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Find Liberty in Unexpected Places

by Joseph S. Diedrich





FIND LIBERTY IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

GUIDE 1.0

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“When Thoreau was released from jail, he immediately went on a berry hunt with a swarm of young boys. No bitterness. Thoreau simply returned to living deeply without missing a beat. This post-jail quest for berries occasioned my favorite line from all of Thoreau’s writings: As he tramped the trails in search of juicy treasure, Thoreau found himself standing on a high point in a field. He gazed about at the continuous, sprawling beauty that surrounded him and observed ‘the State was nowhere to be seen.’”

— Wendy McElroy

INTRODUCTION

Where is liberty? I contend that it is absolutely everywhere. Its wonder permeates every aspect of our lives.



In the following essays, I share but a few examples of how to capture the spirit of a berry-picking Thoreau. Join me as I find “continuous, sprawling beauty” in dating apps, candy bars, and of course, my favorite cocktail. The light of liberty lives in ordinary things...if you’re brave enough to look.

EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT ECONOMICS I LEARNED FROM TINDER

The Huffington Post calls it “the Twitter of dating.” It’s Tinder, a mobile app now available in two dozen languages. Millions of men and women, mostly millennials, have flocked to the Tinderverse. It’s exhilarating, enticing, and occasionally disturbing.

To begin, you download the app and log in via Facebook. Tinder hijacks essential data—name, age, photos, mutual friends, and likes—from Zuck’s house and builds you an editable profile. Then you go window shopping—not for shoes, but for other users in your area. Swipe right if you like what you see and left if you don’t. When two people swipe right for each other, they’re “matched,” and a chat conversation opens.

You may have already known all that, perhaps from personal experience. What you probably didn’t know is that Tinder is also an economics textbook. Besides getting you laid, the app teaches you the fundamentals of the “youngest of all sciences.”

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Human Action

For Ludwig von Mises, economics starts with a foundational understanding of human action. He defines human action as “purposeful behavior” precipitated by perceived “uneasiness” and “the expectation that purposeful behavior has the power to remove or at least to alleviate the felt uneasiness.”

That’s precisely why I downloaded Tinder. Some of my needs, wants, and desires were not being met. I was not perfectly content. By engaging in the purposeful act of using the app, I expected that I would come closer to contentment. Whether or not that happened is none of your business.

Subjective Value

The cornerstone of Austrian economic thought (to which Mises adhered) is the subjective theory of value. When Mises writes, echoing his forebear Carl Menger, “value is not intrinsic, it is not in things,” he underscores the basic premise of Tinder. The choice is mine to make to swipe right. While the app can find people for me based on my location and input parameters (age, gender, etc.), it cannot (and could never) quantify or calculate my valuation of the beauty of another.

My valuations neither impede nor enhance another man’s abilities to make his own subjective valuations. Nobody can be declared “objectively attractive” prior to or because of a swipe. I doubt, for instance, that many people swipe right for anarchy tattoos, but I do. Indiscriminately.

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Law of Returns

Originally articulated in 1815 by the classical economist David Ricardo, the law of diminishing marginal returns states that “as more and more resources are combined in production with a fixed resource—for example, as more labor and machinery are used on a fixed amount of land—the additions to output will diminish.”

More generally, the per-unit (marginal) benefit gained from something diminishes with every further addition of that thing.



When I first started Tindering, I vetted every individual with a critical eye. I swiped deliberately and meticulously. After awhile, however, each additional profile seemed less and less significant. I began to scrutinize with less intensity. My thumbs got faster. Likewise, I remember my first Tinder match vividly: It increased my match total from zero to one. But now, a new match raises the proverbial boat nary an inch on my Tinder sea.

