

geniuses can be found to run it, are simply deluded. But there are many radicals liberals who do not believe. They know that collectivism never works, but cynically pretend that it will. They have a stake in the lie: those among them who end up running the state quickly exempt themselves from the rules that oppress everyone else. And they don't grow up either.

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Pamphlet 504

Modern Liberalism's Second Childhood

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Thinking myself rather witty some years ago, I addressed my daughter's then-current college boyfriend with an affectation of grave, fatherly concern and the intention to tweak him: "Well, Ed," I intoned, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" Not missing a beat, he replied with a straight face: "A grown-up."

Touché. Had I been in a different mood, I would have asked the question clearly begged by his answer: what, after all, *is* a grown-up? Well, the answer is, it depends. In a free society, a modal grown-up is a self-reliant, voluntarily cooperative, morally responsible and mutually thoughtful citizen with wired-in altruistic instincts that lead to charitable caretaking. Those of us who care about our children raise them with exactly these virtues in mind. We raise them to take care of themselves, not to be burdensome to others, as children are. We raise them to anticipate the consequences of their actions and hold themselves accountable, not act impulsively or blame others, as children do. We raise them to help others routinely, not act selfishly, as children

do. We raise them to cooperate with others toward shared goals and win-win outcomes, not exploit or manipulate others with lies or intimidation, as children do.

Those of us who love both our kids and our freedom teach the former what's essential to the latter: we teach them what's right and what's wrong, then hold them to high moral standards by the time they're teenagers. And we instill in their souls those traditional virtues such as kindness and courage and patience and determination that make life better for everyone. This is what a free society expects to happen during what is supposed to be a young citizen's first and only childhood. We prepare him to be a competent adult.

We do these things because we know intuitively that the non-negotiable price of freedom is a set of moral duties, not just legal obligations. All of us have a moral duty to take care of ourselves as best we may so we can pursue happiness in good enough health and adequate material security. All of us have a moral duty to avoid saddling our fellow citizens with the burden of our problems, whatever their type. In fact, a careful analysis of the human condition reveals that freedom is a state of being that one must constantly earn by fulfilling certain obligations, both legal and moral, first in

relation to oneself and then in relation to others. Freedom is not a free lunch. It is not self-indulgence. The freedom that made America the greatest nation in history is not freedom from want or work, nor freedom from existential angst, or from the inevitable tragedies of life. Freedom is not my entitlement to your time, effort or labor. Freedom is not your duty to bail me out of whatever mess I've made of my life. Freedom is not the duty of government to secure my health or safety, subsidize my life, or guarantee economic equality among its citizens. In a free society, a grown-up takes care of himself for his own sake and that of others, and he does it with pride. In a free society, a grown-up has grown up.

In our contemporary collectivist society, by contrast, a grown-up does not in fact grow up but remains instead an adult child of The Modern Parental State. Like all collectivist states, this one undermines the citizen's self-reliance and aborts his growth to maturity. Its oppressive regulations obstruct his freedom to cooperate voluntarily with others. Its intrusive welfare programs preempt his natural inclinations to charity. Its permissive culture promotes sexual acting out, with all of its terrible consequences: sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and abortions, and the devastating effects of

infidelity brought upon marriages and families. But it also rationalizes violence by attributing it to social factors instead of personal choice, promotes blaming and complaining through its victim-villain paradigm, and undermines the character of adult citizens by constantly inviting them to become wards of the state, deeming them incompetent to manage their affairs and declaring them in need of government guardians. The effects of this infantilization of the people are both profound and perverse. But the effects on their liberties are at least as devastating. In exchange for the promise of lifelong security, the collectivized grown-up surrenders to a Hobbesian monster the power to run his life. The result of this surrender is the pseudo-adult life of the modern liberal agenda and the gradual degradation of freedom.

There is no longer any surprise in these effects. The agenda invariably fails because its core principles contradict the defining characteristics of human nature and abort its potential for mature competence. The agenda's socialist goals are antithetical to the human condition and for that reason can never be realized. Yet, despite history's repeated verdicts on collectivism, millions remain true believers. Those who honestly believe that The Modern Parental State will benefit the masses, if only the right