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Liberty and the Place of Man in Nature*

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From the very beginning of humanity, it has been human nature to strive to create more favorable environments in which to live. It is in our nature, then, to live in artificial environments. Over the millennia, we have come to see that the best environment for humans is the environment of liberty. This is the environment that allows and encourages us to live best according to our nature. One achievement of the environment of liberty has been the production of sufficient prosperity that many people can now afford to purchase high quality environmental amenities. Our interest in such amenities, however, should not and need not be purchased at the expense of liberty.

Introduction

This essay concerns two major questions: What is the nature of human liberty and what problems or puzzles does the search for a quality environment pose for liberal thinking? Another way to state this problem would be: Can we live as free persons while preserving an environment that expands the benefits of civilization and sustains many high-quality environmental amenities? Another title for this article could be, "How to Think about Environment."[1]

Over the years I have spent a great deal of time hiking and climbing in the American West. I like the wilds. I am a competent foot traveler through our desert and mountain and forest wilderness. I have spent many hundreds of nights out of doors. I know on sight the common plants and animals in the countrysides I frequent. I aspire to spend more time wandering in the world of nature, but I am not really at home there. Home is the settled world of family, friends, and profession. So while I am a friend of the earth, I desire to live as a civilized, that is a citified, man. It is in our nature as humans to create artificial environments, ones we modify or manufacture for our own purposes. Once we have discovered how to do this effectively, we humans rarely want to live anywhere else. Borrowing from Leon Kass' insight into the book of Genesis, I think it is possible to understand the human fall into sin as a partial estrangement from nature. That from our earliest days of self-consciousness this estrangement has been the nature of the human condition and a consequence of having "chosen enlightenment and freedom," of understanding "what it means to be a *rational* being."[2] So one aspect of thinking about environment is to consider what it means to be human, that is, how to think about what our

nature is, and what the best environment for that nature might be. I conclude that the best environment for humans is the environment for liberty. So I start with a brief discussion of liberty, which is then followed by a brief examination of some suggestions for how humans should relate to the natural world.

The Story of the Long, Slow Growth of Human Liberty

Relatively speaking, we humans have not been around for long. And by modern standards of health, well-being, and justice, for most of this time we have not done too well for ourselves. Thomas Hobbes' famous statement that the lives of men outside of political society were "solitary, poor, mean, nasty, brutish, and short," must have been mostly, though not completely, true. Biologically, the human species is characterized by a peculiar and highly successful breeding strategy, which combined with our ability to learn new behaviors quickly, allowed us to exploit many ecological niches and to expand over the face of the globe.[3] By the end of the Pleistocene Age, say 15,000 to 10,000 years before the present, this population expansion may have begun to exert severe pressure on the resource base of several tribes of hunter-gatherer peoples, leading perhaps to the extinction of many large mammalian species and creating an ecological crisis. Humans dealt with this crisis by inventing agriculture. Taming the wild seeds, domesticating animals through mutual cooperative ventures, settling down in villages—these techniques, inventions of the human mind, increased the available resource base, at a great expense of labor, which, in turn, enabled the human population to expand again.

At a few locations in the Middle East, China, and India from around 8000 to 5000 years ago (and again several thousand years later in Meso-America and West Africa), village agriculture became consolidated into city states and then eventually into empires. Throughout the great civilizations of early history, imperial rule became the strategy for ecological stability. Human population mostly lived in hierarchically arranged societies and labored in the service of a few overlords. Historian William H. McNeill correctly observes that population growth was kept at a very low level through the "macro parasitic exactions" of the tax gatherer, by wars of dynastic succession and imperial conflict, and by the micro parasitic diseases that found a home in the fetid streets of the imperial cities.[4] While the imperial coffers grew rich, little of what we would call economic growth occurred. The ruling classes raked off most of the surplus product and secular growth of real per capita income, as with population, was slow and hard won, experiencing numerous setbacks along the way. High culture belonged to the few and there was little of what McNeill called the

great society, that middling group of merchants, artisans, and skilled professionals that would later characterize the cities of early modern Europe.

