

## CULTURAL LIBERTARIANISM AND THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION IN MURRAY ROTHBARD, BOB DYLAN, AND WOODY ALLEN

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*Abstract:* Because libertarianism is rooted in the non-aggression principle, libertarians tend to focus on the state as the most violent offender of rights. However, this paper proposes that we likewise consider the validity of “cultural libertarianism.” Though this term has been in existence since at least the early 2000s, I define it in a specific way, and use the lives of Murray Rothbard, Bob Dylan, and Woody Allen as real-world examples of its practice. Cultural libertarianism, as conceptualized herein, suggests that social forces can be coercive to individuals in a way that complicates traditional libertarian theory. For Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen, I also show a connection between their roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and their cultural libertarianism. While religion is certainly not a prerequisite for libertarianism, there is a clear connection between Judaism, Christianity, and their belief in the uniqueness of the individual that is complementary to the philosophy of libertarianism.

*Keywords:* cultural libertarianism, Christian libertarian, Judaism, Jewish libertarian, Judeo-Christian, Murray Rothbard, Bob Dylan, Woody Allen

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## I. INTRODUCTION

It has been said that politics is downstream from culture. Whether or not this is always true, the idea is that culture precedes and shapes the political climate.<sup>2</sup> The polemicist H. L. Mencken said that “democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard.”<sup>3</sup> Consequently, we might say that the culture people want leads to the politics they deserve. If one’s culture emphasizes conformity and obedience, then a political climate of conformity and obedience will likely follow. Libertarianism, on the contrary, stresses individuality and self-ownership. However, largely since its formal inception in the early 1970s, the libertarian movement has seemed often to skip the step of culture formation in favor of focusing on the realms of economics, history, and political theory.

Significant figures in the modern libertarian movement have mostly been theorists, economists, historians, and, occasionally, politicians. Brian Doherty, in his *Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (2007), focuses primarily on Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Ayn Rand, Murray Rothbard, and Milton Friedman. But, with the exception of Rand, this list excludes the artists, those who largely create culture on a mass scale. While social theory, political theory, and economics are vital to an understanding of the way the world works, these fields are not readily accessible to and/or consumed by the public; in short, they are not part of popular culture. One definition of *culture* is “the characteristic features of everyday existence . . . shared by people in a place or time.”<sup>4</sup> To be sure, there is a “libertarian culture,” but few within the

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<sup>2</sup> The quote is typically attributed to the late founder of Breitbart News, Andrew Breitbart. See Lawrence Meyers, “Politics Really is Downstream from Culture,” *Breitbart* (Aug. 2011). <https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2011/08/22/politics-really-is-downstream-from-culture/>.

<sup>3</sup> H. L. Mencken, “The Citizen and the State,” in *A Mencken Chrestomathy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, entry 1:1a. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>.

general public would define this niche subculture as a “characteristic feature of everyday existence.” In attempting to define and explain libertarianism largely through an economic or political lens, Doherty’s protagonists tend to ignore the power of popular culture. But if we believe, at least in part, that politics is downstream from culture, then a libertarian culture will precede the political world (or lack thereof) envisioned by libertarian theory.

If libertarianism focuses too narrowly on being “anti-state,” then it ignores one of the primary avenues by which ideas about the state are influenced. In terms of the definition of culture as relating to everyday existence, many, if not most Americans, have never heard of Ludwig von Mises, for example. There is certainly something to be said about libertarian education, but this is only one way to reach the broader public. Another way of conceiving libertarianism is through its cultural instantiation, an avenue which readily reaches the masses. Popular culture—in this case music and cinema—have long been woven into the fabric of American society. They are consumed en masse and are not typically overtly “political.” In short, they are accessible. As I will show, the output of two major figures in their respective fields, Bob Dylan and Woody Allen, has in many ways mirrored the prolific output of Murray Rothbard within the field of libertarian study, but reaching far greater audiences in the cases of the former. It is not only their work, but their personal lives which are emblematic of the kind of cultural libertarianism I am proposing. Though the politics of Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen are much different, they approached their professional lives in a similar way, and I argue that both Judaism and Christianity impacted their propensity for individual liberty. But first, let us further explore this concept of cultural libertarianism.

## II. CULTURAL LIBERTARIANISM AS CONCEPT

Although the term has been in circulation for at least a century now, there are still competing and conflicting definitions of *libertarianism*. As Stephen Kinsella has said, while “libertarians tend to agree on a wide array of policies and principles . . . it is not easy to find consensus on what libertarianism's defining characteristic is, or on what distinguishes it from other political theories and systems.”<sup>5</sup> Broadly speaking, libertarianism is a political philosophy that deals with the proper use of force in society. Murray Rothbard (1926–1995) believed that “the libertarian creed rests upon one central axiom: that no man or group of men may aggress against the person or property of anyone else.” He referred to this as the nonaggression axiom, which elsewhere has been referred to as the non-aggression principle (NAP), the liberty principle, the freedom philosophy, the non-aggression obligation, and the zero-aggression principle. Rothbard defined aggression as “the initiation of the use or threat of physical violence against the person or property of anyone else.”<sup>6</sup> Libertarians generally measure the legitimacy or permissibility of an action based on its adherence to the non-aggression principle. The prolific libertarian writer and theorist, Walter Block, has written that libertarianism “asks only one question, and gives only one answer. It asks, ‘Does [an] act necessarily involve initiatory invasive violence?’”<sup>7</sup> If so, Block and most libertarians believe such an act may be justifiably responded to with force, if necessary.

More recently, however, self-styled “left-libertarians” have proposed additional commitments for libertarians which go beyond simply following the non-aggression principle. Long-time writer and libertarian

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Kinsella, “What Libertarianism Is,” *Ludwig von Mises Institute* (Aug. 2009). <https://mises.org/library/what-libertarianism>. Adapted from the collected essays in *Property, Freedom, and Society: Essays in Honor of Hans-Hermann Hoppe*, edited by Jörg Guido Hülsmann and Stephan Kinsella (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*, 2nd ed. (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2006), 27.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Block, “Libertarianism and Libertinism,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 11:1 (Fall 1994): 119.

thinker Charles Johnson proposed a “thick” libertarianism in his essay from 2008 which raised concerns for the supposed inability of the non-aggression principle to fully deal with coercive or aggressive activity *not* perpetrated by the state:

Noncoercive authoritarianism may be consistent with libertarian principles, but it is hard to reasonably reconcile the two. Whatever reasons you may have for rejecting the arrogant claims of power-hungry politicians and bureaucrats . . . probably serve just as well for reasons to reject other kinds of authoritarian pretension, *even if they are not expressed by means of coercive government action* (emphasis mine).

And later:

...there may be social practices or outcomes that libertarians should (in some sense) be committed to opposing, even though they are not themselves coercive...If aggression is morally illegitimate, then libertarians are entitled not only to condemn it, but also to condemn the destructive results that flow from it—even if those results are, in some important sense, external to the actual coercion.<sup>8</sup>

The notion of “noncoercive authoritarianism” is certainly interesting, if a bit clumsily delivered by Johnson. As is often the case in philosophy, however, the veracity of an idea depends on how it is defined. In this case, what would be deemed “coercive,” and, more importantly, what would count as non-state “authoritarianism”? Critics of Johnson—“thin”

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Johnson, “What Kind of Commitment Is Libertarianism?,” *The Foundation for Economic Education* (July 2008). <https://fee.org/articles/libertarianism-through-thick-and-thin/>. For another perspective on “thick libertarianism,” see Sheldon Richman, “TGIF: Libertarianism Rightly Conceived,” *The Future of Freedom Foundation* (May 2014). <https://www.fff.org/explore-freedom/article/tgif-libertarianism-rightly-conceived/>. For a defense of “thin libertarianism,” see Lew Rockwell, “The Future of Libertarianism,” *LewRockwell.com* (May 2014). <https://www.lewrockwell.com/2014/05/lew-rockwell/the-future-of-libertarianism/>.

libertarians who believe that libertarianism is a philosophy on the use of force, and nothing more—condemned the notion that being a libertarian entails more than adherence to the non-aggression principle. If, thin libertarians wondered, to be a libertarian assumes one should also be, for example, a feminist, will this progression demand that libertarians also become Christians, or atheists, or a host of other things? Thin libertarians believe that libertarianism is only that propounded by Rothbard, Block, and others, defined as opposition to the wrongful initiation of force.

One critical review of Johnson believes that in arguing for a “thick” conception of libertarianism, “the very definition of libertarianism is at stake.” The authors write, “the problem here is that libertarianism does not have the necessary equipment to oppose non-coercive activity because libertarianism simply states that the initiation of aggression is inappropriate.” In brief, the review affirms the Rothbardian notion of philosophical libertarianism, adding that whatever libertarians do beyond the framework of the non-aggression principle is not done *as* a libertarian. Walter Block agrees, writing that if/when one takes a position on non-coercive activities, “...the libertarian *qua* libertarian, has absolutely no view of them at all. To the extent that he takes a position on them, he does so as a non-libertarian.”<sup>9</sup> A man may prefer apples to oranges, for example, but this preference (and even if we more boldly called it a “commitment” or an “obligation” to apples) is not the result of his libertarianism. The reviewers criticize Johnson and “thick” libertarianism for intentionally blurring the language: “The fruit of blurring is a corruption of the libertarian doctrine.”<sup>10</sup>

I propose that both Johnson and his critics are correct to some degree; as I show, even non-state actors can achieve the same results as the state when it comes to coercing particular behaviors or actions, and can do so

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<sup>9</sup> Block, “Libertarianism and Libertinism,” 119–20.

