



Written by [Laurence M. Vance](#) on March 23, 2020

Published in the March 23, 2020 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 36, No. 06

Review of Lew Rockwell's "Against the Left"

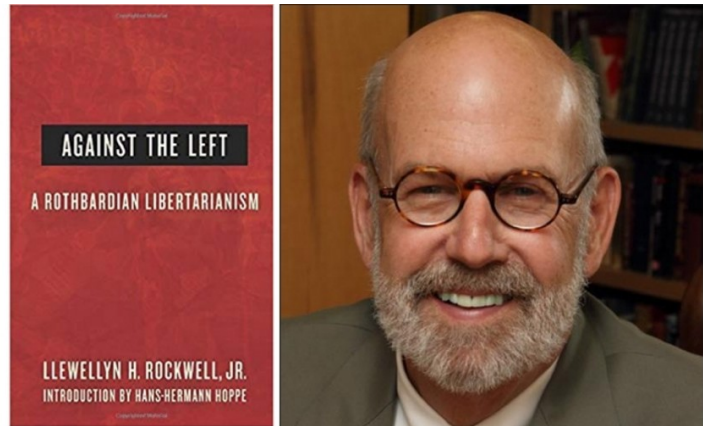
Since the election of Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008, the Democratic Party, as well as liberalism and progressivism in general, has moved increasingly leftward. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016 has accelerated and intensified this leftward move.

The socialist and statist ideals of Democrats, liberals, and progressives are well known: collectivism, paternalism, abortion on demand (at taxpayer expense for low-income women), the transgender movement, feminism, social justice, economic egalitarianism, larger and more intrusive government, organized labor, increased government regulation of the economy and society, public education, government-mandated employee benefits, environmentalism, climate change, an ever-increasing minimum wage, anti-discrimination laws, affirmative action, welfare, higher taxes on "the rich," income-transfer programs, wealth-redistribution schemes, and the championing of every alternative lifestyle known to man.

Thank God for the recent publication of an antidote to the evils of leftist ideology: [Against the Left: A Rothbardian Libertarianism](#). This may very well be the most radical, politically incorrect book that you will read this year — or perhaps that you have ever read.

Llewellyn "Lew" Rockwell is a noted libertarian writer, prolific blogger, astute political commentator, and articulate speaker; the founder and chairman of the Ludwig von Mises Institute in Auburn, Alabama; the founder and editor of the daily news and opinion site LewRockwell.com; and the former congressional chief of staff to Ron Paul, the perennial taxpayers' friend when he was in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Against the Left is a small but powerful book. It contains a brief introduction and conclusion and six chapters, titled "The Assault on the Family," "'Civil Rights' and Disabilities," "Immigration," "Environmentalism," "Economic Egalitarianism," and "Left Libertarianism." The book's lengthy preface is written by Hans-Hermann Hoppe, the noted economist and political theorist. There are no footnotes or bibliography, but *Against the Left* is written for a general audience, and important books for further reading are recommended throughout. The book does, however, include an index. Much of the content in each of the book's chapters has been taken from previously published articles. This content has, for





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the most part, been seamlessly integrated. The insights of the economists and political theorists Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard are “basic” to the book, and Rockwell quotes them often.

The longest chapter in *Against the Left* is the first one, on the assault on the family. This comes as no surprise since “a central theme” of the book “is the importance of the traditional family for preserving our liberty and civilization.” Rockwell maintains that “the modern assault on the family stems from socialism.” Although he is a libertarian, Rockwell is also unapologetically a traditionalist: “In order to maintain a free society, it is essential that the traditional family, i.e., the union of one man and one woman in marriage, in most cases to raise a family, be preserved.” He believes that “the fundamental threat to liberty comes from leftist programs to promote absolute equality.” He explains how “legal equality doesn’t abolish biological differences.” The “failure of all leftists” is “ignoring this point.” In this chapter, Rockwell takes on same-sex “marriage,” homosexuals in the military, feminism, and the canard that women earn less on average than men.

