum necessary for order. People grab for whatever power and stability they can get however they can get it. When, in his novel "That Hideous Truth", C.S. Lewis wished to give insight as to why the leader of an evil demonic corporation in England had become evil, he wrote about how, in his youth, the man had read the English philosopher David Hume who was a strong skeptic and an atheist-agnostic.

Is this charge true? Does Liberal questioning inevitably lead to bad dangerous ideas and social chaos?

Some change in ideas is needed for a change in economics, politics, and society. We would not have the benefits of capitalism and democracy without Liberal ideas. How much change in ideas is needed and how much is irresponsible and dangerous?

Whenever technology and economics change, we also have changes in society, politics, and ideas. The rise of the World Wide Web (Internet) and the wide adoption of cell phones changed the attitudes that people have about jobs, security, clothing, relationship, friendships, and gayness. Do such changes lead inevitably to uncertainty, plethora of crazy ideas, and bad chaos? Do the changes combine with Liberal undermining of society to produce the bad ideas and chaos that Conservatives say Liberals promote? If the changes tend to chaos but don't have to go to chaos, how do we control changes so they are mostly beneficial and don't lead to bad poisonous ideas?

I don't have a general answer and I don't think anybody does.

Yes, deep questions by elite thinkers can filter down and can undermine average thought and long time institutions. But the direct work of deep thinkers by itself does not usually have that bad effect. Deep questions and slightly wacky answers have been around a long time. Deep questions only undermine seriously when individuals and society are vulnerable for other reasons. The economic and political changes since the 1750s have made some of that vulnerability but I don't think they are mostly to blame for American confusion in 2018. Rather, America has opened itself to stupid crazy bad dangerous ideas because we have refused to face deep problems and deal with them rationally. We have not done our job as citizens and our leaders have not done their jobs in explaining and offering plausible solutions.

I was part of the cultural changes of the 1960s, and we did not foresee that our ideas would be abused and misconstrued by people in general and would have such bad effects. I also saw the Conservative backlash of the late 1970s and 1980s, and I don't think Conservatives then anticipated that their ideas would be so twisted and lead to such badness as the never-ending Culture Wars and election of totally blind partisan politicians.

Pure abstract ideas can have unforeseen bad effects. But we have to endure those ideas anyway.

Once upon a time, the idea of one ethical God was a deep disturbing idea and a revolution. Yet in the long run, it did tremendous good. Once upon a time, the idea that God came to Earth as a human, was murdered by civil and religious authorities, and came alive again, was a deep disturbing idea and a revolution. Yet in the long run, it did tremendous good, even if it is not all literally true and even if it is all literally true.

We would be able to endure deep disturbing revolutionary ideas much better if society-and-economy was in other regards fairly sound. The speculative ideas of the 1960s caused damage not because of the ideas themselves but because America had some real problems and would not face those problems and deal with them. The ideas of Conservatives in the 1980s led to such bad politics in the 2000s and 2010s because America still had the problems and still would not face them and deal with them. Average citizens need to make sure they have a handle on what is most likely true and understand the best ways to act given what is most likely true. This is hard but doable.

When the average citizen does not understand the basic issues and is not sure what to do, that is when not only elitist philosophers question deep things but when second and third rate thinkers promote their versions and when third and fourth rate thinkers push crazy ideas to fool people. The problem can be in the deep questions but mostly the problem is that individuals and institutions don't have enough prior defense against craziness. Hopefully this essay and my other work helps. Here is not the place to offer more suggestions as to how people can prepare themselves.

By my definition above, Liberals assert the right to question all institutions and authority, and to ask that institutions and authority make sense. For reasons I don't go into here, asking institutions and authority to make sense leads to deep questions and deep speculations that can be abused. Also, Liberals assert

the right to ask as individuals. Each Liberal is an individual focus of questioning. Also for reasons that I don't go into here, when individuals set themselves up as ultimate authority, and they ask that others make sense according to the standard of me, that too tends to lead to the deep questions and deep speculations that can be abused.

So, does Liberalism necessarily lead to dangerous and bad ideas and lead to social chaos? It can add to the potential. But, by itself, and even mixed with other pre-conditions, it does not necessarily lead to the rise and spread of bad dangerous ideas. I can only repeat what I said above. Bad and dangerous ideas only spread if they arise as part of other conditions such as that we have serious deep problems that we won't face.

I mentioned above that Liberalism tends to go with modern capitalism and with economic individualism. Does this blend lead to bad ideas and social chaos? It adds more to the potential even above what is given by Liberalism by itself or by capitalism and economic individualism themselves (see below). But, again, it does not necessarily lead to the rise and spread of bad dangerous ideas unless it comes along with other deep problems that we won't face and deal with.