<sup>10</sup> Jeff Peterson II, Chris Calton, Blaine Kelley, Henry Moore, Matt Tanous and Rocco Stanzione, “Sophistry Through Thick and Thin,” *Liberty.me* (Nov. 2015). <https://wti.liberty.me/sophistry-through-thick-and-thin/>.

without technically violating the libertarian non-aggression principle. If we conceive of cultural libertarianism, then, as the exercise of personal freedom against the coercive powers of non-state actors (that is, society at large, or groups within society), then this is simply a different expression of Rothbard’s “libertarian creed.” It *does not* entail actual commitments or obligations beyond adherence to the non-aggression principle, but *it does* recognize the potentially coercive power of a social majority, even when such a majority is not acting as part of or through the state. In brief, cultural libertarianism simply presents another front in the struggle for individual liberty.

The notion of cultural libertarianism, or cultural libertarians, has been around since at least the early 2000s. In 2001, writing for the flagship conservative outlet, *National Review*, Jonah Goldberg wrote disparagingly of the concept, arguing that “cultural libertarianism...is rapidly replacing liberalism as the real threat to America, and the true opposition to conservatism. Cultural libertarianism basically says that whatever ideology, religion, cult, belief, creed, fad, hobby, or personal fantasy you like is just fine so long as you don’t impose it on anybody else, especially with the government.”<sup>11</sup> Goldberg referred to this brand of freewheeling libertarianism as “Chinese-menu culture.” Nick Gillespie at *Reason* responded that cultural libertarianism does imply choice, but it does not result in the cultural nihilism that Goldberg fears. “Tolerance,” Gillespie wrote, “particularly in a libertarian framework, is grounded in respect for individuals as equal and autonomous agents...[it] is a universal principle that underwrites all sorts of local differences. To believe in tolerance is manifestly not to believe in nothing.”<sup>12</sup> The term waxed and waned throughout the next two decades, notably taking on new meaning in the

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<sup>11</sup> Jonah Goldberg, “Freedom Kills,” *National Review* (December, 2001).

<https://www.nationalreview.com/2001/12/freedom-kills-jonah-goldberg/>.

<sup>12</sup> Nick Gillespie, “Really Strange Bedfellows II,” *Reason* (December, 2001).

<https://reason.com/2001/12/20/really-strange-bedfellows-ii/>.

reemergent “culture wars” of the pre- and present Trump years.<sup>13</sup> More recently, writers at *Breitbart* argued in 2015 that cultural libertarians were essentially free speech advocates pushing back against the rise of “politically correct” culture, especially as manifested in entertainment and the universities. This brand of libertarianism was, supposedly, a response to the rise of the so-called Social Justice Warrior. Allum Bokhari and Milo Yiannopoulos, then at *Breitbart*, wrote in 2015 that cultural libertarianism “has yet to be fully defined. There is not yet an intellectual figurehead or classic text for fans to cleave to.”<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Nolan Brown at *Reason* went “In Search of the Elusive Cultural Libertarian” in 2016, suggesting that while the “anti-PC” crowd might earn short-term gains in the so-called culture wars, “they fail...by turning off more people in the process than they win over...”<sup>15</sup> However, I have suggested a simpler definition of the concept of cultural libertarianism, one which shares little, if anything, with more recent notions.

As we’ve seen, both the modern libertarian movement and its major figures have tended to focus on conceptual questions of theory, history, economics, and politics; and, more generally, how all of these areas are impacted by and through the state. Indeed, many libertarians use shorthand slogans such as “anti-state” and “anti-war” to quickly convey their philosophy. But the state, while historically the most blatant aggressor, is

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Daniel Larison’s discussion in “On Cultural Libertarianism,” *The American Conservative* (January 2006).

<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/on-cultural-libertarianism/>. See also Daniel Pryor’s essay at *The Center for a Stateless Society* titled “‘Cultural Libertarianism’ on Trial,” (August, 2015). <https://c4ss.org/content/39463>.

<sup>14</sup> Allum Bokhari and Milo Yiannopoulos, “Enough! Entire Entertainment Industry Says ‘No More’ to Social Justice Warriors,” *Breitbart* (July 2015).

<https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2015/07/20/enough-entire-entertainment-industry-says-no-more-to-social-justice-warriors/>. See also Bokhari’s follow-up entitled “Rise of the Cultural Libertarians” (August 2015).

<https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2015/08/24/rise-of-the-cultural-libertarians/>.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Nolan Brown, “In Search of the Elusive Cultural Libertarian,” *Reason* (April 2016). <https://reason.com/2016/04/20/the-elusive-cultural-libertarian/>.



not the only coercive institution. This is where I believe Johnson is correct to allude to non-political authoritarianism. While we tend to think of authoritarianism as unbridled political power, it can also simply refer to the diminution of personal freedom at the hands of any number of forces. A parent who locked their child in a room for days, without food or water, would likewise be acting in an authoritarian manner. While libertarians are apt to propose social shaming or ostracism as non-aggressive forms of influence—that is, seeking to curb another’s behavior in a manner that does not violate the libertarian principle of non-aggression<sup>16</sup>—collective action in this manner can likewise potentially be classified as authoritarian in the sense that the recipient of the social shaming or ostracism has (or *perceives* that they have) no substantive recourse, or that if they were to concede to the demands of others in a particular instance, they would be sacrificing principles, morals, monetary profit, power, or any other number of things.

In defining coercion and aggression, libertarians should differentiate between acts that are voluntary, involuntary, and *nonvoluntary*. In terms of the latter, an act can be nonvoluntary while also not being in direct violation of the NAP. Free-market libertarians generally agree with the Rothbardian theory of exchange which is that all parties to an exchange

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the following passage from *Getting Libertarianism Right*, a collection of essays by Hans-Hermann Hoppe (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2018): “And moreover: Just as a libertarian order must always be on guard against ‘bad’ (even if non-aggressive) neighbours by means of social ostracism, i.e., by a common ‘you are not welcome here’ culture, so, and indeed even more vigilantly so, must it be guarded against neighbours who openly advocate communism, socialism, syndicalism, or democracy in any shape or form. They, in thereby posing an open threat to all private property and property owners, must not only be shunned, but they must . . . be ‘physically removed,’ if need be by violence, and forced to leave for other pastures. Not to do so inevitably leads to — well, communism, socialism, syndicalism, or democracy and hence, the very opposite of a libertarian social order” (p. 84).

are better off when trade is conducted voluntarily.<sup>17</sup> Generally speaking, in a libertarian society, actors would not voluntarily agree to an exchange unless they subjectively felt the exchange was beneficial; in short, in such a society there would be no exchanges where only one party benefited. An example of this sort of one-sided exchange would be the state benefiting by extracting taxes from citizens who would otherwise not pay them if not for threat of force. However, real world examples are not always as binary as “voluntary” and “involuntary.” Libertarians must also reconcile with the prospect of nonvoluntary actions, and must also address the theoretical and philosophical implications of non-aggressive coercion, which of course is coercion nonetheless.

For example, if a man driving a car hits a patch of ice and will either hit another car or skid off the road, he is not *really* making either of those choices voluntarily. It is not *involuntary* because he does have a choice, but it is not willful volition in the sense that he would normally be choosing from among these options. Within a libertarian framework of non-aggression, nonvoluntary actions complicate the idea that voluntarism is the prerequisite for, or marker of, free exchange or autonomous choice. In the case of the state, clearly paying taxes is involuntary since the threat of force backs up the demand; on the other hand, the man who exchanges his dollars for a loaf of bread at the store is acting voluntarily, since both parties benefit from the transaction and neither is coerced into making the exchange. Libertarians rightly see the first example as pure aggression on the part of the state, but they likely wouldn't be as quick to see social or cultural coercion as similarly problematic, at least as a near-violation of the NAP (while not technically a violation). To be sure, the idea of non-aggressive coercion does not have the physical or legal backing of the state, but that is the point: the intended result can be the same whether the state is involved or not, even while we

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<sup>17</sup> While Rothbard did not invent this concept, he does spend ample time explaining free exchange in *For a New Liberty* (pp. 47–50), *The Ethics of Liberty* (pp. 35–45), and, of course, in *Man, Economy, and State* (see Chapter 2, “Direct Exchange”).

acknowledge that the action or behavior being coerced is much milder than something such as military conscription or some other nefarious state function. This is not to say that social coercion can ever realistically reach the proportions of the state, or that it is as predatory, but if libertarians seek to defend individual liberty, then even non-state coercers should be recognized as potentially problematic.

