

Anthony Comegna ([00:19](#)):

Well, folks, here it is. I know you were all expecting it. And now it's here, our first quarantine recordings, with all the usual caveats that you graciously forgive any audio aberrations or how sounds that may pop up from time to time. But my do we have a blinder for you? Aaron Ross Powell and Paul Matzko from [libertarianism.org](#) and the Cato Institute, have recently published *Visions of Liberty*, a series of case studies in what you might call libertarian utopianism, or what we on this show, have been calling liberal futurism.

Anthony Comegna ([00:54](#)):

Before we get there, though, a little bit of full disclosure. My first job out of graduate school was working as Aaron's history editor at [libertarianism.org](#). So both Aaron and Paul are friends and colleagues. I also have a chapter in this volume myself. So you may find me a little less critical than usual, on some points here. So with that said, let's get to it.

Anthony Comegna ([01:18](#)):

Thanks both for joining us very much. And I wondered if we could really start here by giving a prehistory to the volume in question, *Visions of Liberty*. And let's start with you, Aaron, can you tell us a bit about the conception and founding of [libertarianism.org](#) itself just for listeners who might not be aware of it? And what folks could find when they pull out their phones right now and type it up and go there?

Aaron Powell ([01:47](#)):

Sure. So [libertarianism.org](#) is the Cato Institute's project to explore the underlying ideas of the libertarian tradition. So it was launched eight or nine years ago and the idea was that Cato, as a libertarian organization, bases its public policy recommendations on a core set of principles. On a philosophy and that philosophy has a history and has developed over time. And to understand why we do what we do, it's important to understand that philosophy. And so I thought that we should have a website, a resource where people could learn about the libertarian, classical liberal intellectual tradition.

Aaron Powell ([02:35](#)):

So that was the genesis of it. And it's grown over the nearly decade, from essentially a blog and some online videos to now a huge resource with an encyclopedia of libertarianism, new articles every week, multiple podcasts. I think we're doing five weekly podcasts now, on all sorts of topics within libertarianism. Book publishing, so *Visions of Liberty* being our latest. And so really it's, yeah, it's if you want to know what libertarianism is about, and you want to dive deep into the ideas and the people that have informed it, [libertarianism.org](#) is really the best place to go.

Anthony Comegna ([03:26](#)):

And then Paul, you came in as part of what's called the Building Tomorrow project.

Paul Matzko ([03:30](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative).

Anthony Comegna ([03:31](#)):

And you do a podcast of the same name. So can you tell us a bit about that and how this book fits into the overall project at [libertarianism.org](#)?

Paul Matzko ([03:42](#)):

Yeah. So part of being housed at a think tank like the Cato Institute is the focus can very easily become on, what are the concrete policy goals that are achievable in the near to medium-term horizon? So what government regulations are getting in the way of different scholars, depending on the area of expertise will have an idea, "This regulation is in the way of good things happening."

Paul Matzko ([04:11](#)):

So it can all be very short-term to medium-term focused and very rooted in the politics of possibility. So what can you get done, given the current political configuration. And there is some Overton Window pushing, you're trying to push the boundaries of what people imagine is possible. But it's very much policy-grounded. And libertarianism.org, we have an opportunity to do something that a lot of DC think tanks don't have the warrant or the time or mental space to do, which is to imagine something bigger, different, more long-term and even more optimistic as well.

Paul Matzko ([04:50](#)):

And so building tomorrow's particular mission is to say, "Look, let's say we achieved all of these hoped for regulatory changes. We got the state out of the way, we unleashed the creative energy across all sectors of our economy, society, culture, and so on. What might the future look like?" So have a more future focus, and a more optimistic focus. It's also easy for libertarians to get bogged down in negative prescriptions, or negative proscriptions, I should say. And there's nothing... I mean, that's needed. There are barriers to free and fair flourishing in modern society. But always shaking your finger at, "This thing is bad, that thing is bad." It's a needed thing, but it's insufficient on its own. You also need a positive message of what could be different.

Paul Matzko ([05:48](#)):

And people tend to be inspired by positive messages. So we try to have this more optimistic, prescriptiveness to building tomorrow, that if we follow this, this area of emerging technology, to its logical extreme, what might society look like for better for worse with an emphasis on for the better? So we spend a lot of time in Building Tomorrow talking about technology and the future. And I use technology on the show in a very generous, maximized sense. So it's not tech... When people hear tech, they think of artificial intelligence and self-driving cars, phones, stuff. Code, hardware, software. But technology is a bigger term, it's any kind of a recipe of knowledge.