Conservatives blame Liberalism, capitalism, and economic individualism for the many bad ideas and bad social movements that we have had since 1750. Any set of ideas can be perverted if the conditions are right, and that has happened with Liberalism, capitalism, and economic individualism but they alone are not responsible for all the crazy silly bad and dangerous ideas and movements.

It is not clear if Liberalism and the economic individualism that go with capitalism lead to bad dangerous ideas more than other philosophic systems such as Platonism or Thomism. Different idea systems lead each to its own style of bad dangerous ideas. How much damage the ideas of a particular system cause depends on other conditions. Liberalism likely causes more damage under American capitalism than do Platonism or Thomism but not as much as Hegelianism or glamour worship. Liberalism likely would cause little damage in a good fair capitalist system. Here is not the place to consider which idea systems are dangerous or helpful under which conditions and why.

Note 1: Not all capitalism entails American style economic individualism, and strategic individualism can go with economic or social systems other than American capitalism. Fascism in its Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, or Chinese forms is a kind of capitalism but does not see individuals as does American Liberalism that is tied to American capitalism. Russian and Chinese totalitarianism, and especially the bureaucracies and police, foster vicious strategic individualism and gang mentality but it is not the kind of individualism we see associated with American capitalism.

Why do Conservatives say bad Liberal ideas are the primary reason for lack of self control, selfishness, the breakdown of society, godliness, immorality, and general unhappiness? Why don't Conservatives take into account the other forces, the fact that Liberal ideas only lead to badness in the right context? Saying this is one way to avoid looking at real causes. This view gives plausibility to Conservative blends of practicality (economic rationality, cost effective assessment, means only rationality), morality, and

religion while allowing people to overlook that the Conservative blend of these ways of thinking leads to as much confusion and badness as Liberal ideas. Saying this allows Conservatives to focus on issues that supposedly result directly from bad Liberal ideas such as abortion and emancipated women. It is one way to enable Conservative blindness. People fool themselves to feel better, especially when they wish to attack others. People fool themselves so as to better fool others into going along.

Values 4: Morality (Ends) versus Efficiency (Means), Yet Again

This section restates in another arena the problems with goals, morals, means, efficient effective means, and passion. It restates the conflict between morality and efficiency, between ends and means.

The issues below are more urgent in modern plural democracy, especially given that the values behind modern democracies came out of Western Christianity, Greek and Roman political thought, and English culture, did not arise in any other way, but can be adapted and adopted by any culture or society with the proper preparation. I cannot take the space to go into that topic.

Liberals want institutions and programs to make sense. Make sense in what terms? What are the deep values and principles by which you measure how things make sense? Fairness is one such value. Where did all the values come from? Which values are deeper than others? How much can Liberals disagree on deep values and principles and still agree that an institution or policy makes sense or does not make sense? What happens when values conflict such as the need for fairness versus need for competition? Liberals have done an amazingly poor job since World War 2 of giving their basic values and explaining how to resolve contradictions. Hopefully the rest of my work gives my values and how I would apply them in the modern world.

Conservatives are more interesting at this level. In addition to the problem faced by Liberals about the deepest values and principles, by the definition of the word "conservative", Conservatives have to decide what they wish to conserve, what they will give up, and in what order. And they have to say why. They have to decide what is deepest, what levels of depth are, and what resides in each level. They have to decide what to do in case of conflicts. And you must decide why.

What is more important, God or wealth? You really can't have both. What is more important, justice or keeping your group of righteous people on top? Read Isaiah and Jeremiah on the importance of justice and social justice. Is religious freedom more important than economic development or does economic development win, as in China? How important is it that children learn a particular religion when they go to school? Would you still feel that way if all the children had to learn Islam or Roman Catholicism? Is security more important than freedom? Is limiting marriage to one-man-one-woman more important than allowing divorce and more important than allowing gay marriage? Is enforcing contracts a more important and deeper role for government than making sure business firms don't sell poison candy? Is it more important to integrate all schools or to have at least some schools where middle class children can get a good quality education that adequately prepares them for jobs? Why?

Your really can't say "just because". You have to explain. You don't have to explain in the same way that a Liberal wants it all to make sense but you have to have some believable reasons.

Is it more important to "sir" and "ma'am" or to feel true respect for parents, teachers, and elders?

More than Liberals, Conservatives have done a miserable job of saying what they want to conserve, what they will change, and why. If you really want to annoy a modern self-styled Conservative, ask him-her to state clear what he-she wishes to conserve and why.

Values 5: Liberal Ideas that Might Have Gone Too Far.

Originally I did have a section here on Liberal ideas but have removed it because it grew too large. I will put it on the Internet as a separate essay. I gave a few examples above.