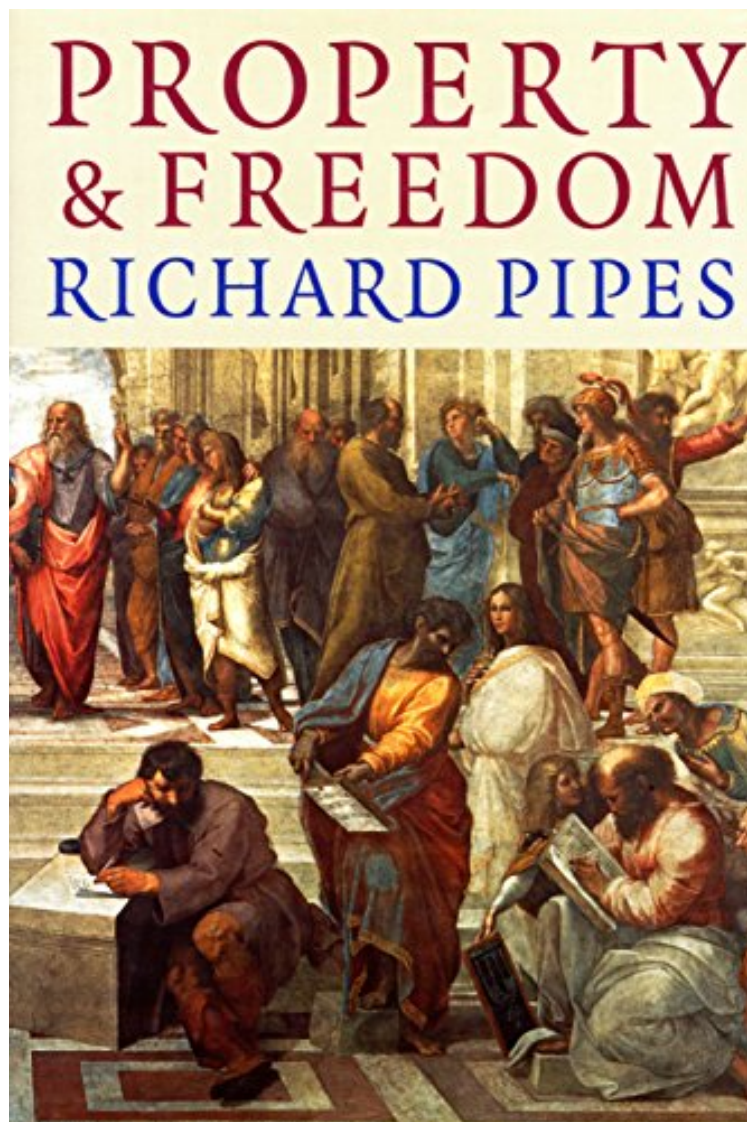


(Free) Property And Freedom

Property And Freedom

Von Richard Pipes

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Von Richard Pipes : Property And Freedom before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Property And Freedom:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. It's Quite Clear: No Property, No LibertyVon Allan from San FranciscoPipes does an excellent job of tracing the history of the concept of property, as well as refuting the laughable utopian idea (still held by many writers and even anthropologists) that the original form of society was communistic, with no concept of private property. The author saw the necessity of also refuting environmental determinism--the idea that mankind is infinitely malleable, with

behavior shaped completely by "cultural conditioning" rather than by human nature (as if culture arrived from outer space, instead of being itself a human creation)! He musters an impressive and diverse array of facts to prove his case, but his text never becomes dense or boring, remaining easily accessible to the average reader and quite stimulating. Pipes demonstrates that contrary to the contentions of the intelligentsia, acquisitiveness is universal and has never been eliminated by conditioning, despite numerous attempts. After all, as he points out, even animals are territorial. He also shows that private property arises more by mutual agreement than by forceful appropriation. Using England and Russia as his main historical reference points, he shows how the existence of (and respect for) property has limited the power of monarchs and the state, prevented oppression, and fostered both freedom and progress (in England, "property" and "liberty" were almost synonymous), while the absence of a concept of property rightfully owned by individuals (as in Russia throughout most of its history) has inevitably fostered oppression and general impoverishment. Property, as he points out, is a bulwark between the state and the individual, and property rights allow the people to be co-sovereign with the state--as opposed to having sovereignty vested in the state alone, a condition only too conducive to abuse. In the case of Russia, he is able to draw upon his expertise on the subject of Russian history, in which he is one of the world's leading authorities. (His massive book, *THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION*, is sure to become a standard reference work on the subject.) The only missing item I would like to have seen in this book is a very important and much-neglected one--an attempt to explain WHY so many writers and intellectuals remain hostile to property, while poor and working-class people are not, seeking to acquire it rather than to denigrate it. Perhaps the identity of the contestants supplies the answer: intellectuals, almost by definition, tend to feel guilty about having a much easier life than working-class people. (In the case of today's journalists, this has blossomed into out-and-out self-hatred, as watching the "news" confirms. Is there ANYTHING that journalists believe in that doesn't involve SOME form of self-punishment?) As Arthur M. Schlesinger once noted, such theories as Marxism appeal to intellectuals partly because of "the intellectual's sense of guilt over living pleasantly by his wits instead of unpleasantly by his hands." Thus, for the typical intellectual, the ideal society would be one in which the state allocates all property and all resources, taking decision-making power (and hence, responsibility) away from individuals, so that the burden of appearing to be "privileged" is automatically removed from those who feel uneasy about having comfortable lifestyles. No wonder "rich kids," from Plato and Seneca to Marx, Engels, and Lenin, have always been in the forefront of the battle to eliminate private property--the ultimate source of their guilt and self-hatred--and to increase the authority of the state. Not surprisingly, this longing for socio-political absolutism came to the world in the form of theories because it came from theorists. A more complete treatment of the relationship between property and liberty would have taken such factors into account. Nevertheless, Professor Pipes is to be commended for giving us a book that covers such a wide range of disciplines and historical data, and still makes a point (and a much-needed one at that).

