

My Political Objectives

“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original column by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins.

A month ago I shared my result of “The Political Objectives Test” by Hello Quizzy. I was branded an “anarchist” with the summary beginning with this very true statement, “Liberty is so overwhelmingly important to you that you wish to eliminate anything that can interfere with it.” I found the test to be rather helpful in contrasting my views with others on the various topics it questioned me about. For that I wanted to present the questions here with emphasis (underlined> on the statements I selected, followed by some commentary and resources.

Ready, Set, Test!

Let me begin by quoting the first page of the test, which explains how the test is designed:

Most politics tests assess your opinions on a collection of controversial issues and then allocate a political label to you that best corresponds to that set of opinions. But you may have arrived at that particular set of opinions by happenstance rather than as the result of applying a particular political philosophy. This test allocates labels to you on the basis of your response to particular philosophical statements. The assumption behind this test is that the three most important objectives of all-issues political movements in the modern era have been Equality and Liberty and Stability. Your varying levels of commitment to these will determine your philosophical category (what you do in practice may be different). As much as is practical this test uses the universal definitions of political terms rather than any nation-specific usage.

There are a number of these sorts of tests out there, and I’ve taken quite a few that label me similarly, often with an ideology as large as “libertarian”. They are what they are, but I found that this particular test set itself a part by focusing on the objectives I preferred, and in the end informing me via the label it assigns as to what ideology is most compatible with those objectives. Let us now begin the test.

Equality Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- *“Everyone has to be equal in both cultural status and economic standing if they are to have a decent life. A society lacking such equality will be fractured into disparate and rival classes.”*
- *“Equality needs to be promoted among all members of society. Everyone has to be equal in legal and political rights. Also differences in economic standing must be minimised as much as is practical.”*
- *“We need to stress that the only equality that matters in economics is equality of opportunity. Everyone deserves the chance to make a livelihood for themselves.”*
- *“Equality is an empty concept. How can everyone be equal if everyone is different? Everyone has conflicting desires that they will do anything to win. You have to defend yourself from those who want to take things away from you!”*

Indeed, I consider equality to be an empty concept, one wholly incompatible with human nature. Nobody is or can be equal to anybody else, and expecting as much is a very slippery slope to the road of complete totalitarianism, to slavery, which if you know anything about either is quite an unequal situation. Even the concept of “equality of opportunity” is very dangerous. How can two people, who were raised differently, from different socio-cultural backgrounds, with a vastly different social network, ever have the same opportunities in life? They can’t. And there’s no practical way to guarantee that they do. The most that can effectively be done is to guarantee liberty for all, rich or poor, black or white, male or female. That is the best way to guarantee that there is no artificial barriers to the pursuit of opportunity. But that’s it.

Voluntaryist resources on equality: “Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature” by Murray Rothbard; “Equality: The Unknown Ideal” by Roderick Long; “Equal Opportunity versus Individual Opportunity” by Anne Wortham. More can be found via LibertySearch.info here.

Liberty Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- “Liberty is the most important thing anyone can have and the right of everyone. It must be defended at all costs.”
- “Liberty is important because it allows everyone to become the best they can be and live a life to which they are best suited. Naturally there are some limits to liberty but it is among the most important of principles.”
- “Liberty is overrated. Loyalty to others is much more important than the freedom to do whatever you want. The groups you belong to make you who you are so you should always value them for that.”
- “Liberty is dangerous for an orderly and united society. Everyone should do whatever they can to ensure that others behave as society expects them to.”

This one caught me deciding between the first and second statements. Liberty is only dangerous to those who seek to rule others, so the fourth is out. The third statement is a bit confused, or so it seems to me. One may *choose* loyalty to others and their traditions, *et cetera*, and still consider the liberty to do so as very important. I don't see the conflict unless we approach “loyalty” as used in this statement to mean enforced loyalty, which begs the questions: loyalty enforced by who? and, is it loyalty if its not freely chosen? The second statement seems quite reasonable when we acknowledge that the limits to liberty are the so-called rights of others. Or, as the saying goes, “my rights end where another's begins.” But because I consider that embedded within the concept of liberty, it didn't seem to me that the first and second statements were different. Until I considered that what is meant by “limits to liberty” in the second statement is likely referring to some sort of expanded, and ultimately incoherent, definition of liberty. Thus I selected the first statement.

