

Welcome back to our series on the values of liberalism.

In the last article, we talked about peace and how ideas and persuasion are at the heart of the liberal change-making model. We now ask the question: WHO will make this change?

Or:

WHO will be responsible for making these changes. And that's the topic of today's article. Today, we will be talking about: responsibility! To get started, remember the common misconception about individualism and something that we called "false individualism." There, we saw that liberalism is sometimes portrayed as this atomistic worldview where individuals only care about themselves. And some critics of liberalism go even further. They argue that from a liberal perspective, people are left to themselves. If something miserable happens to them, they have to get out of this misery by their own efforts.

So, if you get sick or hurt and can't afford health care. Bad luck. You should have started thinking about insurance before. Both of these accusations that liberals only care about themselves and are expected to solve any problem on their own are far from being true. Actually, it is the other way round. Liberals have always embraced the notion of responsibility. Many of them have argued that liberty and responsibility are part of the same token, they need and complement each other.

And in fact, if you think about it for a second, you will recognize: these accusations make no sense. From all that we have heard about liberal values in the previous articles, we know that at the heart of liberalism is self-mastery. Becoming the author of one's very own book of life. For this, we need others that help us and to empower us. Liberals

have always embraced the ideas of community and achieving projects together VOLUNTARILY.

Here's our explanation of where this misunderstanding might come from. It is not because liberals do not care about others. They do. But liberals approach questions of responsibility in a different way. And that seems to be confusing to some. Just imagine: If there is a social problem in our community. For example, too much trash in the parks. Who do we usually ask to solve this sort of problem? Well, right the government. At least this is what most people would respond in most cases. But that's not how liberals approach such questions. Liberals ask the question in a different way.

They do not ask: How can the government fix it? But rather: What can we ourselves do to fix the problem? Liberals always give priority to the problem solving ability of private individuals, entrepreneurs, community members, families, and the like. Liberals do not only trust those individuals to shoulder those responsibilities; but also recognize that individuals want to take care and be engaged.

Alexis de Tocqueville once observed that the beauty of a liberal order is its many decentralized civic associations that help where help is needed without any force or central planning. Of course, there is space for government intervention in the liberal framework sometimes it is hard for individuals to coordinate, there are problems of transaction costs or free-rider problem. All granted. But these considerations kick in after having trusted individuals on the ground to tackle the issue.

To conclude, it is not that liberals do not like the government. Government might indeed be necessary when coordination is difficult or transaction costs are too high. But liberals think that people on the

ground affected by certain problems will come up with better solutions than a bureaucrat or politician often far detached from the problem in the capital city. It is that liberals trust in the individual above anything else and want to empower them to take an active part in social life.

And the best way to do so is by taking on responsibility!

And this brings us to the final part of our little series on the values of liberalism: spontaneous order. In the next article, we will see why liberals are so committed to markets and oppose central planning.

And you will see, much of what we cover there, is inspired by what we've explored here.