Paul Matzko ([06:38](#)):

So the factory is a technology. The idea that you have an assembly line is a technology. Reorderings of the family unit, are a technology. So it's more than just stuff or code. It's a bigger thing than that. But what could the future look like if we pursue liberty across all these different venues of life?

Anthony Comegna ([07:07](#)):

Now, I wonder, Paul, especially because you have a background as a historian, and Aaron, even though I guess technically your training is as a lawyer, you've really made yourself into more of a philosopher. And that's an odd mix at a think tank like the Cato Institute, which is very, very practical. And libertarians at least often are perceived as being very negative, right? Our outlook is always, it's a focus on the negative liberties that we want to enjoy, and the state can't do this and shouldn't do this. And we shouldn't be doing this to each other and people shouldn't think this.

Anthony Comegna ([07:49](#)):

And there isn't usually a lot of proscription that comes along with that and even when it does, it's often not terribly optimistic. It's usually like telling people to buy lots of gold or something like that. Make sure you store up on Freeze-Dried Ice Cream or something and be ready for when it all comes down. Is it hard to navigate that territory when you're trying to implement something like the Building Tomorrow project and put together a book like this, that charts a distinctly libertarian and optimistic vision for the future?

Aaron Powell ([08:29](#)):

I don't think so. And I think that's because... And so speaking for myself, the thing that drew me to libertarianism in the first place, and the reason that I have dedicated my career to advancing this set of ideas and trying to move the world in a more libertarian direction, is because I think that we human beings, people are capable of amazing things and our history shows that. We're certainly capable of all sorts of awful things too. But I think there's more amazing than there is awful. And that we can make the world a dramatically better place. And this is the set of ideas that enables us to do it.

Aaron Powell ([09:19](#)):

And so there's a negative, yes, there's a negative sense to all of this, in that one of our core beliefs is that government in many or most of the things that it does, makes the world worse. It gets in the way of us embracing our imagination, our innovation or entrepreneurship and so on to improve the state of the world, not just for ourselves, but for everyone in it. That government instead puts up barriers, that government encourages violence, that government consumes resources that could be better used by individuals directing them based on their own knowledge and so on.

Aaron Powell ([10:00](#)):

And so from a policy standpoint, if you're going to be talking about what government policy should be, which is the role of a think tank, then that's going to look from a libertarian perspective, largely negative. Because much of what you're going to be saying is, "Stop doing these things." The things that you're doing that either you have bad reasons for doing or that you think are helpful, but really aren't, the world would be better if you stopped doing them and you embraced individual liberty, free market economics and so on.

Aaron Powell ([10:33](#)):

So from the policy perspective, it's a lot of negative claims, but the underlying motivation for making those claims is this optimistic vision about what we could achieve. Because if I was really pessimistic about what humans would do with their liberty, then I wouldn't be calling for a radical expansion in individual liberty. Or I would be at least not as enthusiastic about it. So I think that libertarianism has this nice... That we respect rights, we think it's morally correct to respect rights, and that that's not dependent on how people are going to use them, but also that we think that when people's rights are respected, and they can do things that they want to do, they will do overwhelmingly great things that will benefit other people as well.

Aaron Powell ([11:27](#)):

And so that optimistic vision is central to basically everything that we do at the Cato Institute. And so this is a nice fit. And it's a way to express that vision, outside of the simple policy recommendations. And

in particular with Visions of Liberty, it's a way to say, "Look, we're out there telling government to stop doing these things. But here's one of the reasons why. Because here are pictures of kinds of futures we think are possible in various areas of our lives if we were free to pursue our own ends and do these amazing things." So it's I don't think you can decouple the negative government stop doing stuff from the optimistic here's amazing stuff we could do if government stopped doing stuff.

Paul Matzko ([12:24](#)):

I'll add on to that, that there's a... I pulled this idea from a historian named Finn Brunton, who introduced me to the concept of cosmic grams. And cosmic grams, it comes from Greek for cosmos, so which literally just means world, but has the idea of world systems. So the universe and the systems that sustain it, and gram, what is written in Greek. So you're writing stories about what the invisible things that bind the world together. And the power of cosmic grams are that that is what inspires radical action.