Throughout the world before the "rise of the West," even before the Industrial Revolution, in what the British historian Peter Laslett called "The World We Have Lost,"[5] economic mobility was downward at all class levels. Whether prince or peasant, the best most fathers could hope for was to pass on the family estate to their eldest sons and to marry off their daughters to other men's eldest sons. For the other surviving children, life was likely to be worse off than that it was for the parents. Most people, regardless of gender, labored in the fields or at other agricultural tasks for much of the year. No doubt many people, perhaps most, expecting nothing more, learned to find some simple pleasure in the midst of hardship and suffering. Human life was not only impoverished, but the idea of personal liberty hardly existed. In this setting there was no choice of work or profession, little choice of spouse, not much of education to speak of (unless you were a priest of some sort), little contact with high culture, and certainly no religious liberty or freedom of speech. There was uncertain protection of person and property; and no idea of the "pursuit of happiness," of personal opportunity, or of general progress.

Fatalistic religions, with no place for secular progress or personal salvation, characterized these imperial systems. Priests often helped rulers maintain control over the masses through religious rituals that emphasized divinely decreed hierarchical orders, patriarchal, authoritarian rule, and elaborate social caste systems. On the edges of the Middle Eastern empires at three different historical junctures, and from differing perspectives,[6] however, religious and intellectual ideas emerged that included belief in a personal God, a place for the individual, and an understanding of the possibility of both faith and reason. These ideas, more than others, would indelibly affect the development of the Western and modern worlds.

It is instructive to consider just how different life is presently, in what we call the developed world, from the typical historical condition of mankind.[7] This difference is owing largely to the changes that occurred slowly in Western Europe throughout the Middle Ages, ironically in those areas once ruled by imperial Rome, that eventually made life much different for people everywhere.

With the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the greatest of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern imperial systems, a more competitive political and economic structure slowly developed upon the Roman ruins in the West. Hundreds of princes, Christian bishops, and burgomeisters in growing commercial towns competed, with lower rates of taxation and lessened exploitation, for the allegiances of the people. This competition allowed surplus wealth to

accumulate here and there rather than to be frittered away by taxes. Increased wealth provided the opportunity for a few daring thinkers and entrepreneurs to strike out on their own initiative. Within the interstices of the political competition, innovation, commerce, savings, and the development of personal liberties slowly grew. Wealth began to increase gradually, and after the Black Death of 1347 to 1350, which destroyed a full one-third of the European society, population began to grow again.

Arising out of this medieval complexity[8] were revolutionary developments in commerce, agriculture, industry, and political liberty. After Columbus's discoveries, these accomplishments led to the European expansion into the Americas and East Asia, which, in turn, produced what the ecologists call *positive feedback loops* leading to further increases in wealth, population, innovation, and change. Out of these changes the Industrial Revolution and the push for American Independence emerged in the eighteenth century, which in turn provided the basis for the subsequent westernization and Americanization of much of the rest of the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Gradual Emergence of the Ideal of Liberty

Increasing personal liberty led to increasing prosperity and to environmental improvements, as measured by the health and well being of ordinary persons. We are, however, a long way from creating a unified world civilization. As people throughout the world grow more aware of each other's cultures and ways of life, we may well hope that much of the rich variety of human existence can be retained as material conditions change. What seems clear, however, is that most people everywhere, if given the chance to do so, will seek to improve the material circumstances, broadly defined, in which they live their lives. One of the great intellectual achievements of our own day has been the discovery of how markets and human liberty can produce this desired prosperity, if government leaves us alone long enough for these institutions to do their work.

Along with these great changes came major intellectual achievements caused by another uniquely human characteristic, namely, our ability to self-reflect and to self-study. New accomplishments in science, technology, religion, scholarship, art, and commerce, were accompanied by reflections upon the meaning of these developments and of life itself. One of humanity's greatest discoveries came in the growing understanding of the nature of human freedom. Inherent in the Christian faith and in its Judaic roots was a concept of the importance of the individual, of the religious duty to strive toward perfection while living, meanwhile, with the knowledge that such perfection was not humanly possible, and of the importance of human stewardship of God's creation.

