

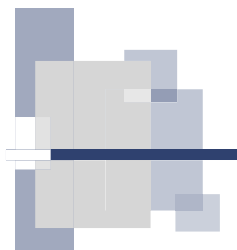
STATISM: THE OPIATE OF THE ELITES

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PEPPERDINE
UNIVERSITY
School of Public Policy

OCTOBER 24, 2003



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Good morning. President Benton, Chancellor Runnels, Dean Wilburn, esteemed faculty, staff, and students—and to all of those who have made this day possible—the Founder’s Cabinet, the Benefactors, and the Board of Visitors, and especially to Virginia Braun, I want to congratulate you all and to thank you for the invitation to be a part of this special day.

I was first introduced to Pepperdine in 1991 when I hosted a small dinner in New York, attended by Jim Wilburn, then dean of the Pepperdine business school, to discuss ways to assist the privatization of the Soviet Union, an effort in which Pepperdine was playing a key role. Two years later Dean Wilburn invited me to speak to the graduating class of the Pepperdine business school. And more recently I have made a significant investment in Pepperdine as the guardian of a South African boy who is a freshman here and loves it.

We are gathered here to dedicate a beautiful new facility for the Pepperdine School of Public Policy and to express deep gratitude for those who have made it possible. But we gather here at a critical crossroads for our nation. There is the growing conflict between love and hate that is being played out in America’s war on terror, which in many ways reflects the apostle Paul’s comment that we battle not merely with flesh and blood, but with “the powers and principalities in heavenly places”—a cosmic struggle between good and evil that may occupy our nation for many years to come.

And then there is the shocking but decisive statement of the citizens of California in a once-in-a-century historic recall of a governor less than one year

after his election. They seem to be declaring that they will not tolerate a central authoritarian government which refuses to acknowledge the creative spirit of individuals seeking for themselves and their families an opportunity to enjoy a fair portion of the fruits of their honest labor.

This is also a special time because we have gathered here at a moment when Pepperdine has said to a secular, centralized, and sometimes monopolistic educational establishment that it is time for a first-rate alternative—a public policy graduate school that is unashamedly based on faith and committed to strengthening the institutions of the private sector which have built this nation.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Today I want to discuss a serious concern of mine—the appropriate relationship between the individual and the state—which also happens to be one of the primary reasons that Pepperdine decided to found its School of Public Policy. Michael Novak—one of your distinguished visiting professors last year—once observed, “each immoral action sows its own irrationality into the pattern of events.” If he is right, a government which breaks the moral laws encoded in the Holy Scriptures that value one individual of greater worth than the state, can easily become its own ultimate institution, to be served rather than to serve. This form of statism easily institutionalizes the government as parent and thus comes to treat its citizens as children. In fact, statisticians are looking for far more than a maternal embrace in the arms of big government.

They are looking for nothing less than statism to be a virtual religion, literally for redemption through the state.

Every human being has a need to believe and belong. Traditionally this impulse found expression through religion. But with the decline of clerical power in the eighteenth century, as Paul Johnson observes in his book entitled, *Intellectuals*:

. . . men arose to assert that they could diagnose the ills of society and cure them with their own unaided intellects: more, that they could devise formulae whereby not merely the structure of society but the fundamental habits of human beings could be transformed . . . [These] were not servants and interpreters of the gods but substitutes. Their hero was Prometheus, who stole the celestial fire and brought it to earth.

In 1789, the Promethean spark burst into the flames of the French Revolution. Historian Will Durant—who was also a very close friend of Pepperdine—recounted that revolutionary leaders “proclaimed a new theology in which Nature would be God, and heaven would be an earthly utopia.” Half a century later, Karl Marx promised that socialism could become the “functional equivalent of religion.” Religion, said Marx, was nothing more than “the sigh of a distressed creature . . . the spirit of spiritless conditions . . . *the opiate of the masses.*”

In a sense, Marx was John the Baptist to the statist faith of the twentieth century. The fact that so many were baptized in his secularity confirms G.K. Chesterton’s observation that “when men cease to believe in

God, they will not believe in nothing, they will believe in anything.” From this perspective it becomes clear that statism is more than a mere ideology. It has become “the spirit of spiritless conditions”—the opiate, not of the masses, but of the elites.