Cultural libertarianism, then, is the idea that resistance to unjustifiable social coercion is likewise key to a free society and individual agency. Just as libertarianism proper sees the state as an inherent violator of the NAP, cultural libertarianism likewise sees coercive social pressure as a potentially problematic constraint on individual liberty, *even when not acting aggressively* in the Rothbardian sense of aggression. Brian Doherty writes that Albert Jay Nock, the early-twentieth-century protolibertarian of whom Rothbard was so fond, likewise “firmly opposed...social pressure that might limit the freedom of alternative lifestyles....He argued not merely for legal freedom but for the necessity of an overarching spirit of liberal tolerance.”<sup>18</sup> When nonvoluntary actions are extracted through social pressure, the actor is doing something he or she wouldn’t normally do, all other things being equal. Libertarians cannot simply ignore this type of coercive pressure just because the state and/or physical force is absent. However, unlike Charles Johnson, I propose no “thick” conception of libertarianism that requires or suggests commitment to extra-libertarian beliefs or causes; we simply need to broaden our conception of *who* or *what* we are resisting. In short, the state is simply one institution which challenges our individual autonomy. Society—those who do not act under the guise of the state—often effects nonvoluntary behavior and actions as well, and thus resistance to this type of coercion-by-the-majority is another instantiation of the expression of libertarianism; it is the “spirit of liberal tolerance” of which Nock wrote.

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<sup>18</sup> Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 57.

To be clear, this is not to conflate libertarianism with libertinism. If libertarianism is a philosophy on the use of force (which, as I argue, should also include unjustifiable social pressure as a form of non-aggressive coercion), then authorities to which persons have voluntarily assented or submitted are perfectly compatible with libertarianism. As I will show (and others have shown), libertarianism is a natural fit with beliefs such as Judaism and Christianity; and is also compatible with atheism in the sense that the former takes no moral position on the latter. This notion of cultural libertarianism, insofar as it is used herein, does not advocate rejection of *all* authority or social pressure simply for the sake of rejection. Oftentimes, in societies and cultures of generally like-minded persons, social pressure (of the Hoppean “shame and ostracize” variety) is a proper remedy to aberrant or undesirable behavior. However, specifically as I relate the term to Murray Rothbard, Bob Dylan, and Woody Allen, cultural libertarianism is a rejection of unjustifiable social pressure. In this sense, unjustifiable could mean unsolicited, creatively stifling, or in a manner that seeks to conform to the mainstream. True art and original thinking are organic, and even, in a sense, anarchic. Therefore, Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen’s consistent rejection of social and/or professional criticism in favor of personal autonomy and creative expression is a model example of the sort of cultural libertarianism I’ve proposed. In addition to serving as significant figures in their respective fields, I focus on these three in particular because another element that binds them together intellectually is their roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, a tradition which is readily compatible with libertarianism.

### **III. THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION IN LIBERTARIANISM**

Writing in 1987, Murray Rothbard said that “The libertarian movement, and the Libertarian Party, will get nowhere in America—or throughout the world—so long as it is perceived, as it generally is, as a

movement dedicated to atheism.”<sup>19</sup> Even though, according to Rothbard, most libertarians were atheists after the 1950s, he nonetheless expressed his desire for a more inclusive libertarianism that in no way philosophically excluded religious persons.<sup>20</sup> In short, even to Rothbard, *the* major libertarian figure of the twentieth century, libertarianism and religion were not mutually exclusive. He himself was an agnostic Jew, seemingly to the end, which makes his views on libertarianism and religion all the more interesting.<sup>21</sup> Though they were not all “practicing,” several other key figures in the broad libertarian movement have been Jews, including Ludwig von Mises, Ayn Rand, Milton and David Friedman, Israel Kirzner, Robert Nozick, David Gordon, Randy Barnett, and Walter Block, to name only a few. And, of course, Bob Dylan and Woody Allen are Jewish.

More recently, “Christian libertarianism” has become its own field of study within the broader libertarian movement, aided by the efforts of organizations such as the Libertarian Christian Institute (f. 2008),<sup>22</sup> and by notable Catholic libertarians such as Tom Woods and Lew Rockwell. Dr. Norman Horn, founder of the Libertarian Christian Institute, believes that “libertarianism is the most consistent expression of Christian political thought.”<sup>23</sup> Laurence Vance, a long-time commentator on the intersection of faith and libertarianism, has written that “Not only is libertarianism compatible with the most strict, most biblically literal form of Christianity,

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<sup>19</sup> Murray Rothbard, “Freedom is for Everyone (Including the Despised ‘Rightists’),” *Liberty Magazine* 4:1 (March 1987): 43–44.

<sup>20</sup> On the intersection of religion and libertarianism in the 1950s, see Lee Haddigan, “The Importance of Christian Thought for the American Libertarian Movement: Christian Libertarianism, 1950–71,” *Libertarian Papers* 2:14 (2010).

<sup>21</sup> See Justin Raimondo, *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray Rothbard* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2000), 67.

<sup>22</sup> Similar organizations include the Acton Institute, The Institute for Faith, Work, and Economics (IFWE), and to a lesser degree but nevertheless noteworthy given several Christian staff and authors, the CATO Institute.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Jamin Hübner, “Christian Libertarianism: An Introduction and Signposts for the Road Ahead,” *The Christian Libertarian Review* 1 (2018): at 37.

it is demanded by it.”<sup>24</sup> Rothbard even noted that “The greatest and most creative minds in the history of mankind have been deeply and profoundly religious, most of them Christian.”<sup>25</sup> All of this to say, libertarianism is certainly not incompatible with religion. As I and others argue, the Judeo-Christian tradition is actually the most natural expression of the libertarian non-aggression principle. The Judeo-Christian tradition focuses on mankind’s individual uniqueness through his creation in the image of God (*imago dei*), as well as living in peace and harmony with those around us. Proverbs 3:30 says, “Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm” (ESV).<sup>26</sup> In Romans, Chapter 12, the Apostle Paul likewise implores readers to live in peace with one another and to not avenge themselves, for vengeance is the Lord’s (vv. 18–21). As Laurence Vance says, “if libertarianism is not compatible with these things then it is not compatible with anything.” Summarizing the connection between libertarianism and Christianity (a connection which is equally applicable to Judaism), Jamin Hübner writes, “Christian libertarianism exhibits an intersection of key concepts and practices in both Christian and libertarian thought, namely, (a) peace and nonviolence, (b) freedom and voluntary order, (c) decentralization and the diffusion of power, and (d) concern for economic flourishing.”<sup>27</sup>

Our cultural libertarians under review—Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen—are all Jews. As we’ve seen, even though Rothbard was agnostic, he welcomed the intellectual compatibility of libertarianism and religion, specifically Judaism and Christianity. From what we can tell based on his

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<sup>24</sup> Laurence Vance, “Is Libertarianism Compatible with Christianity?,” *Lewrockwell.com* (March 2011). <https://www.lewrockwell.com/2011/03/laurence-m-vance/is-libertarianism-compatible-with-religion/>.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, originally in Murray Rothbard, “Libertarians in a State-Run World,” *Liberty Magazine* 1:3 (Dec. 1987): 23–25.

<sup>26</sup> Laurence Vance says this verse (as well as 1 Peter 4:15) “embodies the essence of libertarianism,” *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Hübner, “Christian Libertarianism: An Introduction and Signposts for the Road Ahead,” 16.

public comments, Bob Dylan’s Judaism waxed and waned throughout his career, but the more predominant faith factor in his life has been his evangelical Christianity. Authors Jeff Taylor and Chad Israelson argue that Dylan is a Christian anarchist, which, in terms of our concept of cultural libertarianism, is a model example of rejecting undue social coercion while voluntarily submitting one’s self to other forms of authority.<sup>28</sup> Woody Allen is an atheist, but, interestingly, Jewish themes in his work are the most pronounced between these three. The connection for Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen, then, is one of a Jewish heritage which, while not necessarily inspiring a life of Jewish religious practice, significantly impacted all of their inclinations toward personal autonomy and artistic or literary freedom. In terms of libertarianism proper, the economist Steve Horwitz writes, “It is no exaggeration to say that the modern libertarian movement would not exist were it not for these Jews.” In a fitting summation of the correlation between the Jewish heritage and individual liberty—one which aids our understanding of Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen—Horwitz concludes that while “Judaism is not libertarianism...it is consistent with the long liberal tradition [and] it should not surprise us that Jews...would find libertarian ideas particularly attractive.”<sup>29</sup>

#### **IV. CULTURAL LIBERTARIANS: MURRAY ROTHBARD, BOB DYLAN, AND WOODY ALLEN**

It would be hard to imagine three people who lived such different lives as Murray Rothbard, Bob Dylan, and Woody Allen, and yet who shared such a similar disposition toward professional success and autonomy, personal freedom, and a rejection of undue external influence

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<sup>28</sup> See Jeff Taylor and Chad Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan: Freedom and Justice, Power and Sin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Steve Horwitz, “Libertarianism Rejects Anti-Semitism,” *Foundation for Economic Education* (Aug. 2017). <https://fee.org/articles/libertarianism-rejects-anti-semitism/>.

in their lives. All three are pinnacles of professional success, each of their careers and work spanning decades, and their staggering output nearly unfathomable to aspirants in each of their fields. Personally, all three shared a few things in common, such as being sons of Jewish European immigrants, rising to fame roughly around the same time in the early 1960s (granted, for Rothbard, perhaps this fame is retrospective), their associations with New York City (for Dylan and Allen, this included their beginnings in the Bohemian Greenwich Village), and similar professional challenges each faced as their careers flourished. Collectively, they are notable examples of cultural libertarianism applied to vastly different areas of life.