1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. An Unfinished Masterpiece
Von Joseph L. Bast
What is it about freedom that causes authors who write about it to end their works prematurely or lamely at best? Richard Pipes, our greatest historian of Russia, has written a brilliant and learned study of the historical relationship between property and freedom. He argues persuasively that property rights are the necessary, but not sufficient, cause of individual and political liberty. He documents the history of freedom's repeated rise and fall around the world, first as property rights are discovered, defined, and protected, and then as they are swept away by periods of royal absolutism, socialism, or fascism. The first four parts of the book reflect a life-time of learning and scholarship. Pipes demonstrates complete control over primary as well as secondary sources (despite his humble disclaimer in the introduction). The writing is succinct and fast paced, with disagreements among leading experts quickly identified and the author's own position stated in a sentence or two. This is great research and writing. Part 5, on "Property in the Twentieth Century," and a brief conclusion titled "Portents," hardly seem to have been written by the same author. Here the text is long-winded and tendentious, the sources are seldom peer reviewed or leading experts (except Richard Epstein, who is quoted many times). It is a mystery why the historian felt he had to become a policy analyst in this final section of the book, rendering his opinions on everything from affirmative action and school busing to wetlands regulation. I'm reminded of another great book about freedom, "Freedom in the Making of Western Civilization," by Orlando Patterson. That book, too, ended poorly, with a hastily written account of freedom in the Middle Ages and the unconvincing claim that everything thereafter was "merely a long series of footnotes" to what came before. Richard Epstein's books, especially "Takings" and "Principles for a Free Society," remain the best texts on freedom in the 20th century. But Epstein, a legal scholar, is an acquired taste. We await a history of freedom and property in the 20th century that rises to the bar that Richard Pipes sets in the first four parts of this book.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Right conclusions, weak arguments
Von Ein Kunde
I very much wanted to become an enthusiast of this book. It promotes the thesis that the survival of personal freedom depends upon the broad acceptance, throughout a society, of the principle of the sanctity of private property. That thesis seems to me both true and important. Yet I must say that Pipes throughout this book seems to have bitten off more than he can chew. At one point, for example, Pipes says that John Locke's reasoning is a "regression" -- the same conclusions had been advocated on the firmer foundation of "political sociology" a generation before by James Harrington in *Oceana* (1656). But he doesn't really convey any summary of what Harrington's arguments were, or of

what harm he thinks was done to the cause of property and liberty by Locke's regression into a more metaphysical stance. After all, there is so much more ground to cover -- Godwin, Malthus, the American Indians, etc. One wants to call him back and demand he give us a book, with fewer topics and more sustained attention to each, and better organization to reveal their connections each with the others!

Kurzbeschreibung One of the most enduring dreams is of a Utopian society in which all possessions are held in common ownership, and there is never a quarrel over "mine" and "thine". As Professor Pipes argues in this book, such a dream has never been translated into reality in the secular world, despite the best efforts of socialist and communist ideologues. Acquisitiveness is deeply ingrained in all living creatures and all societies for both economic and psychological reasons. Where there are no guarantees of property there are no limits to state authority and no regulatory bodies of law, and hence no guarantee of individual liberty, or "civil rights". Herein lies the crux of the author's argument.

Richard Pipes offers a vigorous defense of a fundamental freedom--private property--in this engaging mix of history, economics, and political theory. Western historians "take property for granted," complains the acclaimed scholar of Russian history (and author of the masterful *The Russian Revolution*). Pipes argues that a greater appreciation for this institution is necessary if liberty is to survive in the 21st century. "While property in some form is possible without liberty, the contrary is inconceivable," he says. Property rights give rise to the political and legal institutions that secure freedom. Their absence practically invites atrocity. The sinister regimes of Communist Russia and Nazi Germany were fiercely opposed to private property. Those regimes' "simultaneous violation of property rights and destruction of human lives," he emphasizes, "were not mere coincidences." While the bulk of the book compares England and Russia, showing how varying attitudes toward private property led these two nations in totally different directions, the final section examines the broad theme of property rights in the late 20th century--a period when they have come under assault, and have been made increasingly conditional, by the growing strength of the welfare state. Pipes concludes with a broadside against New Deal and Great Society programs. Although liberal readers may bristle, none can deny that *Property and Freedom* is the product of a great mind tackling a big theme with great enthusiasm.

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