The Role of Advertising

Economists have sparred over the role and value of advertising. Prominent figures such as John Kenneth Galbraith believed that advertising is a scourge on society. Firms use advertising to create artificial demand for their own products, thereby distracting the gullible public and siphoning wealth from more productive uses. Galbraith's contemporary F. A. Hayek saw it differently:

It is because each individual producer thinks that the consumers can be persuaded to like his products that he endeavors to influence them. But though this effort is part of the influences which shape consumers' taste, no producer can in any real sense "determine" them.

Information shared by Tinder "producers" is more or less advertising. For that, I am grateful. It helps me make decisions as a "consumer." As Mises says, "The consumer is not omniscient." Oh, you like gin? Please, tell me more. Your profile picture includes multiple cats? Swipe left. I much prefer the market of Tinder to blind-date socialism and arranged-marriage communism.

Assurance contract

An assurance contract is a mechanism through which one party agrees to provide a collective good if and only if other parties first provide resources that reach a threshold when aggregated. The idea first appeared in *The Review of Economic Studies* in 1989. Authors Mark Bagnoli and Barton L. Lipman explain: "Agents voluntarily contribute any non-negative amount of the private good they choose and the social decision is to provide the public good if contributions are sufficient to pay for it."

When I swipe right on Tinder, I pledge my contact information (my Tinder "address," if you will). The app takes note of my pledge and holds it in escrow. Upon reaching a threshold (viz., two reciprocal right swipes), Tinder provides the threshold good (a chat conversation). Neither of us is obligated to actually chat, however. The contract only assures us that the feature will be made available, not that it has to be used.



On the whole, Tinder is a vast marketplace of individuals making choices. That's the economy in a nutshell. Use the app to shop around, find a date, or fall in love...with economics.

MY TINY COSMOPOLITAN APARTMENT

I live in a studio apartment, so my kitchen is my living room is my bedroom. The other day, I was staring out my sole window when something startled me. (And it wasn't the subwoofer two floors up.)

It was my coffee. While sipping from my mug, I glanced at the bag of beans. It read, "Origin: Ethiopia." Next, I read the text on the bottom of my laptop: "Designed by Apple in California. Assembled in China." I looked down at my necktie: "Bruno Piatelli. Roma."

This little exercise became a game. From what other far-off places did my stuff come? I sleep on bed sheets from Egypt. I drink bottles of Shiraz from Australia. I pour Canadian maple syrup on my pancakes. Some things weren't technically "foreign," but they still came a long way: books printed in New York, apples grown in Washington orchards, and beer brewed in St. Louis.

Within the narrow confines of my apartment was an expansive world market — a veritable microcosm of the global economy.

What startled me most wasn't that so much had traveled so far. Rather, it was that I found nothing from my own city. While I had purchased some items in Madison, they didn't originate here.

What about the "buy local" bandwagon? If I were to follow the consumer movement du jour to its fullest extent, I'd be much poorer. Because of a much more constrained division of labor, I'd spend more money on lower quality goods. I probably wouldn't even have coffee, and I certainly wouldn't own an Italian necktie.

Yet I don't intentionally avoid local goods. Every Saturday morning, like a ritual, I visit the county farmers market. I buy delicious seasonal fruits, vegetables, and cheeses from nearby farmers — not because they're local, but because they're the best. Produce tends to be tastier if it hasn't spent a week on a flatbed.

Adam Smith once wrote, "In every country it always is and must be the interest of the great body of the people to buy whatever they want of those who sell it cheapest." The less trade is restricted

Within the narrow confines of my apartment was an expansive world market.



between individuals and across borders, the more “the body of people” can “buy whatever they want” the “cheapest.” As society becomes more and more integrated, we can better take advantage of the division of labor, leading to lower prices, greater prosperity, and a higher standard of living for everyone.

When I buy a preferable foreign product instead of its domestic counterpart, I obviously benefit myself. I receive a better product at a better price. I also clearly help the foreign producer.

I benefit the domestic economy, too. By purchasing cheaper foreign goods, I reserve more of my money to spend elsewhere, including in domestic exchange. More importantly, I send a signal to domestic producers: don’t waste your time making that thing! By doing so, I incentivize domestic producers to reallocate their resources to more highly valued endeavors.