DEFINING THE PUBLIC REALM

To a great extent, the problem lies in how we have defined the public realm. In sharp contrast to both the ancient and early republican experience, where religious, ethnic, or familial institutions shouldered much of the responsibility for shaping the public arena, contemporary public policy, in study and practice, has assumed an increasingly legalistic and technocratic character, with an overemphasis on the federal government.

Not only has government fallen under the spell of statist thinking, the academy has as well. The overwhelming majority of those involved in the study and art of government are so committed to an expansionist central government that they are unable to question its premises. This technocratic approach to public policy has roots in the broader evolution of the contemporary social sciences. The expansion of the welfare state in the 1960s and 1970s gave birth to a sort of “social industrial complex,” an interconnected web of governmental bureaucracies, foundations, and social service professionals with close ties to university social and political science departments.

The overwhelming majority of schools of public policy were founded to serve the needs of an expanding

government. This can be seen by reviewing the curriculum at the established programs—whether in Berkeley or Boston—in New York or Washington, D.C.—where the emphasis remains on technical subjects, organization behavior, and process studies. By way of contrast, these schools show little interest in exploring the role of core values, the church, or the family in the affairs of the Republic. The revolving door whereby many who teach in these graduate programs are regularly in and out of assignments inside the Washington Beltway reminds us of their belief that where there is a problem, there must also be a state program to solve it.

So how did the statists overcome our democratic processes, constitutional restraints, and the American people's historical distrust of state power? Primarily in three ways. The first, a conscious strategy to pay people to value security over freedom; the second, a manipulation of language; and the third, the ingenious use of the courts to overcome popular will.

SECURITY AND FREEDOM

The first part of this strategy has witnessed the search by intellectual elites for security through political salvation, inducing visions of a government engineered utopia. The problem is that ordinary people do not understand, do not trust, and even fear such visions. The solution is to give as many people as possible a taste of entitlement—promoting what the French economist Frederic Bastiat described when he said “the state is that great fictitious entity by which everyone seeks to live at the expense of everyone else.”

Today these inclinations dominate the debate over one example, out of many, social security reform. Here we have a system that was essentially introduced by the Chancellor von Bismark in Germany in 1889—twenty years before the first Model T rolled off the tracks. It does not incorporate *anything* we've learned with regard to markets and investments over the past 100 years. And yet any suggestion that the system might be improved through modernization, choice, and privatization is met by Luddite-like opposition. The point, it would seem, is not to expand the pie of benefits for each individual retiree; the point is to keep the public pie cutters employed. Unfortunately, my time allotment today doesn't allow me to draw the same parallels in health care, and education as well, although the same principles are at work there.

MANIPULATION OF LANGUAGE

This brings me to statism's second means of trying to outwit democracy: the manipulation of language. We have entered an Orwellian era in which entitlement replaces responsibility, coercion is described as compassion, compulsory redistribution is called sharing, race-quotas substitute for diversity, and suicide—suicide—is prescribed as death with dignity. Political discourse has become completely corrupted. The reason is that if you tell people directly that you want to raise their taxes, transfer their wealth, count them by skin color, or let doctors kill patients, most will object. Statists know this, and therefore are obliged to obfuscate.

In one of the most striking examples, abortion is now discussed in terms of “reproductive health.” This sounds absolutely unobjectionable—who, after all, is opposed to “health?” The same thing goes for the term pro-choice. How can you be an American and be against “choice?” Both terms do an effective job of obscuring the real issue—which is the question of the life or death for an unborn child.