Voluntaryist resources on liberty: “The Ethics of Liberty” by Murray Rothbard; “Inclined to Liberty” by Louis Carabini; “Everything Voluntary” edited by Skyler J. Collins; “Libertarian Anarchy” by Gerard Casey. More can be found at Mises.org, FEE.org, and Independent.org.

Stability Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- *“Stability is incredibly important. For a child routines and rules are vital and the same is so for adults. A structured way of life starts in the home but must extend to the wider world.”*
- *“Stability is important in that drastic change always produces hardship and confusion. Any change that occurs must be small and only happen if there is a blatant need. Time-honoured traditions have lasted a long time because they work.”*
- *“Stability is overrated. Old habits and practices can always be improved upon. Besides which change is refreshing and a natural part of life. As long as we can ensure that change is for the better then it is worthwhile.”*
- *“Stability is another word for stagnation and rigidity. In such an environment power accumulates and oppression becomes the norm. Change must be constant and vigorous. If ever you see complacency or conformity you must disrupt it.”*

These statements had me scratching my head. Each of them spoke to me, and to different parts of me, in different ways. Ultimately I chose the third statement as a balance between too much (stifling) and too little (uncertainty) stability. The first statement’s bit about rules for children, and home-based structure, seriously rubbed against the unschooler in me. Rules should be abandoned for principles, and structure for spontaneity and self-direction, methinks. Moving away from the home, the assumption in these statements, considering the political nature of this test, is that stability is somehow government-created. I don’t believe that’s the case. It can be, but that would only be the result of government not changing the rules very often, which is contrary to the purpose of government, ie. to enrich non-producers at the expense of producers, to put it in Hoppean terms. There’s a sleight of hand here going from child routines and rules, enforced by parents, to parent routines and rules, enforced by the state. No thank you. Rather, markets, with entrepreneurs who continuously try to meet consumer demands, provide a type of stability that improves upon what works and easily gets rid of what doesn’t. *That’s* my preferred kind of stability, and the third statement seems most compatible with it.

Voluntaryist resources on stability: “Regime Uncertainty” by Robert Higgs; “Stability and

the Free Market” by Dennis Bechara.

Society Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- *“We are nothing without society. Nobody can live alone and everyone is shaped by their peers. We need everyone to recognise that they are part of society and that the needs of that society are more important than any petty personal aspirations.”*
- *“We are all members of society and need to be included in everything that membership involves. We all have the right to partake in its decision-making and the product of its labour.”*
- *“Society is composed of different persons and groups and cannot be understood in terms of ‘society as a whole’. The extent to which someone will fit into society depends on how well they can negotiate its pitfalls to become a successful person.”*
- *“There is no such thing as one society. We all live in different and conflicting groups and you have to insulate yourself from any groups hostile to your own interests.”*

I had an inkling to choose the fourth statement, but found “insulate yourself” to be a bit much. While I consider the individual to be the fundamental unit of society, I do believe that humans as a species have an evolutionary need for regular interaction with other humans. I recognize that some groups and their ideals within society may ultimately prove “hostile” to my interests, but I don’t think insulating myself from them would be productive. I prefer to be an influence *to them*, and I can’t be if I shut myself away. That and how am I to know which groups are indeed “hostile” to my interests? Trust someone else to make that judgment? That seems foolish to me. Instead, I’ll be an explorer and remain both principled and open-minded. Herein lies the realm of peaceful negotiation with groups we don’t identify with.

Voluntaryist resources on society: “Toward a Free Society” by Skyler J. Collins; “An Attempt at a Universal Ethic (Six-Part Series)” by Skyler J. Collins; “The Ethics of Voluntaryism” by Skyler J. Collins.

Individuality Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- *“Every individual is sovereign. Nobody can rule them but themselves and anyone who seeks to control others is an oppressor that must be resisted by those around them.”*
- *“Individuality is very important. Everyone is different and the expression of those differences makes society vibrant and robust.”*
- *“The importance of individuality is exaggerated. Every person may be different but why do they have to fixate on that difference? It is the things we have in common that are important and help form the bonds that hold society together.”*
- *“What is the individual? Anyone who stands out from the crowd is likely to be a malcontent or deviant. Given time a methodical and powerful state can remake everyone in its image. Everyone will be content once they have a defined role to fill.”*

Once again I was torn between two statements, the first and second. Both are correct to me, and if I could, I would select both with equal emphasis. But I couldn't. I had to select one, so I chose the second on account of the first mirroring a statement that I had chosen in the liberty section. Nowhere else will you find vibrancy and robustness on full display than in the totally free market. Whatever your preference for whatever part of your life and being, there will be dozens of creative and innovative profit-seekers ready and waiting to cater to it. Only in the free market can individuality be expressed completely, without the shackles of government interference on the whims and fancies of every person.