Although rather reserved in their personal lives, the professional lives and careers of Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen often placed them in the public eye, as each of them challenged certain mainstream views of their day. For Rothbard, no feelings were spared in his lifetime assault on organized government. He was a champion of individual liberty, a firm defender of property rights, and a relentless critic of the state. Rejecting centuries of theoretical apologia for the state, Rothbard simply called it what it was: a gang of criminals. He likewise rejected all of the tenets of America's celebrated democratic system, including its alleged basis in the consent of the governed, and the so-called legitimacy of taxation.<sup>30</sup>

While Rothbard was rightly acknowledged as "Mr. Libertarian" (though certainly not without controversy), this shouldn't mean that those who do not self-identify as libertarians are necessarily excluded from this camp. Woody Allen fits the bill of a cultural libertarian, even while never conceiving himself as such. Allen's films are emblematic of his libertarian outlook on society and filmmaking: a complete non-dependence on anyone or any group, and a sort of unannounced withdrawal from popular culture. The writer Mark Evanier said of Allen:

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<sup>30</sup> For a concise introduction to Rothbard's views on government, see Murray Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), Chapter 22–23.



People have a resentment of the untouchable person...People who were assaulting him [and saying] ‘You have to come out and play our game. You have to attend our film festivals. You have to come to my parties, do a personal appearance. And do the interviews we want.’ And [Allen] just said, ‘No, I’m going to do what I want.’ And Woody doesn’t want to play anybody else’s game.<sup>31</sup>

We find in Allen’s radically independent outlook similarities to the libertarian philosophy of Rothbard and Dylan. Jeff Taylor and Chad Israelson have written, “Some persons would not claim the title ‘anarchist,’ but nonetheless have such strong suspicion of human authority that they come close to anarchism.”<sup>32</sup> Though this statement was in reference to Bob Dylan, the same could be said of Woody Allen and libertarianism. If we broaden the target of non-resistance to include social pressure, then Allen’s entire life is an expression of this.

Allen has the unique ability to explore taboo social topics in a comedic fashion, and to defy standards of cultural appropriateness. William Zinsser referred to Allen’s approach as “a perfect formula for an anxious new age: therapy made hilarious.”<sup>33</sup> A central part of Allen’s makeup is his Jewish heritage, specifically the Jewish people’s plight throughout history and, more specifically, the Holocaust, which occurred in his own lifetime. Though a self-described atheist, Allen never sought to escape the ethnic and cultural associations of his Jewishness. To the contrary his Jewishness, coupled with the New York City ethos he embodies so well, constitute the thrust of his cinematic *schlemiel* persona. Allen’s approach to filmmaking has always been fiercely independent, making what he wants, when he wants, with whom he wants.

Likewise, Bob Dylan has lived a life in defiance of social expectations and political power structures, serving instead his self-appointed leader,

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<sup>31</sup> David Evanier, *Woody: The Biography* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015). Kindle ed., 318.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, Kindle ed., 149.

<sup>33</sup> William Zinsser, “My Stardust Memories,” *The American Scholar* (August 2010). <https://theamericanscholar.org/my-stardust-memories/#.Xg5XiBdKhBw>.

Jesus Christ. "Power is at the heart of politics and Dylan distrusts both the exertion of power and the ability of human beings to utilize it to correct the wrongs of society," write Taylor and Israelson.<sup>34</sup> Bob Dylan's career, both pre- and post-conversion to Christianity, has adhered to an ideology of cultural libertarianism and a severe distrust of organized authority. Dylan, like Rothbard and Allen, recognizes the state as the largest instrument for potential violence, namely war and genocide. Dylan confronted these "Masters of War" as early as 1963, reminding them he *can see through [their] masks*.<sup>35</sup>

Though hardly walking similar paths of life, Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen have all served as expressions of cultural libertarianism throughout the last half-century. In terms of the impact of their Jewish heritage, skeptics may well point to the fact that neither Dylan, Rothbard, nor Allen considered themselves religiously Jewish; however, this is precisely where their rejection of what they deemed to be coercive authority began: in repudiating what they felt were the restraints of forced, Orthodox Judaism. On religion in general, Allen has remarked, "Obviously, I'm not a religious person, and I don't have any respect for the religious point of view. I tolerate it, but I find it a mindless grasp of life."<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, Allen's films are filled with themes of Judaism and "Jewish guilt." In *Annie Hall* (1977), he imagines that his girlfriend's *goyish* family is looking at him as a Hasidic Jew during dinner, dressed in all black and with a rabbinic beard. Though Allen is not religious, the Judeo-Christian tradition has certainly left what we might refer to as a secular impact on his life and work. Moreover, this is certainly not to say that atheism is a prerequisite to cultural libertarianism; indeed, Rothbard himself disavowed the atheist trend in the libertarian movement. Although Rothbard was an agnostic, he wrote positively about Christianity, and Bob Dylan himself is a born-

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<sup>34</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, viii.

<sup>35</sup> "Masters of War," from the album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963).

<sup>36</sup> Ann Hornaday, "Woody Allen on 'Rome,' Playing Himself and Why He Skips the Oscars," *The Washington Post* (July 2012).

again Christian. In all three cases, a deviation from their Jewish religious upbringing reveals an early inclination against forced forms of authority. For Rothbard, this started with the pervasive Communism of his youth.

"I grew up in a Communist culture," Rothbard writes, "The middle-class Jews in New York whom I lived among, whether family, friends, or neighbors, were either Communists or fellow-travelers in the Communist orbit. I had two sets of Communist Party uncles and aunts, on both sides of my family."<sup>37</sup> Rothbard was born in 1926 to a set of Jewish immigrants, his father from Poland and his mother from a small village on the Russian-Polish border. He recalls how his father, David, quickly sought to assimilate to American culture and its way of life, which meant downplaying his Yiddish accent and culture. More than this, though, his father took on, as Rothbard put it, "the basic American Way: minimal government, belief in and respect for free enterprise and private property, and a determination to rise by one's own merits and not via government privilege or handout." His father, then, raised young Murray under the guiding American principles of minimal government and free-market economics. While the latter took, a budding Rothbard eventually outgrew what he felt were the logical inconsistencies of minimal government.<sup>38</sup> "The intellectual stance projected here [by his father]—a love of liberty, a hatred of collectivism, and a refusal to be absorbed by the 'religious fanaticism' of the Old World Jews—was to remain constant throughout his life," Justin Raimondo writes.<sup>39</sup> And thus, what is found even in an adolescent Rothbard is a fledgling bent toward independent thought and a rejection of what he deemed to be an illogical religious heritage.

Rothbard also notes that as a young boy, his political options were not really options at all: "...the one great moral question in the lives of all these people was: Should I actually join the Communist Party and devote the

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<sup>37</sup> Murray Rothbard, "Life in the Old Right," *Chronicles* (July 1994). Online version at <https://www.lewrockwell.com/1970/01/murray-n-rothbard/life-in-the-old-right/>.

<sup>38</sup> Raimondo, *An Enemy of the State*, 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

whole of my life to the cause, or should I remain a fellow-traveler and 'selfishly' devote only a fraction of my energy to communism? That was it; any species of liberalism, let alone conservatism, was nonexistent."<sup>40</sup> Consequently, Rothbard associated religious Judaism with socialism and thus, took to neither. This is not to say that Rothbard disassociated himself with his family or Jewish culture in general, but even at an early age he wanted no part in institutionalized religion or political collectivism. He recalls that even in his youth he thought "all socialism seemed...monstrously coercive and abhorrent." His adolescent protolibertarianism reared its head on occasion, such as when he quieted the room by asking his family what was so wrong about the Spanish dictator, Francisco Franco. Or the time he managed to not be expelled from grade school despite his friends having been, since "the idea that the school rightist was a commie was unthinkable."<sup>41</sup> Later at university, Rothbard said that he was often the only conservative he knew within the entire campus. In sum, Rothbard certainly had a contrarian streak, even from a young age.