Paul Matzko ([13:09](#)):

And that's true whether you're talking about the cosmic grams of, I don't know, first century Christians inspired by the words of Jesus. It's true if you're talking about libertarians today. I mean, we are trying to cast a cosmic gram about what a future ordered around perfect individual freedom could look like. This big vision of what might be possible. And you tell a compelling narrative, a powerful story, and that's inspiring the people. I mean, also in this sense, I mean, this is not a concept that's unique to libertarianism, or to utopianism or to religion, it's just how social movements succeed. How they expand, how they grow, is by casting these compelling cosmic grams about the future that is possible.

Paul Matzko ([14:03](#)):

I'll note that the communists actually were very good at this. If you look at communism in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, obviously I disagree with most of their ideas, most of the ideology, but they were very good at saying, "Here is this Full-Orbed portrait of how the world could be better if Soviet ideals were followed to their logical end. And that's true of Soviet architects in the 1920s. Just radically re-imagining what architecture could be like. That's true of Soviet science fiction authors in the '20s, of Soviet poets, of engineers, of... Again, they weren't able to accomplish that vision that they were casting because their ideas were grounded in flawed understandings of how politics and economics and society operates. But they were very good at casting that optimistic future vision.

Paul Matzko ([15:02](#)):

And that is why you have this deeply socialist moment in the interwar period, across much of the world is because of the power of that cosmic gram. And so this is... Our project here, with Visions of Liberty, is a small part of trying to cast an equally optimistic vision of the future that we also think is more feasible, more realistic and grounded in better policy and better understanding of how society operates.

Anthony Comegna ([15:32](#)):

You're making me think, Paul, about a year or so ago, I stumbled across this bizarre pamphlet by a South American communist from the 1960s or early '70s, whose name escapes me at the moment. But he was saying that essentially we need to bring on the nuclear war between major powers, wipe out the human species because the aliens will come in and save the true communists and elevate us to greater purity and Marx's new communist man and all this, in the ashes of the rest of the world.

Anthony Comegna ([16:12](#)):

And those Russian futurists are particularly fascinating, like you said, in the late czarist period, in the early communist period. Just some bizarre and fascinating visions and obviously, this book takes quite a different tack on how the future should look. I wonder if we could turn maybe now to some of the coverage that's actually in the text because we have 20 different essays to go through here, all told. So tell us a bit about some of the topics that you all cover and some of the authors we have here. How you went about selecting those and putting the volume together. Let's start with you, Aaron.

Aaron Powell ([16:53](#)):

Sure. So I think we just started in a not terribly exciting way, which was to say what are the different policy areas that we talk about at the Cato Institute? Because every scholar we have specializes in some area of public policy. And what would... The question that I put to these scholars, so we ran down the list of the policy areas that we thought worked the best in this format, and covered all of the bases of libertarian policy, and how that could change the world. And the question that I put to them was, "You spend a lot of your time writing about immediate policy change. Like, "Government ought to advance this particular policy or they ought not to advance this other policy. Congress should think about doing this thing in the next session, or should repeal this thing and so on," but you're doing that with some aim."

Aaron Powell ([18:01](#)):

As I said before, you're doing that, because you have this underlying view of, "The world would be better if we adopted these policies." And so what I'd like you, the author to do is within your policy area, whether that's trade or immigration, or banking and finance, or so on, imagine that you have a magic wand that you can just wave and you can get, not just those near-term policy changes that you have been advocating, but basically everything on your wish list. That government just did everything you think it should do, or stopped doing everything you think it shouldn't. And you got your way. What do you imagine the world would look like? How would it be different than the way it is now?

Aaron Powell ([18:53](#)):

And try to do it in as concrete a way as possible. Because we're talking about the cosmic grams. One of the issues that libertarians have when we're talking about our ideas to other people, trying to sell our ideas to other people, is most Americans are familiar with what things might look like if the Democrats got everything they wanted. Or what things might look like if the Republicans got everything they wanted, because these are familiar political ideologies. And the changes that they're asking for are, I guess, easy for people to grasp in the sense that they're familiar. We've grown up with them, we understand what they are and so on.

Aaron Powell ([19:40](#)):

Libertarians, first were a minority political viewpoint that a lot of people aren't familiar with at all. But also we're asking for typically much more radical changes to the nature of government than Republicans and Democrats are. And this leads to a problem where people can't really picture what it is that we're aiming at. So when we say, "Hey, the federal government should get out of education entirely. We should privatized the provision of all education." That's a huge thing that is, for a lot of people difficult to imagine what that would look like, and because it's difficult to imagine what that would look like, people can often fill it in with catastrophic stuff, right?