These ideas, taken in conjunction with the Judeo-Christian understanding of purpose in life and the sense of the movement of history through time, had been joined with the personal liberties of the medieval world in bringing about the momentous changes described above. But late in our history as a species we put together our belief in liberty and our ability to self-reflect in new and innovative ways. Society could now be analyzed. History could be mined for lessons. Progress could be measured and setbacks could be studied. The main line of argument went something like this: No longer did the old, stable imperial systems seem to be necessary. They certainly were not desirable. Government should be republican, taking its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of people at large (to paraphrase James Madison).[9] Owing to the imperfection of man, governors should be limited in their powers while governments, even popular governments, should be strictly limited in the scope of their activities. People should be left free to worship their God as they choose and to pursue their life projects, subject only to the limitation that they must not aggress against others, leaving their fellow citizens equally safe in their persons and property.

This ideal of liberty emerged in an evolutionary process, almost accidentally or inadvertently at times. There was nothing inevitable about it. Few people actually desired liberty at first. No prince desired it. But no one could completely stop the process either. This is a great story, which, if measured in terms of human life spans was a long, slow development, but if measured by geologic time came rapidly, in the mere blink of an eye.

From this long and complicated history emerged Thomas Jefferson's ideal of a "wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned."[10] This was the sort of government defended in the Declaration of Independence and institutionalized in the United States Constitution. The ecologist Paul Colinvaux made the same point when he wrote that over time we have come to know a good deal about the most desirable environment for human beings:

> I suggest that the work of philosophers for centuries has given us an understanding of what a desirable human niche must be. It was written down most clearly for us two hundred years ago in America by a group of literate men who thought profoundly about it, even as they fought for the right of their people to have it. We may say that a satisfying human niche is bounded by a set of unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.[11]

My argument is that the environment for liberty, hard won over the millennia, is the best environment for human beings. We are only semi-clever animals, with limited knowledge and a propensity to act on behalf of our own parochial interests. If we want to continue experiencing material abundance, a wide array of personal liberties, religious and artistic freedom, and the amenities of modern society, we must not use the power of the state to control society, to impose our values on our neighbors, or to direct vast projects for social and environmental improvement. If we insist on following this course of statism, we will then only use the state, as we have largely in the past, to oppress our fellow citizens while claiming that despite our imperfect knowledge, we are acting out of special insight into the nature of truth. If we adopt this course it will constitute a reversion to the ecological stability strategy of imperial rule that has prevailed through so much of our history.

We do need government to protect our lives and liberties from both foreign and domestic aggression. But one clear lesson of human history is that the state is an uncertain ally. Turning to the state for social reform is not a good ecological strategy, because it requires us to put all of our eggs in one basket. The state is dangerous, clumsy, inflexible, and prone to massive error and coercive uniformity. The state fails to take advantage of local and informal knowledge, penalizes innovation, concentrates power in the hands of a few, and sets neighbor against neighbor in an unending negative sum struggle for power and benefits. A minimal constitutional state is a necessary ecological strategy for protecting the best environment for humanity.[12]

The Environment for Liberty and Environmental Concerns

What, then, does this environment for liberty have to say about conventional environmental concerns such as the global climate, air and water quality, human health and safety, endangered species, and wild land and wildlife? Several broad points may be made.

First, only humans have developed a breeding strategy that has enabled population to increase over time. Next spring, all things being equal, there will be about as many robins and red-winged blackbirds as there were the year before. This is not necessarily the case with humans. Our creativity has allowed us to transform the face of the earth to suit our needs and interests. Unlike other creatures we can consciously aim to improve our environments, but this also means that we can improve as well as destroy the favored environments of other species as well. The story told in the opening chapters of Genesis reminds us that uncontrolled human ambition, as in the city of Babel, and throughout much of our history, can be horrendously destructive with-

out an understanding of the spiritual quality of life. We have been entrusted with great responsibility and if we fail to develop the institutions that guide us to be good stewards of the world, we will surely bring down upon us evils of biblical proportion.