It’s true that free trade and globalization make the rich richer. But they also make the poor richer. Trade provides cell phones to people in developing countries. It increases wages. It fosters international peace. And it makes denizens of tiny dwellings feel like the freest, richest people in the world.

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Four hundred and fifty square feet doesn’t sound like much. Yet somehow I’ve managed to fit states, countries, and even continents inside. The most remarkable thing of all? I didn’t intend for this to happen. I didn’t decide one day to start purchasing only “foreign” goods. I never consciously attempted to avail myself of “exotic” treasures.

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Nobody ever intends for this to happen. Every day, we make countless, often subconscious cost-benefit analyses. When it comes to purchasing actual goods, we weigh all the factors we care about — price, quality, size, shape, taste, and so on. We search for the highest quality consumer goods within our respective price ranges. Just by buying what we like, we unwittingly amass personal bazaars.

We are capable of planning only for our individual selves. Despite the ubiquity of cosmopolitan collections of consumer goods, nobody could ever plan for such a thing. We simply lack the capacity to organize an entire economy to fit our specific needs.

This was the keen insight of economist F.A. Hayek, who recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of his Nobel Prize. While he admitted that “all economic activity” involves planning, not all planning is the same. Because there’s “no dispute about whether planning is to be done or not,” what



matters is “whether planning is to be done centrally, by one authority for the whole economic system, or is to be divided among many individuals.”

My apartment has only one window, but I feel like I can see the whole world. Every treasure I own is a window to a place I’ve never been and to people I’ve never met.

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF ELECTION

Another election has come and gone. At least for the time being, annoying commercials will cease, people will restore friendships damaged by disagreement, and Anderson Cooper will return to prattling about celebrity divorces.

Most Americans view elections — especially those of the presidential variety — as choices of unparalleled significance. For whom they cast a ballot will supposedly be the most important decision they make for many, many months to come.

You had better make the correct decision, we are told, because you won’t be able to vote again until the next leap year. “Make your voice heard!” shout the pundits, candidates, volunteers, and overzealous next door neighbors. “If you don’t, you can’t complain!”

Is all this really true? Of course not.

In fact, we vote every day; each and every one of us participates in several discrete elections from the moment we wake up till the moment we go to sleep. The democratic process is inescapable.

November 5, 2012, was cold and blustery. The conditions, however, did nothing to deter an enthusiastic gathering of gamers. These people — individuals of all races, creeds, and political beliefs — assembled outside a building, awaiting their opportunity to vote. At midnight, the polls opened and eagerly accepted the opinions of each and every person standing outside.

But these people were not waiting to vote by drawing lines or checking boxes on a ballot. These people were there to vote with their minds and their money. This was about a real choice — a choice among infinite alternatives, a choice that affected not only themselves but also everyone else, a choice that would have a dramatic influence on the future. They were at a video game store, and on that night, the choice was made for Halo 4.

This was about
a real choice.



Elections such as this occur an incalculable number of times every hour across the globe. This is the glory of exchange and commerce: the free market affords us the opportunity to make substantive choices about the way we live our lives. These are the elections that really matter.

And these elections are truly peaceful. The gamers hungrily anticipating their forthcoming satisfaction had convened of their own free will and were talking, laughing, and doing whatever else people who don't hate each other do. There were no derogatory insults or hostile stares. Contrast that with the bitter (and often irrational) hatred seen at political rallies and official polling places.

What emerges from the gallimaufry of countless individual yet interrelated preferences, choices, and commercial exchanges is nothing short of miraculous. The wonders of civilization we enjoy today are the culmination of thousands of years of comparably infinitesimal commercial elections. With every vote, demand, supply, and price are simultaneously affected, ultimately leading toward a more preferable society. Unfortunately, government gets in the way.