Voluntary resources on individuality: “What Teaching in China Taught Me About Freedom and Individuality in the World” by Gregory Diehl; “Individuality and Intellectual Independence” by Anne Wortham; “It’s a Jetsons World” by Jeffrey Tucker.

Family Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- *“The traditional family is of utmost importance. At its best society takes the values of family life and extends them to all relations and all conduct in wider society. The best role-models evoke feelings of parental loyalty in us.”*
- *“Your family instills in you decent standards of behaviour. Society consists of many family groupings and the role of family in acting as a haven and in producing the next generation should be recognised and supported.”*
- *“Family is important but we must recognise that it can take all sorts of forms rather than just the traditional nuclear family. Family relations are just one of the many kinds of relationships that can form in a diverse and tolerant society.”*
- *“The Family is just one of many institutions that work to oppress us. Family has been developed over time into something that instills in us subservience to authority and acceptance of abuse as a way of controlling us.”*

This one really had me metaphorically reeling. So much I agree with, yet so much I disagree with. Not to mention the assumptions that may or may not be there. “At its best society takes the values of family life and extends them to all relations...” and, “The best role-models evoke feelings of parental loyalty in us.” Both of these hinge on the meaning of “family” and “parental”. Either I agree with it wholeheartedly, as in the context of peaceful parenting and radical unschooling, or I disagree vehemently, as in the context of authoritarian and a punitive parenting and compulsory education. Which to assume? Further, “your family instills in you decent standards of behavior...” Instills how? Brute force, or by loving example? BIG difference, eh? Only the fourth statement seems fairly clear on what is meant by family, “authority” and “abuse” and “controlling us.” I would agree with this statement if I assume family as it evolved in the agricultural age, but disagree with it as it is found among modern unschoolers. The third statement ultimately received my selection, but only because it’s focus was on form, not function. It didn’t really seem to belong in the group, actually, and because the others were so challenging, I gave up on them.

Voluntaryist resources on family: “Everything Voluntary” edited by Skyler J. Collins; “Unconditional Parenting” by Alfie Kohn; “Parenting For a Peaceful World” by Robin Grille;

“Parent Effectiveness Training” by Thomas Gordon. More can be found on the Resources page.

Industry Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- *“It is vital that the means of production be owned communally. Only this will ensure that both the power and wealth derived from industry will be justly shared.”*
- *“Industry needs to be regulated to minimise any adverse effects it may have on society. Along with re-distributive taxation and public provision of vital services this will ensure a more equitable society.”*
- *“Industry can only be productive if it is held in private hands so that incentive exists for those who work hard to be rewarded. Anyone can have a stake in the rewards of productivity if they work and then invest some income back into industry.”*
- *“The only useful industry is one you own and operate yourself. Any other kind of industry will just benefit others and possibly even be turned back on you. It is important to acquire the skills and tools necessary to provide for your own survival.”*

This objective separates the left from the rest. Of course, my interpretation of “the left” is all things communism, socialism, and fascism, with or without the state. Any of the statements besides the one I selected are leftist objectives as it concerns industry, and further, destined to fail in obtaining its stated goals. Communally owned resources are rife with waste and inefficiency; tragedy of the commons, and all. Regulated industry is protectionist industry, and makes most worse off at the benefit of the least, our corporatist overlords. And to believe in total self-sufficiency is to believe in abject poverty. Don’t get me wrong, the paleo life has its merits, but it must be freely chosen. Therefore, the third statement is the easy and only logical choice if your goal is prosperity and abundance *for all*.

Voluntaryist resources on industry: “Why Socialism Must Fail” by Hans Hoppe; “What is the

Free Market?" by Murray Rothbard; "I, Pencil" by Leonard Read.

Government Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them appeal then move onto the next question.

