

Regular Self-Interested Human Beings

There is a lot of debate on how liberty-minded people ought to handle personal association. Often this ends up being a point of angst and cognitive dissonance. I thought I would share some of my ideas on the matter.

There are two major camps on personal association. Both hold interesting insights, but I believe are flawed.

The first camp is often embraced by many of the moralists and activists. I'll try to lay out their argument.

"How can you proclaim to love liberty, and yet associate with/befriend statist? If you believe that government is violence, and you believe that is wrong, how can you possibly proclaim to love liberty while associating with people who are cool with murdering you for a disagreement?"

I think this is a very powerful argument. Why do I choose Johnny (the socialist) as a friend instead of Bobby (the capitalist)? Is the fact that Johnny is funny compensate for his violent views of human organization? I think there is an argument that can say he is misguided, harmless, and that differences are okay. However, when he starts voting and engaging in other political action, can we possibly believe that is true?

The other camp doesn't have much of philosophy or argument, but rather appeals to moderation. They will throw a lot of various arguments at the wall to see what sticks.

"Everyone is just trying their best." "We should be friends with everyone to further the cause." "Aren't we weird enough without secluding ourselves?" Etc.

I think these are often very weak arguments given their proclaimed beliefs. However, there is something tangible here that they aren't exactly hitting in their arguments. We are incredibly social creatures and our relationships and preferences are deeper and more complex than our proclaimed political philosophies.

I think the problematic foundation people use in evaluating these questions is a question of foundational individual principles. Libertarians aren't fundamentally libertarians. When you dig down through several layers of philosophy, they are regular self-interested human beings. Once people accept this premise, they are able to tackle this question much more appropriately.

This is a more robust answer. "I have friends who provide many of the social resources I need. I accept their murderous ideology because I understand their incentives. If I had

other people who could provide the resources I desire who didn't believe in socialism ... I would be able to start letting go of the associations that aren't as valuable."

This answer isn't very sexy. However, it reflects human nature vastly more accurately.

To some degree I have a lot more empathy for the first camp. I've known many "libertarians" who surround themselves with socialists because they want to be cool. This does seem like they are intellectual cowards, and someone who doesn't understand their values. However, the first camp is rationalistic and misunderstands human nature. We are egoistic, social beings who believe society is best organized through peaceful interactions. We aren't Libertarian Man.

Personally, I have no one I would call a friend who doesn't have libertarian inclinations. However, I am ultra social and I've been able to collect neat people throughout my life who appreciate my radical views. On the flip side, I am also friendly in business and in public to all sorts of people. I am incredibly outgoing and talkative with most anyone.

I think this discussion gets clouded because people think they are guided by their principles. They aren't. Humans are guided by self-interest. Since we are an incredibly social species, self-interest will often be making friends with the people we are familiar with and the people who benefit us.