In such a world, the notions of right and wrong that have contributed to civilization’s painstaking progress over the past thousands of years are completely stood on their head. Without absolutes, what is right and what is wrong depends upon your point of view. From this perspective, something as fundamental as the United States Constitution becomes what is fashionably called a “living document,” to be reinterpreted as political expediency demands. This is the justification behind statism’s third avenue of assault, that of judicial activism, which maintains that we can with impunity abandon the belief that the Constitution ought to be interpreted according to its original intent.

JUDICIAL ACTIVISM

The founders clearly revealed their intended limits to state power, making it explicit in the tenth amendment of the Bill of Rights: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution . . . are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people.” But where the framers saw islands of enumerated state powers in the sea of unenumerated individual rights, statist since the New Deal see islands of enumerated individual rights in a sea of unenumerated state

powers. Over the past sixty years the judicial and congressional tide has continued to erode those small islands of liberty.

It was this type of whimsical interpretation of law that Justice Antonin Scalia—who I understand is also a frequent visitor to Pepperdine’s classrooms—commented upon when he asked: “What secret knowledge, one must wonder, is breathed into lawyers when they become justices of this Court? Day by day, case by case, [the Court] is busy designing a Constitution for a country I do not recognize.” It is a country many other Americans are finding increasingly difficult to recognize, too.

THE LASTING IMPACT OF THE PEPPERDINE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

It is true that a rich array of think tanks have emerged over the years to oppose the tyranny of thought in the traditional academic programs. I have been proud to serve with and support a number of these organizations. I am pleased that others who have similarly dedicated their lives—good friends such as Ed Feulner, Jack Kemp, Michael Novak, and Steve Forbes—serve on your board. I don’t believe, however, that the future of the Republic can be safely left to a collection of policy and intellectual organizations. If we are to address the tendency towards statism, we must produce leaders. This is why I appreciate the mission of the School of Public Policy—for not only is it dedicated to the proposition that ideas have consequences, but

here you are committed to educating the future. The lasting impact of these graduates and this school can only be imagined and most surely will be underestimated by today's casual observer.

I believe that while there are contemporary policy battles that must be fought, the preservation of our political heritage—in particular the proper relationship between the individual and the state—requires this kind of long-term investment in the halls and classrooms of the academy. And the Pepperdine School of Public Policy, while far outside of Washington, D.C., is truly on the front lines and winning the fight.

I remember that when I spoke at the Pepperdine business school I was impressed with the university's formal affirmation that “freedom, whether spiritual, intellectual, or economic, is indivisible.” And I took note that in your public policy curriculum there is a heightened appreciation for a wide range of market-based solutions to many policy challenges.

When Tocqueville peered into the fog of America's future, he said of its citizens: “I do not fear that they will meet with tyrants in their rulers, but rather with guardians.” Such a government, he said, “does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till [they are] reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.”

We must not confuse Tocqueville's government shepherd with the Good Shepherd. And we must begin by remembering that the true source of our security and our freedoms is not secular, but spiritual. Until we recapture this truth, the relationship between the individual and the state will remain misshapen.

“FEAR NOT”

If we are to overcome the challenges I have outlined today, we will need to draw upon not just our fears, but our hopes. In that spirit, I would like to leave you with a plea from Pope John Paul II:

We must not be afraid of the future. We must not be afraid of man . . . Each and every human person has been created in the image and likeness of the One who is the origin of all that is. We have within us the capacities for wisdom and virtue. With these gifts, and with the help of God’s grace, we can build in [this new] century and [this new] millennium a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and must do so! And in doing so, we shall see that the tears of [the last] century have prepared the ground for a new springtime of the human spirit.

Here today we not only dedicate a building. We empower a new school that heeds Pope John Paul’s favorite exhortation to “fear not” and that finds its roots and sustenance in eternal and God given moral imperatives reflecting the value of the individual over the state. Thank you very much.

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