

THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

By Katherine Dang

Presuppositions

- The American “way of life” is *individual lives progressing in “self evident truth”*
 - “that all men [*without exception and to the exclusion of no man*] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. —*Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776
- The American “way of life” is *individual lives demonstrating the positive alternative to despotism*, government by the absolute and arbitrary power of one or of a few.
 - “. . . when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security”
—*Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776
- The American “way of life” is *individual lives resting on their political ability* to “secure its God-given rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness”.
 - “whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . .” —*Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776
- If the American “way of life” is allegedly offensive to her enemies, presumably, then, to destroy America is to deny the doctrine of self evident truth, to deny every opposition to despotic government, and to deny the capacity of a people to govern themselves.
 - The object of terrorism is to try *to force us to change our way of life*, is to force us to retreat, is to force us to be what we're not.”
— President George W. Bush, October 23, 2001

PROGRESSING IN THE BELIEF OF “SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH”

- From the Old World—of Asia, Europe and Africa—came to America an entrenched idea that *a natural inequality* of men exists
 - “At that time, *social order rested on the assumed natural inequality* of men.” —Richard Frothingham, *The Rise of the Republic*, 1890
 - A man’s worth is established by a social order and a ranking, based upon birth, wealth, power, property, education, by an order of men comparing themselves with other men; of least worth were the weak: women, children, the maimed the poor, etc.
- The fundamental principle of the American way of life: the *belief* in the independent worth of the individual
 - Mankind’s common humanity in his life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” flows out of the idea of a common *wise, just and perfect* Creator—the One who authored Liberty—who does not impose His will on the will of any individual, but is *able to overrule* the decisions of all men
 - Although men are created as rational beings, individuals are liable to be irrational in thought and actions: civil government exists to punish men who injure the life, liberty, and property of the innocent
 - “This the American theory . . . *recognizing* human equality and brotherhood, and *the individual as the unit of society*. . . .”
—Richard Frothingham, 1890
- Advancing and promoting the *natural equality* and individual worth of men and nations, the diffusion, diffusing or spreading of ideas into a world living in accord with a low view of the individual
 - “The American theory . . . *provided for the results of a tendency to look, not to the past, but to the future, for types of perfection that was brought into the world by Christianity. To maintain such a theory were fought the battles of the revolution.* To build on it a worthy superstructure of government and law, was the work entered upon by heroes and sages, and bequeathed to posterity. . . .it *provided for the results of a tendency to look, not to the past, but to the future, for types of perfection*. . . .”
—Richard Frothingham, 1890

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- “. . . we are a united people pledged to maintaining a political system which guarantees individual liberty to a greater degree than any other.” — President Ronald Reagan, Inaugural Address, 1981
 - Convincing men and nations of the independent worth of the individual through his individual enterprise: his enjoying the fruits of his own labor as his means of livelihood, as the fulfillment of his pursuit of happiness
 - individual enterprise is the foundation of Americans affluence: middle class workers hired by small businessmen, 75%
 - “Americans have always believed they live in a land of opportunity, where anybody who has a good idea, determination, and a willingness to work hard can start a business and prosper. In practice, this belief in entrepreneurship has taken many forms, from the self-employed individual to the global conglomerate.
 - In the 17th and 18th centuries, the public extolled the pioneer who overcame great hardships to carve a home and a way of life out of the wilderness. In 19th-century America, as small agricultural enterprises rapidly spread across the vast expanse of the American frontier, the homesteading farmer embodied many of the ideals of the economic individualist. But as the nation’s population grew and cities assumed increased economic importance, *the dream of being in business for oneself evolved to include small merchants, independent craftsmen, and self-reliant professionals as well.*
 - *The 20th century*, continuing a trend that began in the latter part of the 19th century, brought an enormous leap in the scale and complexity of economic activity. In many industries, small enterprises had trouble raising sufficient funds and operating on a scale large enough to produce most efficiently all of the goods demanded by an increasingly sophisticated and affluent population. In this environment, *the modern corporation, often employing hundreds or even thousands of workers, assumed increased importance.*
 - *Today*, the American economy boasts *a wide array of enterprises*, ranging from one-person sole proprietorships to some of the world’s largest corporations. In 1995, there were 16.4 million non-farm, sole proprietorships, 1.6 million partnerships, and 4.5 million corporations in the United States— a total of *22.5 million independent enterprises.*
 - Many visitors from abroad are surprised to learn that even *today, the U.S. economy is by no means dominated by giant corporations.* Fully 99 percent of all independent enterprises in the country employ fewer than 500 people. These *small enterprises account for 52 percent of all U.S. workers*, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Some 19.6 million Americans work for
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companies employing fewer than 20 workers, 18.4 million work for firms employing between 20 and 99 workers, and 14.6 million work for firms with 100 to 499 workers. By contrast, 47.7 million Americans work for firms with 500 or more employees.