Aaron Powell ([20:26](#)):

Like, "Well, what you're saying is, no one would get an education and children would just be wandering around, not learning how to read. Because you're stopping the thing that I'm familiar with." And so what I said to the authors is, "Fill in those details. Try to construct the scenario where you say, "No, no, I think this is what it would actually look like in practice. And I think it's a vision that you ought to be excited about. It's not a grim future scenario, it's in fact, one where things are dramatically better than they are now.""

Aaron Powell ([21:00](#)):

And so that was what each of the chapters sets out to do, is to say, okay, well, look if we have lots of trade barriers right now and tariffs and so on, limitations on what goods people can move and services, people can move across borders, what might the world look like if we got rid of basically all of that? And or if we have really high immigration restrictions right now, what might the world actually look like if we radically liberalized those? Or if we have government created and regulated currency and finance, that's heavily influenced by the state, what if we freed things up dramatically? What might that actually look like? And would it be something we think is worth striving for?

Aaron Powell ([21:49](#)):

So I think that's the core of each of the chapters. And so the job that Paul and I had as editors was to figure out which policy areas work to talk about in that way and then work with the authors to help them articulate, because as we learned, it's a very different way of thinking about doing public policy. And so for our colleagues who have been doing this for 10, 20 or more years, these visions of the world have been in the back of their mind and motivating them, but the actual process of trying to sit down and articulate them was new and often challenging. And so that was our role as editors. Was to try to bring that out and make that more concrete.

Anthony Comegna ([22:36](#)):

So Paul, what are some of the more compelling or important themes that are touched on here in these... Wide variety of different visions of liberty? Because not everybody agrees on the same vision of the future either obviously. But even at a place like Cato, there's a wide variety of opinion and perspective that goes into these kinds of things.

Paul Matzko ([23:03](#)):

Yeah. I think those who take up the book and read it, I suspect whatever your particular set of political interests, your particular ideology is, you'll find some of these essays you probably agree with at least in part, even if you don't agree with some of the others. Because they come from... I mean, one of the advantages of working in a place like Cato is that our experts are expected to think in paradigm shifting kinds of ways. I mean, they're not used to necessarily, I mean, there's an incrementalism to being a policy expert, trying to shift this law here, that law there. But they are encouraged, I mean, by design, they are encouraged to pursue an idea to its logical end. I mean, there are folks who aren't afraid to express their views and take them to a logical extreme potentially.

Paul Matzko ([24:11](#)):

So again, yeah, I think there's a little bit of something there for everyone. I mean, if you're interested, as Aaron mentioned in immigration policy, there's an essay by Alex Nowrasteh, who's Cato's immigration

policy expert. If you're interested in formal tech kinds of topics, the folks who listen to my podcast, Building Tomorrow, well, there's Will Duffield talking about the importance of a decentralized internet in the age of increasing internet gate keeping. Those who are interested in more material technology, Matthew Feeney, our director of emerging tech at Cato has an essay about how daily life could transform over the next several decades through self-driving cars and that kind of technology.

Paul Matzko ([25:01](#)):

And across just a range of policy areas, there's an essay. I mean, I personally don't necessarily agree with all of those. I don't necessarily think all those visions are realistic or will necessarily happen, nor are the authors certain. I mean, part of the difficulty of forecasting is that, if anyone was able to perfectly forecast what the future will look like, I've yet to see them. I mean, it's a very hard thing to get right. It's more often wrong than right. But the act of trying to do it, is where the actual value is, the greatest value is.

Paul Matzko ([25:40](#)):

Even if it's incorrect, it forces you to exercise a certain intellectual muscle and creates a willingness to disrupt your normal patterns, the routine, thought processes that dictate so much of our lives and our intellectual lives. There's a lot of stuff that we just don't think is possible, and so we redirect our thoughts away from it. If you can, even just entering into a space temporarily by reading these essays, it trains your brain to be more flexible, more nimble, even if you don't necessarily agree with that particular essay's argument about what the future could look like.

Paul Matzko ([26:28](#)):

So I think there's value. I mean, obviously, as intellectuals, there's value in reading content we both agree with and disagree with. But I think in particular, when it comes to future forecasting, there's value in whatever your ideological presuppositions and train your brain to be more nimble and more imaginative.