In chapter two, Rockwell discusses discrimination, civil “rights,” racism, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the G.I. bill, and “the greatest of all sacred cows: the *Brown* decision.” He maintains that “discrimination law limits the freedom of property owners to use their money as they see fit.” He explains how “in the name of proving that you are not discriminating against a particular group, your only protection is to discriminate in favor of *that* group.” Rockwell considers “the implied assumption” behind discrimination laws to be “the idea that judges and bureaucrats can discover the real motivation behind every hiring, firing, or labor-management decision.” In a free society, “Employers can hire or fire for any reason they want.” They “can be biased, bigoted, or have poor judgment,” but it is their “judgment to make.” Rockwell believes that “the extent of racism in American society is exaggerated.” The state uses the “racism racket” to silence its critics and to justify “its further extension of power over education, employment, wealth redistribution, and a good deal else.” Rockwell also explains how the state is really saying to the disabled: “Your lack of ability in a particular area entitles you to the property of others.”

Chapter three is devoted to a controversial subject among libertarians: immigration. Rockwell believes it is impossible that “the US or Europe will be a freer place after several more decades of uninterrupted mass immigration.” He explains why the “free immigration” position is not analogous to free trade, “as some libertarians have erroneously claimed.” His solution to the immigration problem is the “total privatization” of everything. With all property privately owned, immigration “would be up to each individual property owner.” In the meantime, because right now “immigration decisions are made by a central authority, with the wishes of property owners completely disregarded,” the correct way to proceed “is to decentralize decision-making on immigration to the lowest possible level, so that we approach ever [more] closely the proper libertarian position, in which individual property owners consent to the various movements of peoples.”

The fourth chapter, on environmentalism, is the most radical one in the book. Rockwell doesn’t recycle or conserve “except when it pays to do so.” He prefers air conditioning, the bug-free indoors, and development over swamps, wetlands, and jungles. The intelligence of dolphins, apes, and bees “doesn’t give them rights” over humans. “Their only real value comes from what they can do for man.” His “favorite section of the hardware store features bug killers, weed killers, varmint traps, and poisons of all sorts.” Nature must be tamed, cut, curbed, and controlled for the benefit of mankind. Swamps “should be drained” and rain forests “turned over to productive agriculture.” Rockwell opposes “world



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central planning in order to control the climate and protect the holy earth from the effects of industrialization,” even as he defends high civilization, capitalism, property rights, and markets.

In this chapter, Rockwell also tackles the subject of government food regulations — “another area dear to the heart of environmentalists.” He explains that “when people say government should do x, y, and z, they are really saying that these people” — a “class of mealy-mouthed, grasping special interests all fired up about what they will do with your money once they get or retain power” — “should be given power to appoint other people to permanent positions of power to tell you and yours what they can and cannot do with their lives and property, and to take a rake-off for their trouble.” Here Rockwell asks a legitimate question for leftists: “Do we owe our health and safety to government regulations or to the responsiveness of the well-capitalized market economy to our preferences and needs?” He explains that most people “are all too willing to credit government for all that is good in the world, and equally prone to overlook market freedom as a source of all that we call civilizational progress.” Rockwell concludes: “The state from the ancient world to the present has created nothing. It has only taken. The market, on the other hand, delivers more miracles every day than we can count.”

Rockwell takes on the nebulous term *equality* in the fifth chapter. Proponents of equality “make precious little effort to disclose to us precisely what they have in mind.” He believes that the “obsession” with equality “undermines every indicator of health we might look for in a civilization.” It is in the course of working toward equality that “the state expands its power at the expense of other forms of human association, including the family itself.” Rockwell believes in the ability of the market “to incorporate just about anyone into the division of labor.” And “even if one person is better than another at absolutely everything, the less able person can still flourish in a free market.” In this chapter, Rockwell also explains how “the struggle for liberty” should not be confused with feminism, and mocks the idea that the use of traditional English pronouns is “oppressive to people who do not identify with the gender they were ‘assigned at birth.’”

The last chapter, on left libertarianism, is the shortest in the book, but an important one for libertarians. Here Rockwell explains how leftism has made inroads into certain elements of libertarianism. He views “infighting” — which is not unique to libertarianism — as helpful. After all, “a respectful exchange of ideas is how a school of thought develops.” He is opposed to “thick” libertarians — tainted by leftist ideas about social justice and egalitarianism — who seek to transform the “elegant moral and social system” of libertarianism by adding to its foundational principle of nonaggression and its resolute commitment to property rights.

Against the Left is a great introduction to the evils of leftism and the ideas of Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard.

Photo of Lew Rockwell: [LewRockwell.com](#)

[Against the Left: A Rothbardian Libertarianism](#), by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr., LewRockwell.com, 2019, 157 pages, paperback.

This review is from the March 23, 2020 print edition of *The New American*.



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