Choosing Burger King over McDonald's, regular over decaf, or leather over suede are all actions infinitely more important and influential to the future composition of society than choosing Romney over Obama. No matter who one votes for in a political election, the government always wins. But if enough individuals stop voting for Duracell batteries, eventually they won't exist anymore.

So do not lament and languish too much over the outcome of the presidential election. You don't have to wait another four years to vote again. In fact, you have almost certainly voted since then — many times.

THE EDUCATION OF JEFF WINGER

While *Parks and Recreation's* Ron Swanson could be crowned TV's libertarian king, there's another fictional character who deserves more attention from libertarian audiences: Jeff Winger,

Jeff Winger was disbarred not because he was an incompetent lawyer or even because he lied about his credentials.

the darling of Greendale Community College. And unlike *Parks and Rec*, which is in its final season, *Community* is coming back for another season on March 17.



Over the course of *Community*'s five-year run, the show has made a few overt references to Jeff's libertarian proclivities, most notably in the second-season episode "Intro to Political Science." Motivated by the desire to mock his classmates' political fervor, Jeff enters the race for student body president. An on-screen graphic displays his party affiliation as "Libertarian."

But Jeff Winger's libertarianism shows more in his approach to education than in his politics.

Community chronicles the lives of students, teachers, and administrators at a community college in the fictional town of Greendale, Colorado. Initially assembled as an ad-hoc Spanish study group, seven misfits quickly become friends, roommates, and occasional lovers. The group's reasons to attend community college range from financial necessity to boredom — and everything in between.

Jeff enrolled at Greendale essentially as punishment. *Community*'s pilot episode reveals that he was once a proud and brilliant attorney. However, at the height of his career, he was disbarred. "The state bar has suspended my license," Jeff says to Professor Ian Duncan (John Oliver), who happens to be a former client. "They found out my college degree is less than legitimate." Jeff never graduated.

Jeff is a liar and a manipulator. But his personal character is beside the point. Adept at his profession, he successfully represented his clients. And he didn't need a diploma to do so. Of course, the state bar disagreed.

Jeff Winger wasn't disbarred for incompetence, or even for lying. His lack of formal education did not hurt his clients or the public.

He was disbarred because he did not possess the arguably arbitrary credentials.

Why is a formal education the nonnegotiable prerequisite for so many lines of work?

One reason is anti-competitive restrictionism. Licensing boards, which are often created or legitimized by municipalities or state governments, create barriers to entry into an occupation. Such barriers include licensing fees, quotas (for example, taxi medallion systems), training requirements (cosmetology licensing boards), and educational prerequisites (medical and bar associations).

Positions on licensing boards are often filled by industry leaders. It serves the board members' interests to restrict competition. Less competition favors established practitioners by increasing their profits and ultimately cartelizing entire industries. The boards act under the guise of "protecting the public." But the only things the public is "protected" from are lower prices, higher quality, and greater choice.



Community itself rebuked a sort of restrictionism. NBC canceled the show after five seasons. Rejected by network TV, however, *Community* is now poised to continue its run on Yahoo Screen.

Restriction from the market only accounts for so much, though. The modern conception of education itself is dubious. Every year, thousands of college students don their caps and gowns and receive their diplomas assuming that four years of academic toil produce an “educated” individual. Is that necessarily true?

Over the past hundred years or so, the meaning of the word “education” has been overhauled. For centuries, education was a quest for enlightenment through the study of language, history, philosophy, literature, and the like — what might be called the “humanities” or “liberal arts.”

Then, around the turn of the last century, a sweeping progressive revolution reshaped the nation’s educational system. The mechanics changed. The system’s purpose changed. The concept of “education” itself changed.

In the wake of this revolution, Albert Jay Nock observed in *The Theory of Education in the United States*, “Perhaps we are not fully aware of the extent to which instruction and education are accepted as being essentially the same thing.”

