Reclaiming America from the
Tyranny of Progressivism

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America was founded on specific principles which were embodied in our Constitution. Yet Progressives — essentially Statists — have been trying to steer American away from those principles for nearly a century. Mark Levin’s book, *Rediscovering Americanism: And the Tyranny of Progressivism*, explains the significance of our founding principles and the reasons why progressives have so dogmatically tried to abrogate them.

In his book, *Liberty and Tyranny*, Levin wrote:

So distant is America today from its founding principles that it is difficult to precisely describe the nature of American government. It is not strictly a constitutional republic, because the Constitution has been and continues to be easily altered by a judicial oligarchy that mostly enforces, if not expands, the Statists’ agenda. It is not strictly a representative republic, because so many edicts are produced by a maze of administrative departments that are unknown to the public and detached from its sentiment. It is not strictly a federal republic, because the states that gave the central government life now live at its behest. What, then, is it? It is a society steadily transitioning toward statism.

**AMERICA’S FOUNDING PRINCIPLE: NATURAL LAW**

America was founded on the universal principle of natural law. Our Declaration of Independence inextricably references natural law:

> When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them... We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. (Italics added)

English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) strongly influenced thinking during the revolutionary period. He wrote that there is a natural circle of freedom that surrounds all people at birth. This natural right is divine and eternal and is unalterable by mankind.

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**REDISCOVERING AMERICANISM: And the Tyranny of Progressivism**

*by Mark R. Levin*

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Levin notes that the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC), the Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC), and the Italian philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) all explored the true nature of man. Philosopher Shirley Robin Letwin wrote that Aristotle described:

> ...the twofold character of law... which he calls 'particular' and 'universal.' Particular law 'is that which each community lays down and applies to its own members'; universal law is 'the law of nature.'

Thus the principle of natural law, recognized by Aristotle, was incorporated into the Declaration of Independence as immutable “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” Levin observes:

Again, it is the foundation of human morality on which republics are built, including
and especially the American republic. The principle of natural law permeated American thought from the beginning of our republic and well before.

Levin concludes that “The abandonment of Natural Law is the adoption of tyranny in one form or another, because there is no humane or benevolent alternative to Natural Law.”

Yet if the Constitution is interpreted according to progressives as a malleable “living, breathing” document, then there is a distinct likelihood that the concept of natural law might take its last breath.

**IMPORTING PROGRESSIVISM**

Levin describes American progressivism, which was imported from Europe, as an “elitist-driven counterrevolution to the American Revolution” in which America’s founding principles would be cast aside for an agenda characterized as “human progress.” Levin writes:

Progressivism is the idea of the inevitability of historical progress and the perfectibility of man — and his self-realization — through the national community or collective.…

Moreover, for progressives there are no absolute or permanent truths, only passing and distant historical events. Thus even values are said to be relative to time and circumstances; there is no eternal moral order — that is, what was true and good in 1776 and before is not necessarily true and good today. Consequently, the very purpose of America’s founding is debased.

On July 13, 2012, President Barack Obama echoed this progressive sentiment, saying: “[I]f you’ve been successful, you didn’t get there on your own…” What a marked contrast to America’s founding precepts of individual effort and responsibility!

Under the progressive paradigm, America’s heritage and outmoded founding principles must be cast aside in order to facilitate the evolution of human progress. Levin writes that under progressivism the old notion of individualism, paramount under the Declaration of Independence, must give way to a new individualism — where the individual is subjugated to the power of the state, all for the greater good. Levin writes:

… for the progressive, historical progress is said to be a process of never-ending cultural and societal adjustments intended to address the unique circumstances of the time, the ultimate goal of which is economic egalitarianism and the material liberation of “the masses.” Unlike most of Europe, the American attitude, experience, and governing sys-
exceedingly restful…. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the govern-er, that is final. No advance, no progress can be made beyond these propositions.…

Levin observes, “Yet for Wilson and the progressives, the American founding was simply a historical event distinct to its own moment and condition.”

John Dewey (1859–1952) was among the foremost progressive thinkers, claiming that progressivism was essentially science-based pragmatism. Dewey acknowledged Marx’s influence on progressivism in his 1930 book, Individualism Old and New. He insisted that progressive ideology is more than simple governance; it must fully infuse all of society.

Progressives abide by the premise that social experimentation is continuous and sweeping. Today that premise is an implicit component of the Democrat party’s agenda.

TYRANNY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STATE

America’s bureaucratic administrative state regulates practically every aspect of our lives, from commerce to education.

Levin writes that “By stripping the individual of his uniqueness and spirit, the democracy transitions into an omnipresent state.” He contends that this overarching administrative state directly impinges on America’s founding principles:

America’s founding principles are eternal principles. They are principles that instruct humanity today and tomorrow, as they did yesterday. These principles are born of intuition, faith, experience, and right reason. They are the foundation on which the civil society is built and the individual is cherished; they are the basis of freedom, moral order, happiness, and prosperity.

Levin explains how progressives must necessarily strive to undermine those founding principles which impede their desired “progress”:

Since the principles undergirding America’s founding are beyond mortal law, they are beyond the reach of the progressives and the administrative state. Hence the war on the founding values, beliefs, and traditions was and is intended to, among other things, stop legitimate inquiry into and teaching of first principles or purposes. They are to be made intellectually and culturally off-limits.