Bob Dylan, another contrarian born fifteen years after Rothbard, grew up in Minnesota, the eldest son of Abram and Beatty Zimmerman. Like many American Jews at the time, Dylan was a descendent of Jewish European expatriates who had left Russia to escape the pogroms. The town of Hibbing in which Dylan's family moved when he was six was defined in its day by the blue-collar ruggedness of its families. The men worked the Iron Range, a tight-knit community whose politics have been described as a "quasi Libertarian brand of Democrat."<sup>42</sup> During his youth, Dylan was exposed to the ups and downs of an economy built largely around a single commodity. This instilled in him a sense of empathy for victims of circumstance; first, for the men in Hibbing whose financial well-being rested in the hands of ownership, and later, for the myriad muses

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<sup>40</sup> Rothbard, "Life in the Old Right."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 4.

he projected through his “finger-pointin’” music. However, despite some of Dylan’s passing nods to liberal politics throughout his career, such as his line in “I Shall Be Free No. 10” (1964) that he was “*liberal, but to a degree,*” his economic outlook has tended toward capitalism. As the economist Joseph Salerno summarizes, Dylan has typically expressed an “appreciation for entrepreneurs as virtuous job creators and for voluntarism as the organizing principle of a prosperous economy.”<sup>43</sup> Even so, Dylan’s music has, at times, chronicled the less romantic elements of capitalism such as layoffs and the struggle of middle and lower-class Americans to get by, expressed, for example, in “Union Sundown” (1983): *Well, the job that you used to have/They gave it to somebody down in El Salvador/The unions are big business, friend/And they’re going out like a dinosaur.*

Even at an early age, Dylan, like Rothbard, felt that he did not fit in with his surroundings. For Dylan, the small-town, increasingly suburban America seemed stale and banal. A high school classmate of Dylan’s says he was “treated as an outcast as he was growing up. He was odd, and different.”<sup>44</sup> For a time, he closely identified with the sentiments of restlessness evinced in Jack Kerouac’s classic Beat novel, *On the Road*.<sup>45</sup> Dylan and this emerging group of countercultural, mid-century “subterraneans” (to borrow Kerouac’s term) would question everything: the Cold War, political elitism, racism, and, in a broader sense, what it meant to be American. These youths, as chronicled by Kerouac, “were like the man with the dungeon stone and the gloom, rising from the underground, the sordid hipsters of America, a new beat generation.”<sup>46</sup>

In terms of Dylan’s embrace or rejection of religious Judaism prior to his conversion to Christianity, it is somewhat ambiguous. As he would do

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<sup>43</sup> Joseph Salerno, “The Political Economy of Bob Dylan,” *Ludwig von Mises Institute* (March 2015). <https://mises.org/wire/political-economy-bob-dylan>.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Bob Dylan, *Chronicles: Volume One* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). Kindle ed., 57.

<sup>46</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976). Kindle ed., 54.

throughout his life, Dylan was careful to avoid being labeled, and thus we are left with intermittent, at times fragmented, and cryptic comments that point toward his views on religion and, more specifically, Judaism. After his father's death in 1968 it was believed he had reconnected with Judaism, and a *People* magazine article from 1975 informed readers that he had "returned to his Jewish roots."<sup>47</sup> In the 1980s there was speculation that he was joining an Hasidic group, despite having converted to Christianity sometime in 1979 or the early 1980s. Dylan observed Jewish rites and holidays on occasion, although he spent the second half of his career as a Christian, which might otherwise imply a repudiation of Orthodox Judaism. As is often the case with Bob Dylan, we have to sift through the multiple meanings of the things he says. For instance, his comment that "religion is a dirty word" should not insinuate that he rejects all religion, just as his criticism of capitalism at times was not a rejection of the entire system. After his conversion to Christianity, his pastor at Vineyard Christian Fellowship summed up Dylan's religious outlook as a sort of fusion between historic Judaism and evangelical Christianity, and one that did not necessarily contradict itself. We might speculate, then, that Dylan's Jewishness stayed with him, both religiously and culturally, even though he put his faith in Jesus Christ and became a born-again Christian. In an apt assessment of Bob Dylan's religious outlook, Jeff Taylor and Chad Israelson write that "his attitudes toward freedom, power, and the workings of the world within a religious context were influenced first by Judaism, later by Christianity, and then continually by both."<sup>48</sup>

Exploring Dylan's inchoate cultural libertarianism from his youth, we see these sorts of leanings through his desire to break out of traditional confines: Orthodox Judaism, his small-town environment, and what he perceived as an uninspiring future. Many of his albums seemed to capture the sentiment of what came to be known broadly as the "counterculture."

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<sup>47</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

"Blowin' in the Wind," "Masters of War," "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," "Oxford Town," "The Times They Are a-Changin'" and "With God on Our Side" are only a few songs from his early albums that young Americans in the counterculture clung to, believing Dylan was their generation's voice. However, Dylan vehemently disavowed the idea that he was "the voice" of anything. As one biographer, Ian Bell, notes, many people admire Dylan for "defending his artistic integrity against all the clamant voices: those who thought they could conscript creativity, [and] who wanted slogans-on-demand...."<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, the notion that a young Bob Dylan could inspire millions of people to reject dominant cultural trends (namely, the Cold War and racial violence) is exemplary of the libertarian creed applied culturally. The same may be said of the cinematic feats and personal views of Woody Allen.

Despite Allen's self-professed atheism, he typifies traditional Jewish culture far more than Rothbard and Dylan. Consequently, Woody Allen has become synonymous with Jewish humor—a modern-day version of Groucho Marx or Mort Sahl. His *shtick* over the course of decades of filmmaking embodies a comedic blend of wit, narcissism, and self-deprecation. Asking his on-screen father in *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986) why Nazis existed, his dad retorts, "How the hell do I know why there were Nazis? I don't know how the can opener works!" The juxtaposition of the tragic and existentialist with the comedic is one of the reasons Allen is unique in his field.

Born during interwar New York City in 1935, Allen quickly began traversing the world of magic tricks, jazz, and comedy. His family, like Rothbard's and Dylan's, immigrated to avoid the oppressive pogroms directed against Jews. A childhood friend of Allen's notes that "he always had this concern about death, death looming. And pessimism."<sup>50</sup> Those familiar with Allen's films will no doubt see a connection between his adolescent preoccupation with the morbid, and the sardonic humor of his

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<sup>49</sup> Ian Bell, *Once Upon a Time: The Lives of Bob Dylan* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2012), 341.

<sup>50</sup> Evanier, *Woody: The Biography*, 71.

films. Speaking of death as a cinematic theme, in what may be taken as equal parts humor and sincerity, Allen has said that “perishing is what it’s all about.”<sup>51</sup> During the 1960s, Allen forged a cinematic path for himself with his own take on the “self-hating Jew.” Biographer David Evanier sums up best the cultural achievement of Woody Allen:

Woody Allen became a comedy star at a time when every preconception about American life came into question. His arrival and triumph were emblematic of the sea change in American society in the sixties; a rejection of a multitude of prejudices—sexual, ethnic, racial, and class—in the spirit of the civil rights movement. The flood had opened up, releasing a new flexibility, open-mindedness, acceptance of differences—differences that accorded society a wealth of new insights, ways to live, ways to explore culturally and sexually. His material was not interchangeable with that of other comedians. The earlier generation of comics could steal from one another because their jokes were so similar, and not directly related to their personalities. With Allen there was a presumption, whether it was true or not, that he was telling you something a little more personal and autobiographical.<sup>52</sup>

Allen’s rise to prominence came at a time when Jews, in Hollywood and American culture in general, were more free to realize their potential *as* Jews. While there had been a steady rise in Jewish control of production companies and financial industries in the early twentieth century, acceptance of Jewish actors and Jewish themes *as such* lagged behind. Woody Allen’s career, then, would prove to be a prime example of uncharted Jewish territory, making a Jewish caricature an ecumenical cultural icon. His style as a writer, actor, and director went beyond false gratitude for new opportunities being afforded to Jews; his films were *avant-garde*, confronting previously tabled cultural conversations like

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<sup>51</sup> Stig Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen: In Conversation with Stig Björkman* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 106.

<sup>52</sup> Evanier, *Woody: The Biography*, 51.



sex, fidelity, the existence of God, and social power structures. Evanier writes that Woody’s characters were “innovative, inherently revolutionary. He gave voice to the funny-looking Jewish guys, but, he also gave voice to the tall blonde gentile football players who secretly felt like the short Jewish guys inside.”<sup>53</sup>

Allen has written and directed nearly every production he has been a part of (over fifty since his directorial debut in 1966), revealing his need for creative control and artistic independence. As opposed to actors and directors who spend years making a movie and then throw a party for themselves (something to which Allen often dismissively alludes), he breaks the mold by working on his next movie before his previous film even debuts. He says making movies is like “stamping out cookies.”<sup>54</sup> Allen has never cared whether his movies were well-received, only whether he is proud of the finished product; he claims he has never watched one of his movies once it is finished. In the same vein, Allen routinely skips the Academy Awards, even when his movies have been nominated and won. This type of cultural libertarianism—a complete rejection of social and professional expectations and accolades—has allowed him the freedom to create timeless films that give moviegoers a glimpse into an otherwise inaccessible world. “It almost strains credulity,” Evanier writes, “that a Jewish film star and comedian who placed his Jewishness front and center and audaciously proclaimed it—utilizing constant references to his Jewish identity, his preoccupation with anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and his ambivalent and satiric ways of defining gentile . . . could capture the imagination and even beguile a wide audience as Allen has done.”<sup>55</sup>

Murray Rothbard reviewed a number of Allen’s films throughout the 1970s and ‘80s, and published them in the newsletter he edited, *The Libertarian Forum*. It is evident when reading Rothbard’s later comments

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>54</sup> Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen*, 96.