Aaron Powell ([26:48](#)):

I would add too, that I think this is an interesting challenge for specifically libertarianism. Because any political philosophy, you could do a version of this book for any political philosophy or ideology where people tell you what they think the world might look like if they got their way. But I think a challenge for us as libertarians is that we are big proponents of unleashing spontaneous orders. Whether that's in the marketplace or in culture or wherever else and spontaneous orders by definition are unknown and spontaneous. We know that markets, if you unleash markets people tend to become wealthier. Society ends up being more stable. There are benefits that flow from it. But we don't know exactly what those markets are going to do, right? We can't be like, "Well if we unleash markets, we will get the following six products as a result."

Aaron Powell ([27:55](#)):

And what this means for libertarians is say, like in healthcare. Take healthcare as an example. Someone on the left can say, "Look, if you vote for me, I will have government provide you with healthcare. I will have government build hospitals that do the following things and give you the following services." And of course, our argument would be, "You can say that but in practice it doesn't work out very well." Right? The quality of services ends up being poor or the costs of it are astronomical, or there's rationing.

All the reasons that we think that, "Socialized medicine is not great." But there's a story that they can tell of, "If you vote for me, I will make government do this."

Aaron Powell ([28:41](#)):

The libertarian story is, if you institute libertarian policies, it will enable individuals to come up with efficient and successful solutions to these problems, but I don't know exactly what those are going to look like. And so you're asking people to... What to them feels like taking a gamble, right? Because you can't tell them exactly what is going to happen. So that's a challenge for us. And so I think in this book, there's this line that you're trying to walk because everyone writing in it knows that we can't predict the actions of private individuals when they're free to innovate and imagine solutions to problems.

Aaron Powell ([29:25](#)):

But if we can say, "Look, here is one possible way that things could go. Here's how healthcare could be provided by private actors instead of the government. And why it might be better." And I don't know for sure that that is the way it will end up. That's the exact mechanisms, but here is a hopeful and valuable and inspiring way that it could end up then that starts to fill in those details. But as Paul said, all of these chapters are, this is not what we are certain will happen, it is, here's a possibility of where things could go. We think that this possibility is somewhat likely or that something like it is somewhat likely. And it looks pretty good.

Aaron Powell ([30:09](#)):

And so we should take the underlying actions of freeing people up in these areas so that they can establish futures that look like these, or in the direction of these visions, versus the failed visions that we are frequently, constantly and historically getting from governments out of Washington and so on.

Anthony Comegna ([30:35](#)):

Well, I mean, as you both know, this is one reason I'm so interested in what's called history from the bottom up, because to me, it suggests so many different possibilities that history could have taken to go down different routes. But as it actually happened, all sorts of minority groups with dissenting views of one sort or another, have been snuffed out over the centuries and their contributions buried and forgotten about in so many cases until historians dredge them up.

Anthony Comegna ([31:14](#)):

And to me that's a lot of what this is doing too, just turn in the other direction in the timeline toward the future is, the value of stressing a libertarian utopianism, or what we've been calling a liberal futurism on this show, is in suggesting all sorts of alternatives, that we could very well choose to follow if we want to. Things don't have to go the way of greater statism and lesser freedom and almost certain catastrophe. So I'm wondering though, do you think that that is the only value of utopianism, is suggesting these kinds of alternatives or is there something else to it that is worth engaging in what's usually thought of as a pretty front term, utopia?

Paul Matzko ([32:11](#)):

Well, I'll say that I mean, all social movements engage in what we might broadly call utopianism. I mean, casting bold future visions, that's just how social movements, religious movements of any kind build followings. So it's not unique to libertarianism. It's not a right thing or a left wing. It's a thing. It's a

universal tact of successful social movements. And it does have real... I mean, the imaginative power shouldn't be understated. Again, this is a Finn Brunton thing. He has a book I interviewed him about called Digital Cash: The Unknown History of the Anarchists, Utopians, and Technologists Who Created Cryptocurrency.

Paul Matzko ([33:00](#)):

And the basic arc of the story is that whatever you think about blockchains and cryptocurrency today, they were drawn into existence by radical acts of imagining. That basically before it was a fact it was fiction. There were these, back in the mid 20th century, and earlier, as he traces in the book, people were saying that there's an alternative to state-backed fiat currency. And we could do it using something like blockchains. And there were people talking about this in pretty concrete detail by the 1970s.

Paul Matzko ([33:35](#)):

So a good three decades before we got the thing, they were already imagining it. And the reason why it has power is that it inspires innovation. People try stuff because they read and tell these stories to each other. And so folks are willing to try big new different stuff. In this regard, I interviewed Robert Zubrin, who is a space engineer, I don't know, astronautics and astrophysicist about what the value to a generation like his, I mean, he's a baby boomer, what the space race meant to an entire generation of engineers and programmers today, and it was this idea of space, the science fiction they're reading. We're talking about fantastical stuff about the value of space exploration.

