



BOOK REVIEW OF STEVEN PINKER'S: "THE BETTER ANGELS OF OUR NATURE: WHY VIOLENCE HAS DECLINED" – Part III –

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Category: **Book review**

Editor's note: *This article is too large to fit into any one of our issues. But, due to its importance, we have decided to run it as a three part series. The first of these (doi:10.12709/mest.01.01.02.04) featured the introduction, the beginnings of Block's critique of Pinker (2011) and the appendix. Part II (doi:10.12709/mest.02.02.01.15) contained most of the main body of this work. And the last appearance of this essay in three parts, presented here, contains the author's conclusion and his voluminous bibliography.*

III. CONCLUSION

States Pinker (538): "In many parts of this book I have credited the Leviathan – a government with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force – as a major reducer of violence. Feuding and anarchy go together." Yes, indeed. That very well sums up the thesis of this book. But China and Chile, Mexico and Mauritania, Australia and Albania all live in a state of anarchy with each other. They have never engaged in and "feuding" with each other.

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I have, mostly, condemned this book. Let me end on a more positive note. I greatly enjoyed reading *The Better Angels of our Nature*. I read it three times. Once, just for the pleasure of it. Second, in order to criticize it, and a third time for pure enjoyment once again. Pinker tackles controversial issues. His words fairly leap off the page at you. He makes hundreds of positive contributions to our understanding of the human condition.¹²⁵ My only complaint is that he draws an erroneous and monstrous conclusion from them: democratic statism is a force for good.

However, I shall not be deterred from ending on a positive note. Here are some of the insightful,

¹²⁵ Read the book for yourself and see!



courageous statements that most attract me to this book: (43): "Anthropologists who did not get with the (Margaret Mead) program found themselves barred from the territories in which they had worked, denounced in manifestoes by their professional societies, slapped with libel lawsuits and even accused of genocide." Shades of climategate, here.

Here is another (614):

"In fact the evidence for recent selection, if it applies to genes with effects on cognition and emotion, would license a far more radical form of evolutionary psychology, one in which minds have been biologically shaped by recent environments in addition to ancient ones. And it could have the incendiary implication that aboriginal and immigrant populations are less biologically adapted to the demands of modern life than populations that have lived in literate state societies for millennia. The fact that a hypothesis is politically uncomfortable does not mean that it is false."

Incendiary? Yes. Therefore, courageous.

Here is yet another brilliant insight from Pinker (696, footnote deleted):

"To review the history of violence is to be repeatedly astounded by the cruelty and waste of it all, and at times to be overcome with anger, disgust, and immeasurable sadness. I know that behind the graphs there is a young man who feels a stab of pain and watches the life drain slowly out of him, knowing he has been robbed of decades of existence. There is a victim of torture whose

contents of consciousness have been replaced by unbearable agony, leaving room only for the desire that consciousness itself should cease. There is a woman who has learned that her husband, her father, and her brothers lie dead in a ditch, and who will soon 'fall into the hand of hot and forcing violation.' It would be terrible enough if these ordeals befell one person, or ten, or a hundred. But the numbers are not in the hundreds, or the thousands, or even the millions, but in the hundreds of millions — an order of magnitude that the mind staggers to comprehend, with deepening horror as it comes to realize just how much suffering has been inflicted by the naked ape upon its own kind."

No man who could write this inspirational message can be impervious to the philosophy of libertarianism. It is my fervent hope that Pinker, and all those inspired by him, will read this review and be led by it leave off their genuflections to statolatry and embrace libertarianism, yes, the anarcho capitalist version of this philosophy.

This review has been far longer than what would have been needed to refute Pinker's two main theses, that violence has decreased, due to democratic government. Why? It is because I regard this book as one of the best defenders of statism, statolatry,¹²⁶ ever written. As an intellectual opponent of this institution, I wanted not only to confront these two main contentions, but also its author's other "progressive" views, which lead to, support, are part of, that same pernicious philosophy.

¹²⁶ A new type of superstition has got hold of people's minds, the worship of the state. People demand the exercise of the methods of coercion and compulsion, of violence and threat. Woe to anybody who does not bend his knee to the fashionable idols! -- Ludwig von Mises, *Omnipotent Government*, p. 11; The worship of the state is the worship of force. There is no more dangerous menace to civilization than a government of incompetent, corrupt, or vile men. The worst evils which mankind ever had to endure were inflicted by bad governments. -- Ludwig von Mises, *Omnipotent Government*, p. 47; The state is a human institution, not

a superhuman being. He who says state means coercion and compulsion. He who says: There should be a law concerning this matter, means: The armed men of the government should force people to do what they do not want to do, or not to do what they like. He who says: This law should be better enforced, means: the police should force people to obey this law. He who says: The state is God, deifies arms and prisons. -- Ludwig von Mises, *Omnipotent Government*, p. 47; He who proclaims the godliness of the State and the infallibility of its priests, the bureaucrats, is considered as an impartial student of the social sciences. -- Ludwig von Mises, *Planned Chaos*, p. 16

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