<sup>55</sup> Evanier, *Woody: The Biography*, 60.

about Woody Allen that he clearly disliked him on a personal level: “For decades Woody Allen has been the very embodiment of left-liberal values and expression...[his] ideology has been implicitly leftist.” Writing in the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report* in 1992, Rothbard also commented on Allen’s illicit romance with Mia Farrow’s adopted daughter, Soon-Yi Previn (whom Allen married in 1997). In the essay, Rothbard criticized Allen as the epitome of “alternative lifestyles,” hedonism, and the New Culture.<sup>56</sup> However, despite Rothbard’s later feelings about Allen’s personal life, many of Rothbard’s earlier reviews were quite glowing, frequently commenting on the uniqueness of Allen’s films. “Woody Allen,” Rothbard wrote in 1974, “is surely the outstanding comic in films today...It is a pleasure to see that great and now dead tradition of visual and cinematic humor recreated [in *Sleeper*].”<sup>57</sup> In 1982 Rothbard referred to Allen as one of the “last great comic forces in our culture.”<sup>58</sup> Regarding *Annie Hall*, one of Allen’s most well-known films, Rothbard called it Allen’s “best film to date.”<sup>59</sup> And also, “Annie Hall is a constant stream of hilarious, scintillating wit.” Rothbard likewise agreed that *Manhattan* (1979) “is the greatest movie of the 1970’s,” referring to Allen as a champion of the Old Culture. Ironically, the plot of the movie involves Allen’s character’s on-and-off romance with a much younger girl, the same taboo that Rothbard would later criticize as emblematic of Allen’s hedonism. As of 1979, however, Rothbard believed that “The mature Allen is emphatically and defiantly a romantic, and romanticism is at the heart of the Old Culture.” In his review of *Manhattan*, Rothbard even compares Allen to the “great satirists” such as Jonathan Swift, G.K. Chesterton, and H.L. Mencken. The film, according to Rothbard, was a “wonderous testament to what the

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<sup>56</sup> Murray Rothbard, “Woody Allen, Murphy Brown, and the Art-For-Art’s Sake Scam,” in *The Irrepressible Rothbard: The Rothbard-Rockwell Report, Essays of Murray N. Rothbard* (Burlingame: The Center for Libertarian Studies, 2000): 294-98.

<sup>57</sup> Murray Rothbard, *The Complete Libertarian Forum 1969-1984*, Vol. I (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2012), 442.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1070.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:782.

mind of man can achieve.”<sup>60</sup> Rothbard’s dotting approval of Allen’s early work speaks to the type of artistic independence and creative control that I am suggesting is part-and-parcel of cultural libertarianism.

Politically, Rothbard would likely have been glad to hear that Allen was against the War in Vietnam, that he had campaigned for Adlai Stevenson’s presidential runs (1952, 1956), and that he considered American imperialism in Latin America to be “exploitative,”<sup>61</sup> a theme Allen satirized in *Bananas* (1971). We could also imagine Rothbard echoing Allen’s desire to read the “non-fiction version” of the Warren Report. Despite Rothbard’s later condemnation of Allen’s personal life, we do find a camaraderie in the social views of these two New York City Jews, specifically in their rejection of mainstream art and culture, political correctness, and, at times, their defense of what Rothbard calls Old Culture. Perhaps Rothbard’s opinion of Allen’s cinematic career would have been more positive had he lived to see Allen’s twenty-first century renaissance, including critically-acclaimed films such as *Match Point* (2005) and *Midnight in Paris* (2011).

In terms of Allen’s Judaism, we find that it is the most culturally pronounced between he, Rothbard, and Dylan, while at the same time being the most religiously rejected. It is a stark contrast between the unshakeable influence of his Jewish upbringing, coupled with his intellectual dismissal of religion in general. In both personal comments and on-screen dialogue, Allen points to his rejection of God and an afterlife. His early deviation from religious Judaism is similar to that of Rothbard’s, both of whom seemingly could not allow their ultra-rationalistic intellects to conceive of anything other-worldly. In the same way that Rothbard’s philosophical libertarianism rejects the legitimacy of the state, Allen, rightly or wrongly, could not abide what he felt to be the restrictive nature of religion. “All of these religious do’s and don’ts,” Allen

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 2:889-90.

<sup>61</sup> See Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen*, 39-41.

remarked, “ranged for me from the laughable to the offensive.”<sup>62</sup> Commenting on the blind rabbi in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), Allen said that the rabbi is not only blind literally, but also metaphorically in terms of his naive belief in God.<sup>63</sup>

Religiously, we find three divergent paths between Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen, despite the fact that all three were born into practicing Jewish families. Whereas Rothbard takes a radical anarchist position politically, he was agnostic when it came to the existence of God. And yet, as we have seen, Rothbard was inclined to see the merits of the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially as he saw its compatibility with libertarianism. As he said, the libertarian movement would never succeed as long as it was perceived to be a group of atheists. In his personal life, his wife Joey was a Presbyterian, and toward the end of Murray’s life, many speculated that he might convert to Catholicism, but of course this wasn’t to be. Author Gerard Casey cites a letter Rothbard wrote to Justin Raimondo in 1990 wherein he (Rothbard) vociferously praised the connection between the Christian basis of Western civilization and the advance of individual liberty: “I am convinced that it is no accident that freedom, limited government, natural rights, and the market economy only really developed in Western civilization. I am convinced that the reason is the attitudes developed by the Christian Church in general, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular....even though I am not a believer, I hail Christianity, and especially Catholicism as the underpinning of liberty.”<sup>64</sup> While Woody Allen seems to be the most impacted by his family’s Judaism and Jewish culture, he is also the most sure of his atheism. And even while Allen has described himself as a liberal Democrat,<sup>65</sup> he has supported policies and expressed views which resonate with Rothbardian

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>64</sup> Gerard Casey, *Murray Rothbard*, 15, from the series *Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers*, edited by John Meadowcroft (London: Continuum, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen*, 39.

libertarians. And as we’ve seen, Rothbard certainly relished the artistic and cultural achievements of Allen’s earlier work.

Bob Dylan’s politics, if we may call them such, are informed by his ultimate allegiance to Christ. Dylan told an interviewer in 1986 that “you don’t see nothing about right or left” in the Bible.<sup>66</sup> Around the same time, his albums underwent a noticeable shift toward Christian themes and a gospel sound. While this “new,” evangelical Dylan shocked fans once again, Dylan simply continued to say and sing what he believed to be true, revealing the cultural libertarianism inherent in his career. Albums such as *Slow Train Coming* (1979), *Saved* (1980), and *Shot of Love* (1981) offered fans a drastically different version of their counterculture hero. To be sure, many disapproved. In 1979, a review of Dylan’s concert published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* had the headline, “Bob Dylan’s God-Awful Gospel,” afterward informing readers that “Dylan has written some of the most banal, uninspired and inventionless songs of his career for his Jesus phase.”<sup>67</sup> Once, during this so-called Jesus phase, Dylan paused to tell concert-goers that the end times are near: “You know we’re living in the end times....The scriptures say, ‘In the last days, perilous times shall be at hand. Men shall become lovers of their own selves. Blasphemous, heavy and highminded....I’m telling you now Jesus is coming back, and He is! And there is no other way of salvation...Jesus is coming back to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem for a thousand years.”<sup>68</sup> Jeff Taylor and Chad Israelson lament the fact that Dylan essentially stopped writing explicitly Christian music sometime around the 1990s, but they argue that we should nonetheless interpret Dylan’s politico-religious stance as a modern version of Leo Tolstoy—a spiritually radical, Christian anarchist.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 39.

<sup>67</sup> David Lister, “How Bob Dylan Embraced Jesus in a Born-Again Period Lasting Three Years,” *Independent* (November, 2017). <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/bob-dylan-jesus-trouble-no-more-bootleg-series-volume-13-slow-train-coming-u2-a8031031.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 195.