Second, by all relevant measures (human longevity, health, infant mortality, literacy, personal opportunity, leisure time, availability of clean air and water, access to physical space, the relative prices of commodity resources) the environment for human beings in the rich, developed world (and in much of the less developed world as well) has shown marked improvement over the course of the last fifty years. Liberty has unlocked that *ultimate resource*, to use Julian Simon's well-known phrase, of the human mind and spirit to improve the quality of the environments in which we live. Because of the nature of this resource, while not all things are possible at once, neither are there necessary limits on continued human self-improvement.[13]

Increased freedom and material abundance has meant an increased ability to purchase other aspects of a high quality environment such as peaceful neighborhoods, increased living space, personal travel, high culture amenities, and recreational leisure. It has also meant an increase in natural amenities such as suburban lawns, cleaner air and water, public parks and wilderness areas, agricultural vistas, and projects for wildlife preservation. What threatens to inhibit the continued expansion of this quality of life is the pollution of the spirit and the landscape that comes with abject poverty. The only lasting cure for poverty is to reject socialism and statism and to embrace the institutions of liberty: market enterprise based on secure and transferable property rights, the rule of law, the cultivation of the institutions of civil society, and limited, decentralized government.

Third, thinking about the environment of liberty and thinking ecologically are closely related concepts. Friends of liberty should take questions of environmental quality more seriously. Discouraged by the extremism of much environmentalist rhetoric, we have failed to understand how liberty and environmental quality go together. Consider, for example, how much of the language of the ecologist resembles that of the classical liberal: the tragedy of the commons or the tendency to overuse commonly held resources and the Public Choice analysis of government failure; the wisdom of nature or the limited power of rationality because of the local and subjective aspects of knowledge; the understanding that small changes may have big effects and the impossibility of changing only one thing at a time because of the complicated and hidden linkage of events; the fact that the world is dynamic, changing, subject to novelty, and that for natural as well as human systems, stasis is death; the know-

ledge that resources are limited (that is, that things have prices) and therefore that needs are not the same thing as demands; that all is not possible at once and that trade-offs must be made at the margin.

The command and control model of contemporary public policy is a highly suspect means for treating environmental concerns. Historically power has always warred with liberty. Centralized power, which is subject to massive destabilizing error, is likely to be destructive of both the environment for liberty and the natural environment.

Nevertheless, there is a proper role for government in the provision of high quality environmental amenities. Government can legitimately assist with defining and enforcing property boundaries so that we do not foul each other's nests. It may be able to regulate effectively the use of some common pool resources, such as roads and ground water resources, subject to the limitations posed by the problems of collective action. It may protect for public pleasure some of the country's great natural treasures.[14] But when government becomes the monopoly provider of desired goods, quality falls, waste increases, competing demands on the resource are not met, and politicized conflict leads to management outcomes desired by very few. In the realm of environmental protection the lessons concerning the environment for liberty still apply.

Fourth, when it comes to the use of government policy to enhance available environmental amenities, undoing the mistakes of the past is the single most important activity. Throughout history the course of government action more often than not has been destructive of natural environmental amenities. From wars, to politically created famine, to collectivized farms, to Soviet-style industry, to the extravagant construction of highways, to subsidized energy development, to the draining of wetlands, to the systematic elimination of predators, to the building of high dams and massive irrigation projects, to restrictions on trade, to the management of public lands, the record of government on environmental protection is not pleasing either to the friends of liberty or to the friends of nature.

Concerned environmentalists continually complain about government failure, yet too often call for expanded government involvement to accomplish their ends. Evidently they think that the friends of nature will always be in charge and that their desires will be favored once their reforms have been accomplished. They need to study the difficult lessons history recounts concerning the environment for liberty. There is little reason to think that the sad tale of government-sponsored destruction of desirable environments will cease.