An “educated” person was no longer one well versed in, say, logic and history; rather, he or she was simply “instructed.” Knowledge in the spirit of the Great Tradition was superseded by vocational and practical know-how, leading Nock to conclude that “the understanding of instruction as synonymous with education is erroneous.”

Instruction neither necessarily nor sufficiently implies education. They are anything but synonymous, and hoards of college graduates incapable of penning coherent sentences supply damning evidence for this claim.

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Jeff Winger graduated from Greendale Community College in the fourth season of *Community*. Was he educated as a result? Clearly not, although he was instructed. In fact, he was educated before the requisite instruction even began, insofar as he possessed the knowledge needed to perform his occupation well. Four years of his life went to waste: instead of being a productive member of society creating and accumulating wealth, he was forced to endure a hodgepodge of irrelevant courses, instructors, and — as any frequent viewer of the show can attest to — diorama projects.



Libertarian philosophy does not equate education with instruction. While the two sometimes go hand in hand, they can also be polar opposites. A free people in a free market are the only just determinant of educational and instructional requisites. Licensing boards and other state-sponsored restrictions are unnecessary and often harmful.

If Jeff Winger or anyone else can be a productive member of society without a degree, then that is, as Abed would say, “Cool, cool, cool.”

POLITWIX: ARE LEFT AND RIGHT REALLY DIFFERENT?

The world is full of puzzling questions. Do ghosts exist? What is the meaning of life? Why are there two Twix bars in one wrapper?

Finally, after years upon years of vexation, the Twix company has shared the details of its troubled past, shedding light on the question of candy bar bifurcation. About a year ago, Twix released the first in a series of television commercials that has begun to explain one of life’s greatest mysteries. It seems that almost immediately after Twix was unveiled, the company’s two like-minded founders, Seamus and Earl, fell into an abyss of irreconcilable disagreement. Realizing that they could no longer continue on as co-workers, they decided to split the company in two. What emerged from the division were two rival companies alike in nearly every way: Left Twix and Right Twix.

While obvious to the outside world, the overwhelming similarities between the two chocolatey corporations went unnoticed by the myopic executives of each respective side.

According to the ad’s narrator, “Each factory took a vastly different approach. Left Twix flowed caramel on cookie, while Right Twix cascaded caramel on cookie. Left Twix bathed in chocolate, while Right Twix cloaked in chocolate.”

Another similar ad focuses on the modern-day state of the rival factories. A young, ambitious employee approaches the head of Right Twix. “We’re in the Right Twix factory,” he says, “making cookie layered with caramel for the right side of the pack. And next door is the Left Twix factory, and they make cookie layered with caramel covered in chocolate.”

“No — cloaked in chocolate,” interrupts the obtuse executive. “Totally different process.” After peering across the driveway through a telescope, observing an identical office in the Left Twix factory, he contemptuously concludes, “I just don’t like the way they carry themselves.”



This is laughable, of course, because Left Twix and Right Twix “carry themselves” exactly the same. Beyond mere rhetoric, they are indistinguishable. The Left-Right Twix dichotomy bears a striking resemblance to the American political system. Like Seamus and Earl, Republicans and Democrats quarrel over superficial disparities while enthusiastically (albeit often unwittingly) agreeing on all matters of substance.

Democrats and Republicans quibble about the structure and funding of education, but they unanimously agree that mandated, standardized instruction is the only way to go. Democrats favor intervention in one far-off land, while Republicans favor it in another, but neither party flinches at the mention of sanctions, foreign aid, arms dealing, drone strikes, combat troops, or outright war.

The only hint of disagreement concerns whether the nation should approach financial insolvency at Mach-2 or Mach-3.

Democrats and Republicans adhere to slightly different philosophies regarding the manipulation of the economy, yet on both sides there is an unequivocal disdain for the free market. Bailouts, taxes, subsidies, and regulations are bipartisan rallying cries. The only hint of disagreement concerns whether the nation should approach financial insolvency at Mach-2 or Mach-3.