Levin examines the concept of freedom as embodied in the Bill of Rights in the context of positive liberty and negative liberty as defined by philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997). Levin points out that the Bill of Rights is essentially a set of negative liberty directives to the federal government, preventing or limiting certain actions, as opposed to positive liberty directives giving specific rights and permissions to the populace. He notes that tyrannical regimes are based on notions of coercive positive liberty, stating that “For the progressive, the answer is the centralized administrative state, where the individual is coerced in infinite ways, as willed by the machinery of the state.” Levin observes that positivism as such constitutes an implicit rejection of natural law.

Levin emphasizes that virtue was an integral component of the nation our Founders created:

Hence, for Jefferson, and most of the Founders, virtue was an essential element of liberty; if the people lack virtue, no form of government can rescue them from tyranny. Again, it must be remembered that the Founders relied on the wisdom of such thinkers as Aristotle, Cicero, and Locke and were influenced by such contemporaries as Edmund Burke and Adam Smith… And the Founders returned repeatedly to the importance of natural law, eternal truths, and transcendent moral order, including virtue.

One might wonder whether America today has lost its inherent moral order, and whether such a loss has been orchestrated by the progressive agenda.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Iconic French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) feared for the death of American individualism and republicanism in his two-volume book, Democracy in America, writing:

It is indeed difficult to conceive how men who have entirely given up the habit of self-government should succeed in making a proper choice of those by whom they are to be governed; and no one will ever believe that a liberal, wise, and energetic government can spring from the suffrages of a subservient people.

Today, America is moving ever more quickly to a statist form of government control which the Founders could not have imagined possible. This dominance has transgressed from administrative oversight to the ominous agenda of transforming man and society.

Philosopher Karl Popper wrote in his 1957 book, The Poverty of Historicism, that the human factor must be controlled:

…by institutional means, and to extend his program so as to embrace not only the transformation of society… but also the transformation of man. The political problem, therefore, is to organize human impulses in
such a way that they will direct their energy
to the right strategic points, and steer the
total process of development in the desired
direction.

Popper continues:
It seems to escape the well-meaning Utopia-
nist that his program implies an admission of
failure, even before he launches. For it sub-
stitutes for his demand that we build a new
society, fit for men and women to live in,
the demand that we ‘mould’ these men and
women to fit into the new society.

Marx criticized education as promoting the sta-
tus quo. Similarly, Dewey advocated reconstructing our
educational system in order to incorporate progressive
ideology into the public school system — an agenda now
visibly accomplished.

Levin writes that “The American founding was…
an effort to ensure that the individual can prosper in a
just and stable environment…. It is one thing for the
individual to be all he can be, but it is quite another thing
for the government to be all it can be.”

Mark Levin is an astute and insightful analyst and
author. In his book, Liberty and Tyranny, he presents a
manifesto of policies and actions that could contribute
to improving our society.

In The Liberty Amendments, Levin argues for using
Article V of the Constitution to bring together a conven-
tion of the states, thus bypassing the federal Leviathan
altogether in order to enable the states to consider con-
stitutional avenues for restoring republican government.

In Plunder and Deceit, he highlighted the extent
to which the federal government is pushing the nation
toward the abyss of unfettered spending and borrowing.

All of the actions recommended in his books would
require both an informed public and the political will to
engage on these actions. At this point, the certainty of
either is questionable.

While the book Rediscovering Americanism: And
the Tyranny of Progressivism covers a lot of ground, it is
well organized and well written. Levin presents a substan-
tive historical perspective, and his penetrating analysis is
especially relevant in light of today’s political environ-
ment. Highly recommended reading.

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Rediscovering Americanism

Excerpts from Epilogue of Rediscovering Americanism by Mark R. Levin

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uffice it to say that America’s founding principles are eternal principles. They are principles that instruct
humanity today and tomorrow, as they did yesterday. These principles are born of intuition, faith, experi-
ence, and right reason. They are the foundation on which the civil society is built and the individual is cher-
ished; they are the basis of freedom, moral order, happiness, and prosperity.

Yet these principles are apparently so grievous and abhorrent that they are mostly ignored or even
ridiculed today by academia, the media, and politicians — that is, the ruling elite and its surrogates. They
reject history’s lessons and instead are absorbed with their own conceit and aggrandizement in the relentless
pursuit of a diabolical project, the final outcome of which is an oppression of mind and soul. Indeed our ears
are pierced with the shrill and constant chorus of promises and shibboleths about utopian statism, which, of
course, serve the purposes of a sterile, scientific project and its centralized administrative-state masterminds.
The equality they envision, but dare not honestly proclaim, is life on the hamster wheel, where one individual
is indistinguishable from the next.

In many respects, the progressive has succeeded in his primary objective: the deconstruction of the
American republic for concentrated, centralized power — the exact opposite of the Founders’ intentions.
During the last century or so, American began the transformation into a kind of pseudo-constitutional or
post-constitutional republic, in which the natural law truths of the Declaration of Independence and the
justice and security of the Constitution are typically and repeatedly abused to, paradoxically, enshrine in law
and justify as legitimate the progressive’s autocratic and egalitarian agenda.

[L]est we forget: It is one thing for the individual to be all he can be, but it is quite another thing for the
government to be all it can be. The former was born to be free; the latter was established with limits.