It is possible to argue that all government programs, which encourage dependence and economic waste rather than personal responsibility, are

especially destructive of the environment of liberty and, therefore, of the opportunity to expand the availability of high quality environmental amenities. It is a false belief that centralized government and "scientific management" by well-meaning and democratically elected politicians and their hired bureaucrats will consistently produce thoughtful sustained social change. This is the dream of the failed Socialist vision.[15]

Those people who are most concerned with environmental quality, who understand the complexities of natural systems and the slow, spontaneously ordered nature of evolution, should be among those who are most suspicious of global engineering schemes to improve the human condition. One would hope that they, above all others, would see that from the point of view of ecological calculation placing all your bets on one strategy, in this case that of benevolent government action, is the one strategy bound to fail.

Fifth, another lesson of history is that there are limitations to human action. Not everything we desire can or will be accomplished. Humans have been transforming the natural landscape to suit their needs from the very beginning. This will continue to be a characteristic of our species. The only difference between the present and the dawn of human time is that now there are more of us and of those species that also benefit from civilization. Our tools are more powerful than before, so change can occur more rapidly and systematically.

Given the fact of change, it is likely that damage will be done to the environment. We can be sure that species will become extinct, waste will be released into the air and water, global carbon dioxide concentrations will increase, handsome woods and swamps will be converted to other uses, and that a common view of the public good regarding environmental concerns will not emerge. Therefore, we should not be utopian with respect to the environment and condemn humanity for its failings without recognizing the limits of the possible. We should take a thin, rather than a robust view of the public interest and be guided in our public policy decisions by this understanding. This means that we need to encourage what economists call the *internalization of costs and benefits*. Those who desire some activity or amenity should be expected to pay for it. The two key policies here are the private ownership of property and the use of common law procedures to handle tort claims. Keep in mind, too, that the most abused common pool resource today is not the ocean, atmosphere, or the open range, but the national treasury. Each of our favorite individual government projects exploits this resource. This lesson, too, is a lesson of ecology.

If a proposed policy is really in the public interest it should win support from just about everybody. Substantial opposition suggests that the projected benefits have been exaggerated or, at least, have not been explained well. Advo-

cates of democracy should be leery of forcing extensive policies of social change upon reluctant minorities. Especially people with minority tastes to such things as wilderness and wolves and wicked weather—tastes that I share—should realize as a practical matter, that coercive, democratic government is not likely to work in their interest over the long haul.

Instead of placing new demands on the public purse we need to think of clever ways to use markets to promote environmental goals. Markets harness individual interest and initiative toward the attainment of some end. They make use of the diffuse information and the special knowledge of creative people everywhere. They promote social harmony by reducing the vice of envy and rely on the voluntary support of free people. They release us from bureaucratic stagnation and encourage unanticipated solutions. Just as it was difficult to privatize the open range before the invention of barbed wire, new issues and technologies can make it possible to develop ownership and markets where none previously existed. In principle at least, we can create water, game, and wildlife markets, genetically engineered and patented products, scenic easements, probably even air sheds and amenity sheds (similar to water sheds) allowing the private ownership, transfer, and preservation of desired environmental resources.[16] If the resources in time, money, and creative energy currently spent on politicized environmental controversies were expended on the private protection of environmental resources, we might find that the solution to problems of environmental amenities would emerge in unexpected ways.

Conclusion

Finally, a concluding word to the friend of liberty who supports the provision and protection of better environmental amenities. There are many important things that can be done to support both goals. The environment for liberty is characterized by a social order where individuals are secure in their person and property against invasion by others, including agents of the state; by an economic order of well-defined opportunities to contract for goods and services and to transfer property freely; by a political order in which the power of the State is strictly limited; and where common law rules on trespass prevail instead of bureaucratic regulations of productive activity.

A country characterized by such institutions would be a decent civil society where people live at peace with their neighbors, and where as they engage in peaceable business they will seldom confront the policeman, the magistrate, the bureaucrat, or the soldier. The opportunities for private voluntary enhancement of environmental quality in such a society will be plentiful, but not

altogether known. They must be discovered. Their emergence depends on the creative imagination of environmental entrepreneurs. And a free society will encourage such a flowering of creative thinking for no one person can be single-handedly responsible for achieving environmental change.