Whether it's Medicare Part-D or Obamacare, healthcare nationalization counts on both sides of the aisle. Whether it's marijuana or raw milk, the war on illicit commerce gathers support from the GOP and the Dems alike. Whether it's sheet music or cell phone

technology, intellectual property remains unquestioned by nearly everyone. Attempts to distinguish the indistinguishable are futile and distracting. Prattling about trivial differences invites vacuous dialogue, subdues critical thinking, precludes progress, and produces farcical demagoguery.

From the Twix website, we learn of the lengths taken by each factory to maintain illusory separation:

“Right Twix Bars are packaged in the same location as that other Twix at The Twix Union Packaging Company, an equal opportunity packaging company. They package Right Twix between the hours of 12:00 pm and 11:00 pm. That other one is packaged between 12:00 am and 11:00 am. Between shifts, the equipment is reviewed and conveyor belts are replaced to avoid any unwanted cookie mingling.”



At the end of the day, though, neither Twix manufacturer can deny that their respective candy bars do, in fact, snuggle closely with their supposed rival.

These excessive expenditures on avoidance and propaganda mirror the electoral rigmarole. Every four years, presidential candidates go to extraordinary lengths to convince the voting public that two inches is a mile.

At the end of each Twix commercial, we are prompted to, “Try both and pick a side.” Of course, we could also choose to not buy Twix at all.

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LIBERTY ON THE LINKS

Individuals of all makes and models enjoy golf. Men and women, vegetarians and carnivores, statists and anarchists — they all take pleasure in the joy of the swing. Unrealized by them all, however, is the game’s inherent libertarianism.

A golfer can choose to tee up his ball in the middle of the fairway. A golfer can choose to ground his club in the sand. A golfer can choose to talk while someone is swinging. A golfer can lie about his score. None of these offenses will result in conventional punishment. The police won’t arrest the golfer. He won’t be put on trial. There won’t be eager lawyers lining up to take his case.

That being said, if the golfer repeatedly commits such offenses on the course, eventually nobody will want to play with him. Others will boycott his company, and ostracism will be his fate. From his sour reputation will come loneliness. Yet there is hardly a soul on the planet (especially of the

Yet there is hardly a soul on the planet (especially of the golfing variety) who wishes to walk the fairways of life alone.

golfing variety) who wishes to walk the fairways of life alone. For that reason, the golfer will voluntarily obey the rules of the game that demand his acquiescence.

In order to “protect and preserve the game and its challenges,” the USGA recently announced a controversial ban on the use of the popular anchored putting stroke. The USGA, unlike state governments that rely on force, is much more sensitive to public opinion. If the ban, which is scheduled to take effect in 2016, reduces participation in the game (and thereby reduces the profits of golf courses), then it could very well be reversed.



A curious question resulted from the ruling: Would the PGA and PGA Tour (the governing bodies of professional competitive golf in the United States) honor the ban? Or would the rules of the game be bifurcated?

The very possibility of bifurcation, regardless of whether or not it would be beneficial or disastrous, demonstrates the fundamental difference between golf governance and state government. Obviously, multiple golf governing bodies can operate simultaneously and harmoniously. On the contrary and by definition, a state government is a monopoly on the provision of its services within a given territory.

When it comes to governance and rules, the game of golf is self-regulating. Examples of golfers penalizing themselves abound. In 2009, J.P. Hayes inadvertently “penalized himself out of a job” for playing with a non-conforming golf ball. He could have easily kept quiet and nothing would have happened. Nevertheless, he chose to publicize his transgression.

Six days after a round of golf, Blayne Barber could not expel uneasiness from his conscience. After much thinking, he disqualified himself ex post from the 2012 PGA Tour qualifying tournament, even though nobody else but he was questioning the authenticity of his scorecard.

In 2008, Michael Thompson called a penalty on himself in the Masters when his ball oscillated after he addressed it. While he ended up missing the cut in that tournament, some positive press for his honesty did result.