- *"The state and all things associated with it exist purely to oppress and degrade us. All manner of institutions exist simply to control us from birth to death. The state only persists because it monopolises the tools of violence."*
- *"The state is a necessary tool and acts as a neutral arbiter between members of society. However its involvement in everyday life must be kept to a minimum and it must always act on the wishes of those it serves."*
- *"The state is important because it can promote ethical behaviour. It can also help to make life better by lending its impressive monetary support to projects of community renewal. Laws need to be drawn from accepted community standards."*
- *"The state is all-important to ensure discipline and order. The state is more than just some invention of humans. Rather it is an intrinsic part of any society - it effectively is society in a well-structured form."*

My selection here should be obvious considering my objection to all things coercive and criminal. The state is *the* institution in society that is built and maintained on the basis of coercion and crime. It is never necessary, never important, and completely incapable of ensuring anything but misery and chaos.

Voluntaryist resources on government and the state: "The Anatomy of the State" by Murray Rothbard; "Our Enemy, the State" by Albert Jay Nock; "The State is Not the Way" by Skyler J. Collins.

History Objective

Select the statement which appeals most to you. If none of them

appeal then move onto the next question.

- *“The past gives us everything that is worth having including a sense of belonging. We must defend our heritage from any insults or misinterpretations. History gives us a sense of purpose. Revered historic figures inspire us to be strong and brave.”*
- *“The past should be cherished but we can also recognise that our ancestors are flawed humans just like us. We can value the contribution they have made to our culture and institutions while also making our own contributions to the organic whole.”*
- *“It is important to understand the past. However it is risky to glorify the past or to allow for only one interpretation of history. Knowing history allows us to escape the mistakes of the past and do things better in the future.”*
- *“The past is whatever the powerful want it to be. Oppressors will tamper with the historic record to secure power. We have to record and nurture our own history. We also have to make history by challenging old assumptions and making a new world.”*

What do you think? Both the third and fourth statements appealed to me. Yes, those bent on manipulating us in order to continue their rule do have a powerful incentive in shaping the past to suit their agenda. And yes, glorifying the past or allowing for only one interpretation of history is risky, nay, dangerous. I can't see any conflict between these two statements. They seem quite compatible to me. I suppose the fourth is a bit more extreme version of the third, but the message is really the same. I also found appeal in the first two statements.

Voluntaryist resources on history: “The Case for Revisionism” by Murray Rothbard; “Liberty and Revisionist History” by Anthony Gregory; “Why American History is Not What They Say” by Jeff Rigenbach. More can be found via LibertySearch.info here.

Grand Finale

Finally which of the following statements appeals to you most?

- *“A friend in need is a friend indeed.”*
- *“God helps those that help themselves.”*

- "All must be free or none can be free."

The final section of the test gives just three short, familiar statements. The first is nonsense. A friend being in need of something makes him a friend indeed? I can't for the life of me understand why. By this logic, our neediest friends are our greatest friends, and what, should be assisted, or worse, enabled? Hmm. The second assumes the existence of deity, which is a rather large assumption. The third was the most appealing to me, and I interpret it thus: if oppression exists for some, or even just one, then the potential is there to exist for all. Oppression must be abolished *en toto*.

Final Thoughts

The test completes with a question on gender, age, and relationship status, probably to track the demographics of test takers. At the end my result was as it was before, *anarchist*. The full summary is below. I took the liberty to strike-through the bits I disagreed with, with an accompanying note.

Liberty is so overwhelmingly important to you that you wish to eliminate anything that can interfere with it. The number one target of your outrage is 'The State' (all government + bureaucracy + military) but other forces that may quash freedom (~~corporations~~ or ~~religions~~ or even family) are also subject to your ridicule. [NOTE: These strikes-through are because standing alone without support from government, they are harmless, in my humble opinion.] If you have ~~the right personality~~ then you may participate in anarchist actions to remove all these oppressive institutions. [NOTE: Huh? Personality?] ~~You may advocate violent revolution~~ but you are more likely to recognise that violence is itself the product of oppression and reject it in favour of non-violent resistance. [NOTE: I can't imagine a scenario where I would ever advocate for violent revolution. It simply doesn't work in the long term.] You think that every person is sovereign unto themselves but you also recognise that it is natural for us to want to interact with others. However every relationship must be totally consensual. The preferred model for you is the group in which everyone willingly participates in decision-making and in which

all economic and cultural interactions are freely made or terminated.

Yes, I like the rest of it. It's quite fitting for me as a voluntaryist. There really is no difference between a voluntaryist and an anarchist if one is consistent in their application of the principles of either. In any event, I hope you enjoyed exploring the political objectives test with me and I invite you to give it a try. If you do, please don't be shy with your results!