Authors R. Clifton Spargo and Anne Ream argue that “...even without the rebirth in 1979, Jewish and Christian idioms persist in his work to such a degree that Dylan would have to be reckoned one of the most powerful interpreters of religious language and sensibility in all of American pop culture.”<sup>70</sup>

While Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen were impacted by this Judeo-Christian tradition, their cultural libertarianism often manifested in non-religious ways. Rothbard’s libertarian contrarianism was a philosophical and deductive approach aimed at concepts of rights, violence, and the illegitimacy of the state. He, like Dylan, strove for justice. He viewed governments, specifically the American government under which he lived, as a tool for violence, theft, and all manner of actions that would be deemed criminal were an average citizen to commit them. While Rothbard was a trained economist and a disciple of the Austrian economist, Ludwig von Mises, he also made significant contributions to political theory, history, and strategies for the libertarian movement. In the purist-versus-pragmatist debate that often plagues libertarian circles, Rothbard formulated and exercised a strategy of pure anarcho-capitalism in theory, but pursued through compromises and coalitions in the present. His posthumously published work, *The Betrayal of the American Right* (2007), chronicles his libertarian ideological journey in a world dominated by Left and Right. His willingness to build temporary coalitions sometimes led him into the camp of old guard conservatives who opposed the New Deal and the Korean War, and later brought him to align with those forming the New Left who opposed the War in Vietnam and emerging forms of domestic militancy. Works such as *Man, Economy, and State* (1962), *America’s Great Depression* (1963), *For a New Liberty* (1973), *The Ethics of Liberty* (1982), and *The Case Against the Fed* (1994) are but a few of

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<sup>70</sup> R. Clifton Spargo and Anne. K Ream, “Bob Dylan and Religion,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan*, edited by Kevin J. H. Dettmar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 98.

Rothbard's timeless and prescient contributions to modern political and economic thought.

Most of all, Rothbard pursued truth. Justin Raimondo writes that Rothbard "never coveted the honors heaped on other far less worthy scholars; all he ever wanted was to be left alone to his work."<sup>71</sup> As homage to the threat Rothbard posed to conventional political thought and the powers that be, Raimondo titled his biography of Rothbard *An Enemy of the State*. Ever the optimist, Rothbard concluded his *Betrayal of the American Right* with the following: "...the passion for justice and moral principle that is infusing more and more people can only move them in the same direction; morality and practical utility are fusing ever more clearly to greater numbers of people in one great call: for the liberty of people, of individuals and voluntary groups, to work out their own destiny, to take control over their own lives. We have it in our power to reclaim the American Dream."<sup>72</sup>

The cultural libertarianism of Bob Dylan, on the other hand, is a product of both his Jewish upbringing and his conversion to Christianity. Authors Chad Israelson and Jeffrey Taylor write in reference to Dylan's Christian anarchism, "The concepts of law and authority are assumed to be diametrically opposed to the concepts of liberty and anarchy, but this is not necessarily true. In the proper, godly context, law and authority free human beings."<sup>73</sup> And thus, Bob Dylan sees no conflict between being both a Christian and a political anarchist; albeit, he doesn't identify as such, but Bob Dylan has never really identified as anything. We find in Christian anarchism, as opposed to Rothbard's purely political anarchism, the willful submission of one's self to Christ. It is often wrongly assumed that anarchism and its proponents are completely against all forms of authority. On the contrary, both the Dylanesque Christian anarchism and

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<sup>71</sup> Raimondo, *An Enemy of the State*, 283.

<sup>72</sup> Murray Rothbard, *The Betrayal of the American Right* (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007), 205–6.

<sup>73</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 153.

the free-market anarchism of the Rothbardian variety would readily recognize legitimate forms of authority. Whereas Dylan's authority is Christ, Rothbard's anarchism proposes submission to whomever one chooses. In both instances, whether religious or not, the important aspect is that the authority is freely chosen. The very concept of Christian salvation centers on willful submission to Christ, an act made freely.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, as Rothbard said, "There is no sense to any concept of morality, regardless of the particular moral action one favors, if a man is not free to do the *immoral* as well as the moral thing. If a man is not free to choose, if he is compelled by force to do the moral thing, then, on the contrary, *he is being deprived of the opportunity of being moral*" (emphasis mine).<sup>75</sup> Dylan expressed a similar sentiment in "Gonna Change My Way of Thinking" (1979) during the early years of his conversion to Christianity, saying, "*Gonna change my way of thinking/Make myself a different set of rules,*" and later, "*You remember only about the brass ring/You forget all about the golden rule.*" Indeed, many libertarians see the non-aggression principle as a logical corollary to the Golden Rule found in Matthew 7:12. In an apt description of Dylan's Christian anarchism, he says toward the end of the song, "*There's only one authority/And that's the authority on high.*"

Countless authors have attempted to analyze Dylan's politics pre- and post-conversion to Christianity, but his cultural libertarianism that rejects labels makes this task impossible. He intentionally obfuscates, misdirects, and rejects labels that might otherwise seem to fit. While seemingly everything Dylan does and says is taken by some to be political, Dylan admitted early in his career that he cared little for politics. In 1963, accepting the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee's *Tom Paine Award*, Dylan launched into a slightly drunken tirade against everyone's

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<sup>74</sup> In John 3:36, for example, Jesus says that "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (ESV), thus implying man's choice to both believe and obey, or not.

<sup>75</sup> Murray Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State, with Power and Market*, 2nd ed. (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2009), 1305.



expectations of him, saying, "There's no black and white, left and right to me anymore; there's only up and down and down is very close to the ground. And I'm trying to go up without thinking about anything trivial such as politics. They has [sic] got nothing to do with it. I'm thinking about the general people and when they get hurt."<sup>76</sup> After the fallout from this incident, Dylan told an interviewer from *The New Yorker*, "I tell you, I'm never going to have anything to do with any political organisation again in my life."<sup>77</sup> Though he didn't become a Christian until later in his career, this anti-authoritarian attitude has remained consistent. The same Bob Dylan that sang about "The Death of Emmett Till" (1962) and performed at the March On Washington in 1963 continued to sing about power structures in the late 1970s and beyond. The only difference is that the Christian Bob Dylan infused his anarchism with theological undertones. "It may be the devil, or it may be the Lord/But you're gonna have to serve somebody," Dylan sang in 1979.<sup>78</sup>

His Christian anarchism tends toward a distrust of political power since state activity is often, according to Christian libertarians, opposed to the tenets of peace found in the New Testament. His conversion coincided with the emerging Religious Right, and Dylan recognized the unseemly combination of evangelical Christianity and concentrated political power. Even before he became a Christian, Dylan mocked the ultra-nationalist Christians who seemed to think anything was defensible "With God On Our Side" (1964). And as a believer who takes Jesus's call to love one another seriously, Dylan laments the fact that Americans are apt to pawn off their Christian obligation to the government. "Dylan understands that liberty frightens people who do not want to accept the responsibility of

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<sup>76</sup> Bob Dylan, remarks from the *Tom Paine Award* speech at the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee's Bill of Rights dinner, 1963. A full transcript of the speech may be found online at <http://www.daysofthecrazy-wild.com/watch-listen-bob-dylans-infamous-1963-tom-paine-award-speech/>.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Bell, *Once Upon a Time*, 295.

<sup>78</sup> "Gotta Serve Somebody," from the album *Slow Train Coming* (1979).

being free,” write Taylor and Israelson.<sup>79</sup> In other words, Dylan is a Christian anarchist in-part because he realizes that the state attempts to manage people’s lives in a way that individuals alone are called to do, a sentiment with which Rothbard would surely agree. Responding to questions in 1986 about the patriotic tunes of singers like Bruce Springsteen and John Cougar Mellencamp, and whether or not they inspired patriotic principles, Dylan said “The only principles you can find are the principles in the Bible. Proverbs has got them all.”<sup>80</sup>

Bob Dylan’s long career has not been without controversy. Fans and critics alike want to understand him and his motivation for everything: going electric, retreating to a quiet life in the country, straying from his “protest songs,” and converting to Christianity. Dylan has commented, both in his memoir *Chronicles* (2004) and elsewhere, about the backlash he faced from going electric at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. The previous year’s festival exemplified the claim his fans thought they had on him when he was introduced with the grand pronouncement: “Here he is...take him, you know him, he’s yours.” Quickly after Dylan’s ascent in the early 1960s, everyone wanted to claim him for their cause, something which rubbed Dylan the wrong way. Similarly to Woody Allen’s dismissal of popular opinion, Dylan has always pursued the art without worrying about its or his reception. In terms of Dylan’s famous “going electric” moment, we find a similar incident in Woody Allen’s decision in 1978 to make the non-comedy *Interiors* after the widespread success of *Annie Hall*. He told Stig Björkman in 1993 that the negative reception to *Interiors* was essentially due to people’s claim on his art: “People were shocked, and so disappointed with me that I broke my contract with them, my implicit deal with them.”<sup>81</sup> Likewise, Bob Dylan often broke whatever “implicit deal” his fans thought they had with him throughout his career. Both Dylan’s life and music have been emblematic

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<sup>79</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 108.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>81</sup> Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen*, 95.

of the cultural libertarianism by which he abides. He doesn't care what people think of him. He, like Rothbard, has usually just wanted to be left alone, which is ironic in light of his growing popularity through the decades. Nonetheless, “Dylan remains standing,” write Israelson and Taylor, “as a voice of cultural dissent. A personally inconsistent but still compelling-scourge of institutionalized nonsense. An undercover example of Christian anarchism.”<sup>82</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

The common strand between Dylan, Rothbard, and Allen is their aversion to other people telling them what to do. In a personal, social, professional, and political sense, Bob Dylan has always been fiercely independent and even intentionally contrarian at times. Since his debut in 1961, his career has been the subject of much scrutiny, with fans and critics always trying to more fully understand him. In many ways, Dylan embodies the rebellious ethos he has so often captured with his music. He does not care about awards, public perception, or cultural expectations of what a star should be. Even as recently as 2016, Dylan confused many by forgoing his reception for the Nobel Prize in Literature, in a manner not unlike Woody Allen's frequent abstention from the Academy Awards. This is but one of innumerable examples of Dylan showing no regard for awards, popularity, or social acceptance. Politically, we might say that Dylan's seemingly inexplicable politics are the result of his Judaism, Christianity, and his generally defiant social outlook. Though he is now on the latter end of his career, his words from “Let Me Die in My Footsteps” (1962) are still a prescient example of his lifelong cultural libertarianism: *There's been rumors of war and wars that have been/The meaning of life has been lost in the wind/And some people thinkin' that the end is*

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<sup>82</sup> Taylor and Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan*, 195.

