

the harm in the world is done by good people, and not by accident, lapse, or omission." Her belief in human freedom was as strong as her distaste for socialism, interventionism, and the welfare state, and it is no wonder she converted so many to the cause of liberty.

Yet there has been comparatively little written on Paterson. Stephen Cox's new biography corrects this intellectual sin of omission.

Charting the course of her life from the wilds of Canada to the hubris of intellectual cocktail parties in New York City, Cox weaves an intricate picture of this iconoclast's life. For those who came to Paterson through *The God of the Machine*, Cox's book reminds us that she was firmly established as an important libertarian intellectual even before its publication. Her columns covered war, peace, trade, and socialism from the stance of a libertarian individualist fighting the tide of collectivism.

Cox, a professor of literature at the University of California, San Diego, understands that *what* Paterson wrote was equally as important as *when* she wrote it. If alive and writing today, Isabel Paterson would be an important and courageous thinker. She was all the more so given that she was virtually alone in her politics—doubly so, considering her gender—during the New Deal and world war. She proudly proclaimed her belief in "the Rights of Man, personal liberty and private property" when the literary world was infatuated with the "new man" of the Soviet Union. This, along with her strong position against entry into the war and her dislike of militant anticommunism, won her enemies on all sides. Like Mencken, she traveled in a world hostile to her ideas, and her unyielding belief in liberty and limited government marginalized her in many people's eyes.

Much of the material for the book was drawn from Paterson's personal correspondence, and that consequently gives it a strongly partisan feel—with Cox firmly ensconced in Paterson's corner. Some of Cox's conclusions seem a bit strained. For example, he asserts that Paterson was the guiding force behind Rand's political development. He writes, "If there was a crucial, external influence on Rand's political development, Paterson was that influence." His evidence to support this statement is weak—an inscription in Paterson's copy of *The Fountainhead* that reads, "You have been

the one encounter in my life that can never be repeated." This is certainly a touching sentiment, but it's hardly enough evidence to support the contention.

That small point aside, *The Woman and the Dynamo* is a valuable addition to the history of the libertarian movement. While it is not the final word on Paterson, it should serve as a springboard for further research into a woman and her writings, which are still highly relevant half a century later.



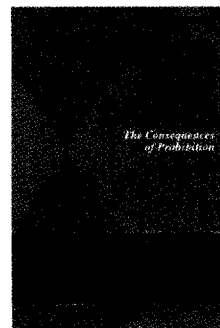
Jude Blanchette (jblanchette@fee.org), the Henry Hazlitt Adjunct Scholar at FEE, is writing a biography of Hazlitt.

Drug War Crimes: The Consequences of Prohibition

by Jeffrey A. Miron

Independent Institute • 2004 • 101 pages • \$15.95 paperback

Reviewed by George C. Leef



In perhaps no other public-policy question is the United States more hopelessly in the grip of a conventional wisdom that is utterly and egregiously wrong than drugs. Most Americans, no matter their political affiliation, are adamant supporters of the "war on drugs." Try suggesting that the war might be stupendous folly and you'll most likely run into vehement opposition replete with ad hominem attacks.

It is hard to get people to examine their ideas—"prejudices" might be a better word—about drugs, but in *Drug War Crimes*, Boston University economics professor Jeffrey Miron has put into the public discourse an attack on the conventional wisdom that is impossible for any serious-minded person to brush off. Written with a professional economist's careful attention to costs and benefits, both seen and unseen, the book relentlessly challenges all the beliefs that support the criminalization of drugs.

Miron begins by toting up some of the principal costs of our anti-drug crusade. Government spends more than \$33 billion annually on it. Arrests for drug-related infractions exceed 1.5 million per year. The United States now has well in excess of 300,000 people behind bars for drug violations. If they're even aware of

the cost, drug-war supporters contend that we would experience a disastrous rise in drug use—which is assumed to be a life-ruining event—and therefore worth it. Prohibitionists assert that “drug use causes crime, diminishes health and productivity, encourages driving and industrial accidents, exacerbates poverty, supports terrorism and contributes generally to societal decay,” Miron writes. Those beliefs are carefully reinforced by spokesmen for the drug war. Our author takes on all those claims and shows them to be erroneous.

Consider, for example, the widely held idea that drug use causes crime. Statistics show that in 35 cities monitored by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2000, at least 50 percent of adult men arrested for crimes tested positive for drugs. That’s enough to frighten the typical citizen into supporting the drug war. After all, who wants more crime? But Miron points out that those statistics don’t show that drug usage *causes* criminal behavior or that the arrestees were under the influence of drugs at the time of the crime. “The methodology used in these analyses would also demonstrate that consumption of fast food or wearing blue jeans causes criminal behavior,” Miron observes with appropriate sarcasm.

Another mistaken belief that leads to support for the drug war is that any drug use almost inevitably leads to addiction and an increasingly dissolute life. That notion causes people to view drug use as so dangerous as to warrant the extreme measures the government employs in its attempt to prevent anyone from using any illegal drug in any amount. Miron shows that belief to be unfounded. Drug use may be addictive, but is not necessarily so and many drug users lead perfectly normal lives. True, some users suffer adverse health consequences, but, the author observes, “A critical problem with standard depictions of the health consequences of drug use is reliance on data sources that are systematically biased toward those who suffer the worst consequences.”

For all our costly enforcement efforts, Miron shows that drug prohibition has little impact on the incidence of drug use, mainly because drug producers and sellers can evade law enforcement so easily. Yet the costs extend beyond the obvious ones already mentioned. One of them is increased racial tension because drug enforcement is so often targeted at minority areas.

Another is a great increase in violence. Miron argues that without drug prohibition, homicide rates in the United States would fall by half. A third is the non-availability of drugs, particularly marijuana, for medical reasons, thus causing much avoidable pain and suffering. By the time our author is done with his analysis of costs and benefits, it is clear that the war on drugs is an exceedingly foolish policy.

Miron advocates legalization rather than any of the halfway alternatives sometimes advanced. He concludes by saying, “American tradition should make legalization—i.e., liberty—the preferred policy, barring compelling evidence prohibition generates benefits in excess of its costs. As I have demonstrated here, a serious weighing of the evidence shows instead that prohibition has enormous costs with, at best, modest and speculative benefits. Liberty and utility thus both recommend that prohibition end now: the goals of prohibition are questionable, the methods are unsound, and the results are deadly.”



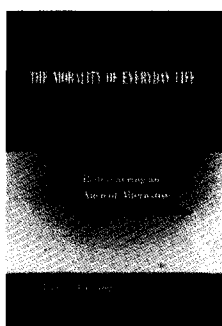
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The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

University of Missouri Press • 2004 • 270 pages • \$44.95

Reviewed by Brian Doherty



In his new book, *The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition*, Thomas Fleming, longtime editor of the fine paleo-conservative journal *Chronicles* (to which I have contributed in the past), essays a multipronged assault on the style of moral reasoning that has, in his telling, dominated the Western world from the Enlightenment on—to our detriment.

“The unexamined life may well be worth living,” he writes, “so long as it is lived in accordance with traditions that are consistent with human nature and encourage the fulfillment of human needs. But it is precisely those traditions that have been destroyed by