“I think that’s one of the things that I love about golf, that there is a defined set of rules and it’s a gentleman’s game,” Thompson said of the incident. “It’s based on honor and I think what sets golf apart from every other sport is that you hold yourself to higher standards than anybody else does.”

Contrary to popular opinion and even more popular cliché, golf is not, in fact, a sport of gentlemen. Like any other humans, golfers are just as frequently crass, filthy, and ungentlemanly. The honesty associated with the game does not emanate from some naturally superior class of men who play it. Rather, golf is a sport of individuals, and upstanding character is a symptom of that fact. We play by ourselves and for ourselves. We own our equipment, our bodies, and our minds. With exclusive control comes full responsibility.

Nobody assesses penalties on themselves in team sports. And while there is certainly nothing wrong with team sports, they do form one half of a poignant analogy. In football, for example, character becomes like a common lake: polluted.

Golf is a sport of individuals, and upstanding character is a symptom of that fact.



Like golf, the free market is self-regulating. The unrelenting determination of every individual to enjoy a fortuitous reputation fosters honest, mutually beneficial interaction. Force is not needed to relegate cheaters, manipulators, and anti-socialites to the rough.

Golf is libertarian.

SPONTANEOUS ORDER IN THE COCKTAIL LOUNGE

It's Friday night after a long week at the office. You gather a few tolerable co-workers and head out for some spirited refreshments. The elevator doors nearly meet before an arm halts their convergence. It's New Guy from the marketing department, at once both svelte and awkward. Not expecting him to accept the invitation, you ask him to join you. To your surprise, your cohort increases in size by one pair of thick-rimmed glasses.

While there's unspoken agreement amongst your group that Corner Bar is the manifestation of mediocrity, it always ends up being the watering hole of choice. You'd be willing to venture down the street to East Tavern, but Julia would surely complain about the loud music. Likewise, West Café would be a welcome change of scenery, but Stan would protest because of the high number of youths. So, Corner Bar it is — familiar, established, and non-controversial.

Your group posts up at a table along the wall. After an uncomfortably long wait, a waitress approaches to take everyone's drink order. Stan leads off with a rum and Coke, the alcoholic equivalent of white bread. Julia follows with a light beer, and Mike and Dana follow suit. Batting clean-up, you request a gin and tonic.

Now it's New Guy's turn. "Negroni," he says with a reserved confidence.

Stan leans over to Julia and snickers, "Sounds racist."

"Serve it up, please," adds New Guy.

Within a few minutes, the waitress returns bearing libations. Starting from the left, she passes out the drinks one by one. The Negroni is last. New Guy proposes a toast in celebration of a hard week's work. Everyone at the table merrily raises a glass and serial clangor ensues.



Once immersed in petty small talk, you become intrigued by New Guy's beverage. "What exactly are you drinking?" you ask. New Guy describes the drink in detail, answering your multiple follow-up questions inquiring how he happened upon it, what he likes about it, and if that's always his potion of choice.

"Would you care to try it?"

You're tepid at first. The drink's nearly mystical aura makes you pause before accepting the generous offer. Delicately grasping the martini glass, you bring the liquor to your nose. A single waft is all you need to realize that the Negroni is unlike anything you've ever encountered. Sprightly floral gin, subtly sweet vermouth, and rich herbal Campari coalesce perfectly into a magical red elixir.

And then comes the moment of truth. Your lips touch the cold rim of the glass. For everyone else, this ephemeral moment is like any other. For you, it seems to last a lifetime. Time stops as the intoxicating liquor touches your tongue. You savor the liquid for as long as you possibly can.

Heretofore unfamiliar sensations overwhelm you. At once, you experience joy, fright, wonder, and insatiable curiosity. All of your past drink decisions are immediately called into question. You become bemused and annoyed: what took me so long? Suddenly, you feel inexplicably different from everyone else.