*close by/‘Stead of learnin’ to live they are learning to die/Let me die in my footsteps/Before I go down under the ground.*<sup>83</sup>

Rothbard, on the other hand, reveled in the libertarianism that so often made him a social and professional pariah. Those familiar with his work are struck by Rothbard’s expansive command of economics, history, philosophy, and political theory. And he also deserves credit for aiding the revival of the Austrian tradition of economics. His career and work were a constant challenge to establishment consensus and to what the historian Thomas Woods refers to as “allowable opinion.” This is evidenced early in Rothbard’s career when he was unable to publish his doctoral dissertation at Columbia over differences of opinion with a faculty advisor. But Murray refused to acquiesce to suggested changes, even when doing so would have been the easiest path to a life in academia.<sup>84</sup> Even after obtaining his Ph.D. and subsequently publishing his seminal work in the field of economics, Rothbard was never offered positions at prominent research universities. Despite Rothbard’s prolific career, Brian Doherty notes that Rothbard never attained the broader recognition of his libertarian peers: “He lacks Milton Friedman’s almost universal respect as an economist and commentator. He lacks [Ayn] Rand’s huge cult following. [And] he lacks Hayek’s academic influence.”<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, in addition to teaching part-time at New York Polytechnic Institute in Brooklyn, Rothbard and others organized the famed *Circle Bastiat*, a “group of friends who held endless discussions, went to the movies, sang, and composed songs, played board games, and...joked about how [they] would be treated by future historians.”<sup>86</sup> Rothbard, along with Llewellyn Rockwell, also founded the Ludwig von Mises Institute in 1982 as the premier center for Austro-libertarian studies. While

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<sup>83</sup> “Let Me Die In My Footsteps,” first recorded in 1962. Featured on the album *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1–3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961–1991*, released in 1991.

<sup>84</sup> On this episode, see Raimondo, *An Enemy of the State*, 44.

<sup>85</sup> Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 13.

<sup>86</sup> Raimondo, *An Enemy of the State*, 82.

hardly receiving due recognition in his own lifetime, Rothbard's legacy and contribution to libertarianism are seemingly unrivaled. "Anarcho-Capitalism," his comprehensive approach to political theory (fleshed out in *For a New Liberty*, *The Ethics of Liberty*, and elsewhere) has inspired scores of libertarians since his passing, many of whom style themselves as "Rothbardian" libertarians or anarchists. Because Rothbard was ideologically unyielding, it may be safely assumed that he never attained the literary or professional success in his own time that he might otherwise have; however, his rigorous consistency of principles, without regard for their implications for his personal and financial success, is a quintessential example of cultural libertarianism.

Though more enigmatic than Rothbard, Woody Allen's life and career in film possess, to some degree, the same marks of cultural libertarianism evidenced by Dylan and Rothbard. While political "to a degree," Allen has never focused on political issues per se in his films. "I don't find political subjects or topical world events profound enough to get interested in them myself as an artist," Allen has said. "The history of the world is like: he kills me, I kill him. Only with different cosmetics and different casting... Political questions, if you go back thousands of years, are ephemeral, not important. History is the same thing over and over again."<sup>87</sup> Although Rothbard would disagree with the idea of political questions being unimportant, he likely would have sympathized with the sentiment that history is essentially a story of violence and that the answer is not to be found in politics.

Just as Bob Dylan has seemingly always been claimed and commodified by his fans, it has been said of Allen that "his followers ascribed to him whatever [political position] they believed in at the moment." But Allen has, for the most part, refused to be co-opted by political groups and causes. His politics, like Dylan's, can be hard to

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<sup>87</sup> Woody Allen, "Spiegel Interview with Woody Allen, *Spiegel Online* (June 2005). <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/spiegel-interview-with-woody-allen-nothing-pleases-me-more-than-being-thought-of-as-a-european-filmmaker-a-361905.html>.

ascertain. He has said he's apolitical, but also admitted that he could be described as a liberal Democrat. He has campaigned for politicians that Rothbard also supported, but also "gave [his name] to the Clinton people" in the 1990s.<sup>88</sup> However, like Dylan and Rothbard, Allen recognizes the genocidal capabilities of the state, expressed most often in his films through references to the Holocaust, the "therapy made hilarious" that Allen is known for. While some of his films deal peripherally with political themes, such as *Bananas, Love and Death* (1975), and *Zelig* (1983), others such as *Annie Hall, Manhattan, Midnight in Paris*, and *Blue Jasmine* (2013) deal more with existential themes. Allen says that the things which interest him are the "unsolvable problems: the finiteness of life and the sense of meaninglessness..."<sup>89</sup> Big-budget action films may still dominate Hollywood, but Allen's work has been an example of something more timeless. Allen cares little for critics or public reception of his movies. Regarding critics, he said, "If they say you're bad, it doesn't mean you're bad. If they say you're good, it doesn't mean you're good."<sup>90</sup> While not without controversy, Allen has spent his career quietly going about his work, turning out movies "like cookies." While Allen *has* achieved the personal success that seemed to elude Rothbard, it has not been without its challenges. Just as Dylan angered fans by both going electric and later making gospel albums, Allen often follows up commercially successful movies with something else entirely. Rothbard defended Allen in this regard, commenting after Allen's *Stardust Memories* (1980) was met with mixed reviews:

Their [the reviewers'] behavior is ironic, however, because it bears out the thesis of this picture which they have so bitterly condemned: namely, that adoring fans of Superstars can be treacherous, boring, and selfish, and can turn savagely on their idol when he or she fails to live up to their

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<sup>88</sup> Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen*, 39.

<sup>89</sup> Evanier, *Woody: The Biography*, 5.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

fantasy-expectations. Again and again, the critics, sensing all too well that Woody considers *them* as part of the problem, have denounced him for treating his fans in this film in cranky and mean-spirited fashion. His fans depicted boorish, ugly, etc. What none of the critics has bothered to ask is: is Woody right? I suspect that he is.<sup>91</sup>

Like Rothbard, Allen is always going to produce what he wants to produce, regardless of others' expectations or the ramifications of such creative freedom for his career.

While Rothbard has passed, and Dylan and Allen's most creative years are likely behind them, their contributions continue to entertain, inspire, and perhaps perplex. Rothbard continues to be a major and oft-discussed figure of the libertarian movement. Bob Dylan, nearing eighty, continues to tour and write new music, having produced a corpus of work throughout his life that rivals Rothbard's literary output. The octogenarian Allen likewise continues to simply "do the work," an approach he has consistently taken throughout his career. "I've always kept my nose to the grindstone," Allen says. "All I do is work, and my philosophy has always been that if I just keep working, just focus on my work, everything else will fall into place. It's irrelevant whether I make a lot of money or don't, or whether the films are successful or not. All that is total nonsense and superfluous and superficial."<sup>92</sup> At its essence, this is the philosophy of Allen, Rothbard, and Dylan.

In terms of the genesis and fairly recent evolution of the concept of cultural libertarianism, I have suggested that we look backwards to see it actually practiced. In assessing the lives of Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen this way, we glean a better sense of what it means to resist undue influence in one's life, and to do so against forces that have little to do with the state. Cultural libertarianism is no addendum or additional "commitment" beyond the non-aggression principle, it is simply another way of looking

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<sup>91</sup> Rothbard, *The Complete Libertarian Forum 1969-1984*, 2:964.

<sup>92</sup> Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen*, 192.

at *whom* libertarians are resisting. It does not deny legitimate forms of authority, nor does it necessarily imply *libertinism*. Murray Rothbard and Woody Allen lived (and continue to live, in the latter case) fairly conservative personal lives. Bob Dylan certainly spent years in the libertine culture of the 1960s, but this seems to have changed after having children and after his conversion to Christianity. For Rothbard, Dylan, and Allen, there is a clear connection between the freedom of the individual as espoused by Judaism and Christianity, and each of their general worldviews and professional outlooks. Cultural libertarianism, like libertarianism as traditionally understood, proposes a threshold of personal autonomy, but does not take a view on what one does with that autonomy. As Rothbard said, “The concept of ‘morality’ makes no sense unless the moral act is freely chosen...Coercion deprives a man of the freedom to choose and, therefore, of the possibility of choosing morally.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, 128–29.