Paul Matzko ([34:37](#)):

Whether or not you think that was worth all the expense and the Cold War drama and politics that went with the space race, set that aside for a second, just think of an entire generation of physicists and engineers and the like, who were inspired by those stories, and then took that inspiration not to do the stuff necessarily that they were reading, but to try doing all kinds of stuff that they couldn't have foreseen at the time. I mean, you just look at the technological stack of stuff that we use in our daily lives, that generation built that stuff. And so that's the power of casting these big visions.

Paul Matzko ([35:20](#)):

And utopianism is, like I said, a bit of a universal. People tend to be inspired either by love or by fear. And there is a moment in the mid-twenty... I mean, the birth of libertarianism as a formal movement is rooted in both, but it is also rooted in a moment of reaction. That's, folks, if you combine the various intellectual influences, it is a combination of you have economists, Austria and Chicago, who are alarmed with Keynesian progressive economics. You have businessmen disenchanted with The New Deal, ready to fund the network of classical liberal think takes after World War II, you've got disenchanted immigrants from communist countries, as well as former communist journalists, folks like Ayn Rand, Max Eastman and so on.

Paul Matzko ([36:12](#)):

So libertarianism, in many ways was a reaction against the failed utopianisms of the late 19th to early 20th century. And an attempt to envision something different. Those early hopeful, if you will socialist visions burnt out. Burnt people out and started to show their failure points pretty quickly by the mid 20th century. And libertarianism is in many ways a reaction. It's birthed as much by disenchantment as enchantment. But we need to re-enchant the libertarian movement today, especially because we're in a moment of disruption. Things are disorder in American society, in American the political economy.

We're going through a great party realignment, there is a lot of chaos and confusion, the ordinary coalitions, the ordinary ways of thinking are being disrupted. And so this is exactly the moment when bold visions of what the future could look like can potentially get the most purchase. Because people are unsettled and shaken up. So it's a moment of possibility.

Aaron Powell ([37:22](#)):

To take what Paul said, and make it abstract, because I'm a philosopher, and that's what I do, when you think about the role of utopianism, and I would push back a little bit on Visions of Liberty being a utopian book. Because I think a lot of our authors tried to be more measured than that. But in general, I think utopianism can play... There's two ways to think about it. It can play two roles.

Aaron Powell ([37:57](#)):

So the first is given a set of circumstances we have now, where do we think we'll end up? And what's the best possible version of where we might end up? So you're actually trying to imagine the future and it becomes utopian in the sense that, it's either A, really, really awesome, optimistic and maybe overly optimistic view of the future. But that still, you're starting where you are and imagining forward.

Aaron Powell ([38:31](#)):

The other way to think about the role of utopianism is that what you're doing is you're saying, "Okay, let me imagine the best possible world. And then I can use that as essentially a guiding light for what I and our society and our politics and so on do now." So this is similar to in political philosophy, there's this argument about the role of ideal theory, which is ideal theory and political philosophy is, is what does a perfectly just world look like? What do perfectly just institutions look like?

Aaron Powell ([39:11](#)):

And we're going to just set aside questions of are they achievable? Do they conflict with basics of human nature? Is there any way to actually get there? And a lot of people think that because you've set aside all those questions, ideal theory is just junk, it doesn't have much value. But I think the value of it and this is similar to I think the value of this second type of utopianism, is to say, no, it's helpful to know what the absolute ideal is. Because then, in what we're doing now, it gives us a direction to aim, even if we don't think we can ever get there 100% of the way, but it gives us a direction to go, and as we are doing things today, as we're making changes, as we're adopting policies, as we're inventing things and trying out new things, we have essentially a standard to judge them against. We can say, "Is what I'm doing getting me closer to that ideal, or is it taking me further from it?" But in order to do that, we need to have put the work into imagining that ideal.

Anthony Comegna ([40:21](#)):

Visions of Liberty is available in free digital format from [libertarianism.org](http://libertarianism.org) or for extraordinarily reasonable sums in hard copy from the very finest online booksellers. And while you're checking that one out, take some time to peruse all their other wonderful content, from columns and essays, endless primary sources, free books, and podcast after podcast. Aaron and Paul will be back for more next week. But until then, stay healthy, happy and keep the progress coming.