Practicing what one preaches should be the first rule for all friends of liberty. In the case of combining liberty and an interest in nature, practicing what you preach will first and foremost entail being a good steward. Although I hesitate to be too prescriptive, surely God intends that we take care of this beautiful blue planet and that we use its bounteous resources wisely and well. It is good for humans to live with reverence for the world we live in—as the economist Paul Heyne puts it, we should not go through the world with our hats on. A love of nature and of our fellow creatures should teach us something about love for each other, as well as give us a more humble view about our place in the universe. In turn, an increased understanding of the natural world helps us to obtain a more profound understanding of the benefits of civilization and the human necessity to create artificial environments in which to spend most of our days.

The best stewards are owners. The possibility of good political stewardship is a delusion. Owners know their land, its requirements and possibilities. They have the special local knowledge upon which true stewardship depends. They have the best incentives to do the right thing, to correct error, and to learn by experience. So whether we own only an urban apartment window box or a vast western ranch, we should think about how best to surround ourselves with something of the natural world, to invite nature into our lives, and to grow in spirit in its presence. In this regard, one of the virtually untapped resources for habitat enhancement is the suburban yard. Our efforts here might include less grass and more native wild perennials, brushy patches, small water sources, and plantings for birds and butterflies. We need to fix, patch, paint, clean, and till—to walk more—to pick up trash—in short to cultivate our own gardens and thus to be good examples to others.

We will want to cooperate with others who seem to be doing God's work—perhaps in private efforts to preserve habitat as in some of the activities of The Nature Conservancy, or to engage in scientific study as does Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania, or work for the propagation of particular species like Trout Unlimited, or the American Wild Turkey Society, or to develop neighborhood land trusts in order to put conservation easements on some of the land we own. We might invest in for-profit corporations such as International Paper who have proved to be good stewards of their land.

Since most of these endeavors add to our complement of wild natural areas,

we work without much planning to preserve species diversity, protect watersheds, provide aesthetic amenities, and reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide. Preserving habitat is the best way to confront many environmental problems and the legal traditions of the Western world make the well-defined private ownership of property a familiar and easily accomplished operation.

We will want to read and study about the natural world in order to understand it scientifically, aesthetically, and spiritually. The only education of lasting value is the life long project of self-education. So we will have our hands full here too. One of the things a little study will produce is an end to apocalyptic environmental thinking. We live in a pretty good environment for humans. We can make it better. But to do so successfully we must act through small steps, taken by many people, trying out many different paths.

We influence friends and neighbors by our example, but children need more explicit instruction so that they will delight in insects, snakes and spiders, birds and bats—so they will play in the mud on rainy days—so they will know bird calls, animal signs, geologic strata, and which plants sting and which make a sweet bed. Children must know all of this so they will greet each morning as a wonderful new gift of life.

Of course, other aspects of the environment of liberty should also be promoted: speaking our minds, standing for that which is right, living in peace, tolerating the choices of others, supporting those people who are on the side of freedom. This seems to be a demanding agenda, which means that we will have little time left to interfere with the peaceable lives of others.

Will this make any difference? Of course it can. All great accomplishments are the sum of individual activities. If the world is to be saved, it must always be done bit by bit. As the British scientist James Lovelock, the inventor of the Gaia hypothesis, wrote: "It is always from the action of individuals that powerful local, regional, and global systems evolve. When the activity of an organism favors the environment as well as the organism itself, then its spread will be assisted; eventually the organism and the environmental change associated with it will become global in extent."[17] In a free society, if we, individually, make the right choices, we will thrive and prosper. If the environment for liberty is good for humans, over time, it should expand. Others will get the message and will change too.

One of the most important individual contributions toward saving the planet is to work hard and grow rich. It is work that produces new resources and technologies for human and planetary improvement. It is work that provides much of the satisfaction that comes from being human. It will be the people in the rich and comfortable societies that have the time, the interest, the knowledge,

and the resources to be good stewards of the natural world. It will be riches that lead to improvements in human health, culture, and social well-being. It will be riches that allow us best to tend and cultivate our gardens.