- ***Small businesses*** are a continuing source of dynamism for the American economy. They ***produced three-fourths of the economy's new jobs between 1990 and 1995***, an even larger ***contribution to employment growth than they made in the 1980s***. They also represent an ***entry point into the economy for new groups***. ***Women***, for instance, participate heavily in small businesses. The number of female-owned businesses climbed by 89 percent, to an estimated 8.1 million, between 1987 and 1997, and women-owned sole proprietorships were expected to reach 35 percent of all such ventures by the year 2000. Small firms also tend to hire a greater number of ***older workers*** and ***people who prefer to work part-time***.
- A particular strength of small businesses is their ***ability to respond quickly to changing economic conditions***. They often ***know their customers personally*** and are ***especially suited to meet local needs***. Small businesses—computer-related ventures in California's “Silicon Valley” and other high-tech enclaves, for instance—are a ***source of technical innovation***. Many computer-industry innovators began as “tinkerers,” working on hand-assembled machines in their garages, and quickly grew into large, powerful corporations. Small companies that rapidly became major players in the national and international economies include the computer software company ***Microsoft***; the package delivery service ***Federal Express***; sports clothing manufacturer ***Nike***; the computer networking firm ***America OnLine***; and ice cream maker ***Ben & Jerry's***.
- “Every one of us ... knows that our economy is changing. ***More and more, it is being driven by small business and entrepreneurial activity***.”

“The nature of employment is changing dramatically as well, spawned by ***a huge shift toward self-employment, contracting, and consulting***. Contracting is an interesting phenomenon in employment. As firms responded to the recession by restructuring, they frequently replaced employees with contract workers — often the same people doing the same job, just not on the official payroll. Or these highly trained workers took other work, again not as employees but as consultants.”

—“The New Entrepreneurial Economy, by Anita Campbell, April 11, 2004, *Economic Trends*”

DEMONSTRATING THE POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE TO DESPOTISM

- Only two forms of government exist in this world: despotic government and self government
 - “At the formation of our government, many had formed their *political opinions on European writings and practices*, believing the experience of old countries, and especially of England, abusive as it was, to be a safer guide than mere theory. The *doctrines of Europe* were, that *men* in numerous associations *cannot be restrained within the limits of order and justice, but by forces physical and moral, wielded over them by authorities independent of their will. Hence their organization of kings, hereditary nobles, and priests.*”
—Thomas Jefferson, 1823
 - “*We are different* because our government and *our way of life are not based on the divine right of kings, the hereditary privileges of elites, or the enforcement of deference to dictators. They are based on pieces of paper*, the Charters of Freedom —*the Declaration* that asserted our independence, *the Constitution* that created our government, and *the Bill of Rights* that established our liberties.”
— John W. Carlin, National Archivist, 1999
- The *new* American way of living: a people living in self government
 - “*We the people of the United States. . . do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America*”: America is a *representative republic*; the rulers are elected to serve the will of the people; the people do not serve the will of their rulers
 - “We are a nation that has a government—not the other way around. And this makes us *special among the nations of the earth*. Our Government has *no power except that granted it by the people*. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the *consent of the governed*. . . All of us—all of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the states; the states created the Federal Government.” —President Ronald Reagan, Inaugural Address, 1981
 - “*The equal rights of man, and the happiness of every individual*, are now acknowledged to be *the only legitimate objects of government*. *Modern times* have the signal advantage, too, of *having discovered the only device by which these rights can be secured*, to wit: *government* by the people, acting not in person, but *by representatives chosen by themselves*, that is to say, by *every man of ripe years and sane mind, who contributes either by his purse or person to the support of his country.*” —Thomas Jefferson, 1823
 - “*If men were angels*, no government would be necessary. *If angels were to govern men*, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing *a government which is to be administered by men over men*, the great difficulty lies in this: you must *first enable the government to control the governed*; and in the next place *oblige it to control itself*.
—James Madison, *Federalist No. 51*

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- “*Unlimited power is apt to corrupt* the minds of those who possess it.” — William Pitt, before the House of Lords, 1770
 - “Free government is founded in jealousy, not confidence. It is jealousy and not confidence which prescribes limited constitutions, to *bind those we are obliged to trust with power*.... In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in men, but *bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution*.” —Thomas Jefferson, 1799
 - “An elective despotism was not the government we fought for; but one in which the *powers of government* should be so *divided and balanced* among the several bodies of magistracy as that *no one could transcend their legal limits without being effectually checked and restrained by the others*.” —James Madison, *Federalist No. 58*, 1788

- Congress has the supreme power: the lawmaking body, the body which taxes, directs the *domestic policies* of the United States

Article I, Section. 1.

- **Clause 1: The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members *chosen every second Year by the People of the several States***, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.
- Clause 1: The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, *chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years*; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Article I, Section. 7.