New Guy reclaims his drink as you summon the waitress to order a Negroni for yourself. Twenty minutes later, everyone at the table except Stan is drinking one. While no one re-

While no one realizes it at the time, you've each broken a lifelong pattern of playing by the rules and wondering why you're not having any fun at it.

alizes it at the time, you've each broken a lifelong pattern of playing by the rules and wondering why you're not having any fun at it.

You consider ordering a Negroni for Stan. He must try one! If there's one staring him straight in the eyeballs, he'll be compelled to take a sip. Before ordering, though, you rethink your plan. Maybe Stan isn't ready. How would you have liked it if New Guy ordered for you?

You realize your best strategy is not to force the Negroni upon others. That would only compromise its valor and charisma. You must set an example. Whenever it's your turn, you'll order

Once immersed in petty small talk, you become intrigued by New Guy's beverage.



with a reserved confidence. Like New Guy, you'll stand poised and prepared. You won't coerce others into ordering a Negroni; rather, you'll let natural curiosity get the best of them.

Faces may contort at the first sip of the Negroni's stringent bitterness. Its price may turn some away. The Negroni isn't perfect, but it can always be improved: better gin, better bartender, better company.

Alas, there will still be a demand for bad drinks — those everyday concoctions with which people are so blindly content. At the very least, you'll know that you've discovered something with more substance, more flare, and more livelihood. Even if only one other individual discovers it because of you, it's a win for both you and the Negroni. After all, it only takes one spark to ignite a flame and only one flame to engulf a forest.

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ENCORE

I spent four years of my life rigorously studying the art of music. During that time, I fell in love with chamber music — string quartets, woodwind quintets, Pierrot ensembles, etc. For me, liberty is immanent in these small groups.

Solo music highlights the talent and perseverance of an individual, but lacks a depth of character. In contrast, chamber ensembles showcase the rich sound produced when several performers work together in harmony.

On the other hand, the coup d'archet of a large orchestra connotes regimented militarism. Unison attack is a relic of Mannheim, developed during a time of incipient nationalism. Conductors are the totalitarians of classical music: their mission, to quell dissent and dictate expression.

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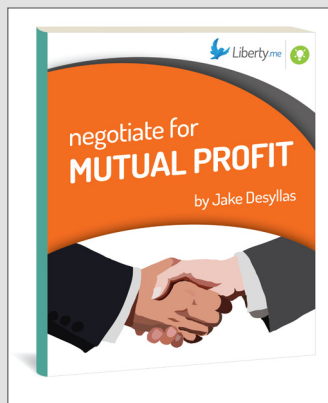
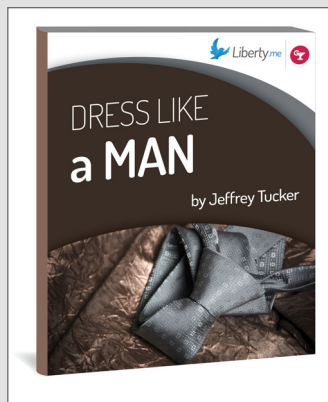
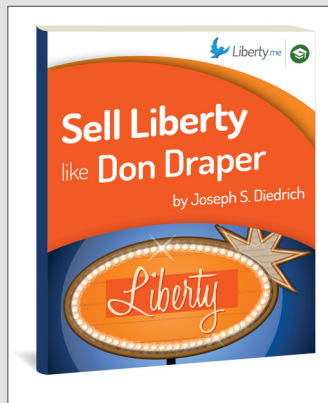
Have you ever seen a string quartet perform live? Even the deaf can appreciate the intensity of focus and the constant non-verbal communication required for the players to remain in sync. In any given passage or piece, multiple leaders emerge, each accepting the responsibility for the task at hand.

Chamber music supports the soloist and liberates the slave. Without a central planner, the ensemble acts with surgical



precision. This is but one example of liberty in an unexpected place. They're everywhere.

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