With these principles in mind we can continue to be good stewards of our land while remaining true to the principles of liberty. Surely, in the name of environment protection, we do not want to revert to the dominant human ecological pattern of the past—that of stagnant, hierarchical, exploitative, and authoritarian imperial regimes—or to follow the modern road to oppression through democratic socialism.

Notes

* This essay is a revision of a talk written for the Acton Institute and delivered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on April 3, 1995.

1. Many of the ideas in this article have been developed through my attendance at conferences sponsored by Liberty Fund, Inc., and from conversations with scholars from the Political Economy Research Center and the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment. These organizations are located in Bozeman, Montana.

2. See Leon R. Kass, "What's Wrong with Babel?" *The American Scholar* (Winter 1988-1989): 41–60. "As the end of the Garden of Eden story itself makes clear, the so-called 'fall of man' is in fact a bittersweet rise into civilization. God's announced future for our race … embraces separation from the animals, self-consciousness, division of labor, rule and obedience, agriculture and bread, clothing and the arts, concern with good and bad, and the longing for immortality and lost innocence—in a word, civilization" (51). Of, course, Babel is a cautionary tale.

3. Modern anthropology tells us that hominid species have existed for several million years and our own species for as long as 250,000 years. Anthropologists argue that humans were formed genetically in Darwinian competition as hunter-gatherer peoples on the African savannah. If this is accurate, then, as a species, humans have lived much longer as hunter-gatherers than as civilized peoples. Some researchers, in fact, insist that our genetic nature is ill-suited for civilized life. See, for instance, Lionel Tiger, *The Decline of Males* (New York: Golden Books, 1999). The argument here, by contrast, is that we are a young species genetically and that we have moved with incredible rapidity into civilization and that from the socio-biological point of view, our genes for creativity, rationality, and speech have come to override, though not destroy, our earlier hunter-gatherer nature.

4. William H. McNeill, *The Human Condition: An Ecological and Historical View* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

5. Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: England Before the Industrial Age*, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984).

6. In Egypt during the time of Moses; in Greece during the fifth century B.C.; and in Palestine during the time of Christ.

7. Elsewhere in the world people by the millions still live in conditions not too far removed from this pre-modern state.

8. At first in the Italian and the north German city states in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and in England and the Protestant Low Countries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then elsewhere later.

9. See *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Mentor, 1961), 241.

10. From Jefferson's First Inaugural Address. See *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), 293.

11. Paul Colinvaux, *Why Big, Fierce Animals Are Rare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 232. I should probably mention that Colinvaux, like many ecologists who fail to see how humans

may expand the domain in which they live, writes: "Liberty will fall progressively as the numbers rise…" (233). This, despite the fact that liberty and population growth, as argued above, so far have often gone hand-in-hand.

12. One delightful essay to be consulted here is Anthony de Jasay, *The State* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998). Professor de Jasay considers the state as a self-interested rational maximizer and asks whether approaching the state in this fashion explains much of its historical pathologies.

13. This point has been made at great length and substantive brilliance in many recent studies including, among others, works by Douglass North, Nathan Rosenberg, Earle Birdzell, Richard Pipes, Tom Bethell, Julian Simon, and E. L. Jones. The statistical descriptions of the accomplishments of the environment for liberty are published regularly by the Heritage Foundation, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, and the Fraser Institute in indexes of economic freedom.

14. Though protection and ownership are different matters. Just as we can have public education without government schools, we can have public parks and open spaces without government ownership or management.

15. For an example of this argument applied to government land management, see Robert H. Nelson, *Public Lands and Private Rights: The Failure of Scientific Management* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995).

16. Many examples of such enterprise can now be found in published sources. A good place to start is with the Political Economy Forum series published by Rowman & Littlefield for the Political Economy Research Center. Another reputable source is publications from the Center for Private Conservation of the Competitive Enterprise Institute. See also Terry L. Anderson and Donald R. Leal, *Enviro-Capitalists: Doing Well While Doing Good* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

17. James Lovelock, *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, l988), 235–36.