- **Clause 1: All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives**; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.
 - “Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by *a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity*. . . For decades we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children’s future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals. *You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why then should we think that collectively, as a nation, we are not bound by that same limitation?*”
—President Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural, 1981
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Up or Down the Political Scale of Men and Nations

Liberty, Self Government and Freedom
Self-interests of the individual secured by the State

“You and I are told we must choose between a left or right, but I suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. *There is only an up or down.* Up to man's age-old dream—the maximum of individual freedom consistent with order—or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. Regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, *those who would sacrifice freedom for security have embarked on this downward path.* Plutarch warned, ‘The real destroyer of the liberties of the people is he who spreads among them bounties, donations and benefits.’”

—President Ronald Reagan
Inaugural Address, 1981

Bondage, Despotic Government and Slavery
Existing to serve the arbitrary will of the State

RESTING ON THE POLITICAL ABILITY OF THE PEOPLE

- “The qualifications for self-government in society are not innate. They are the result of habit and long training.” —Thomas Jefferson
 - “All had for many generations been more or less *accustomed to self-government and to public meetings for discussing local affairs*. That self-government, especially as far as church matters were concerned, they were stoutly bent upon maintaining and extending. Indeed, that was what they had crossed the ocean for.
 - “Within its proper sphere, *government by town-meeting is the form of government most effectively under watch and control*. Everything is done in the full daylight of publicity. The specific objects for which public money is to be appropriated are discussed in the presence of everybody, and *any one who disapproves of any of these objects, or of the way in which it is proposed to obtain it, has an opportunity to declare his opinions*. Under this form of government people are not so liable to bewildering delusions as under other forms. I refer especially to *the delusion that ‘the Government’ is a sort of mysterious power, possessed of a magic inexhaustible fund of wealth, and able to do all manner of things for the benefit of ‘the People*. ‘Some such notion as this, more often implied than expressed, is very common, and it is inexpressibly dear to demagogues. It is the prolific root from which springs that luxuriant crop of humbug upon which political tricksters thrive as pigs fatten upon corn. In point of fact *no such government, armed with a magic fund of its own, has ever existed upon the earth. No government has ever yet used any money for public purposes which it did not first take from its own people,— unless when it may have plundered it from some other people in victorious warfare*.
 - [the inhabitant] is kept pretty *close to the facts where local affairs are concerned*, and in this there is *a political training of no small value*.
 - “In the kind of discussion which it provokes, in *the necessity of facing argument with argument and of keeping one’s temper under control, the town-meeting is the best political training school in existence*. Its educational value is far higher than that of the newspaper, which, in spite of its many merits as a diffuser of information, is very apt to do its best to bemuddle and sophisticate plain facts. The period when town-meetings were most important from the wide scope of their transactions was *the period of earnest and sometimes stormy discussion that ushered in our Revolutionary war. . . . In those days great principles of government were discussed with a wealth of knowledge and stated with masterly skill in town meeting*.
- “We base all our experiments on the capacity of mankind for self government.”
—James Madison
 - The town sends to the wider government *a delegation of persons who can represent the town and its people*. They can *speak for the town*, and *have a voice in the framing of laws and imposition of taxes by the wider government...*” —Richard Frothingham, 1890
 - “They *delegated the power to sever their relations with the monarchy, and to take steps to form a new government or confederation*, and not only *left the local law undisturbed*, but stipulated that *each community should retain full right over its domestic affairs. . . .*”
—Richard Frothingham, 1890

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- “Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.”
—Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural, 1801
 - “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; ***government is the problem***. From time to time we’ve been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But ***if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else?***” —President Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural, 1981
 - “The orderly transfer of authority as called for in the Constitution routinely takes place as it has for almost two centuries and few of us stop to think how unique we really are. In the eyes of many in the world, this every-four-year ceremony we accept as normal is nothing less than a miracle.” —President Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural, 1981
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Conclusions

- An American is identified more by his political sphere of influence, than by his social rank: more by his town, city, county, and his state affiliation than by his station in society determined by birth, wealth or education
 - Within each political sphere there will be found the rich, middle income, and poor, at relative scale and with relative mobility between them
 - The excesses of affluence: inordinate consumption, political corruption, gluttony, greed, etc., judge and destroy themselves
- America is structured to solve her problems beginning at the local level.
 - “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; *government is the problem*. From time to time we’ve been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But *if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else?*” —President Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural, 1981
 - *Are you willing to spend time studying the issues, making yourself aware, and then conveying that information to family and friends? Will you resist the temptation to get a government handout for your community?* Realize that the doctor's fight against socialized medicine is your fight. We can't socialize the doctors without socializing the patients. Recognize that government invasion of public power is eventually an assault upon your own business. If some among you fear taking a stand because you are afraid of reprisals from customers, clients, or even government, recognize that you are just feeding the crocodile hoping he'll eat you last.”
—President Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural, 1981
 - “All great change in America begins at the dinner table.” —Ronald Reagan
- To destroy the American “way of life”:
 - The American must first deny his own individual, independent worth, his own properties of conscience, intellect, will, talent, opinions, etc.
 - The American must deny his responsibility for the quality of civil government in which he lives.
- America’s “way of life” is fuelled by individual liberty:
 - America—the envy of the world— began with individuals with nothing more than their liberty living in a seemingly God-forsaken wilderness.