A Manifesto for a Free Society

Andrew Yu

Revision 0.1

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This document is still a draft, and will probably stay that way in a few decades. Please apply your critical thinking skills when reading. We cannot guarentee that what we think of as facts are all true, and we cannot guarentee that other ideas apply to you. Generally, you should take this approach when reading *anything* that's written by a person you don't ultimately trust, i.e., yourself.

The latest version is usually available at https://project.andrewyu.org/libresociety.█

Preface

Modern countries have laws that restrict the liberty of people in unacceptable ways but also don't guarantee the security of people at the same time. Governments are corrupted, inefficent, or both. This makes the lives of people miserable.

This experiment aims to develop the ideological base of a country with this main goal:

> The power of the government is limited to an extent where people have the freedom *from* persecution, intentional killing, and extreme poverty, while liberty *to* do what they will is not significantly compromised.

Choose a better word, persecution does not fit

This is an seemingly impossible task. However, considering the recent development of mathematics (especially in ideas such as group theory) and computer science (especially upcoming quantum computers), I believe there may be a algorithmic way to run a country.

Note the vague use of "run a country". This may mean a function of government decision over public opinion, the economy, expert opinion (along with a description of the expert). It might as well be a function of accepting the decision of the executive branch over the circumstances of the decision. The point is, there may be an referentially transparent function that decides how the country runs based on all the information we know.

A lot of ideas presented in this book are too vague. The mission of this project includes turning these abstractions into a solid system of society and law, where these are defined and leave minimum space for misconceptions and ambiguity.

In this book, we'll also identify problems in society, then present our solutions to it, if any. To the best of our ability, we'll provide examples and real-life stories in order to better explain the ideas. Then, we'll propose a legal framework for a country with the aforementioned goals. We'll try to make them specific and cover every possible case. Even though our math systems aren't complete (thanks to Gödel), we believe that in the field of law, things could (and should) be made mostly complete. Otherwise, it would be unclear what the country should do in an unexpected situation. Note that, if you find a problem with completeness over cases, or some scenarios where our theory creates results that

are (in your opinion) bad or unacceptable, that is considered a bug. Please report them to the mailing list.

This book is part of the Libre Society project, available at https://project.andrewyu.org/libresociety. ▮

This book, or the Libre Society project in general, is not endorsed or affiliated with the Free Software Foundation. However, we share many views, especially on copyright issues.

The authors of this book aren't experts in mathematics, computer science, or politics. The intelligence of us authors combined are unlikely to yield a substantial result, for example, the aforementioned algorithm. Anyone who is interested in giving ideas, participating in revising the book, and/or contributing by other means is welcome! Please refer to page ix.

Nothing in this book is considered legal advice. We take no responsibility for your actions due to reading this book.

Community

Please write to our mailing list at libresociety@andrewyu.org. In order to join the list, send an email to the list.

We also have an IRC channel at `#libresociety` on `irc.andrewyu.org` and at `##libresociety`█ on `libera.chat`. These two channels are relayed to each other, you won't be able to see users on the other network, though. Users unfamiliar with IRC may use email or https://web.libera.chat/libresociety.

Resources

There are a few resources that are in this book's repository. Unless otherwise noted, they are not written by the authors of this book.

Abstract Algebra contains the basics of Abstract Algebra. It was fetched from https://math.berkeley.edu/ apaulin/AbstractAlgebra.pdf

Concrete Mathematics contains the basics of math in modern computer science. It was fetched from https://www.csie.ntu.edu.tw/ r97002/temp/Concrete%20Mathematics%202e.pdf

Das Kapital is a criticism of modern Capitalism by Karl Marx;

Contribution

By contributing to this work, you agree that your contributions are made available in the public domain and under the simple license on page ii.

0.1 Ideas

If you're planning to give contributions related to your ideas directly to the code of the book, you could choose one of the following methods:

- Write to the mailing list describing your changes;

- Diff the file from the original. Git diffs are preferred but are not necessary;

- Clone from and push to `git://git.andrewyu.org/libresociety`, which isn't set up yet (your changes will be reviewed and merged to the main branch);   Yes, remind Andrew to set it up.

- Become a coauthor, if you think you're contributing a lot.

0.2 Coauthors

If you have contributed very significant ideas to this project, we may invite you as a coauthor. You can also request to be a coauthor too. This section describes the technical way of how a coauthor contributes.

First of all, all coauthors would be added to the Git respository of this project, hosted at https://git.andrewyu.org.

You need to know how to add, commit and push with respect to Git bare repositories with SSH via SSH public key authentication. There are many guides online to this. Here we included a short guide.

```
# Obviously the numbers might change, and we assume you have Git installed and
# configured your Git name and email.  If you haven't, install \verb|git| from
# your package manager and read the manual page \verb|gittutorial|.)
~ $ git clone username@git.andrewyu.org:/var/www/git.andrewyu.org/libresociety
# Of course, replace the 'username' with the username we set for you.
Cloning into 'libresociety'...
remote: Enumerating objects: 17, done.
remote: Counting objects: 100% (17/17), done.
remote: Compressing objects: 100% (13/13), done.
```

```
remote: Total 17 (delta 1), reused 0 (delta 0), pack-reused 0
Receiving objects: 100% (17/17), 156.22 KiB | 120.00 KiB/s, done.
Resolving deltas: 100% (1/1), done.
~ $ cd ./libresociety/
~/libresociety $ git pull  # Make sure you have the laterst version.
# If an editor asks you for a commit message, just save and quit it.  If it
# talks about conflicts, you probably have to learn basic Git, i.e., how to
# resolve conflicts in merge.  I currently recommend against using rebase.
~/libresociety $ $EDITOR manifesto.tex
# If this does not work out for you, replace '$EDITOR' with the name of your
# plain text editor of choice.  Do not use something like LibreOffice to edit
# this, of course.  Please read the comments (they start with '%'); they
# provide crucial information.
~/libresociety $ make
# This will fail if you do not have a proper LaTeX installation.  We strongly
# recommend installing one.  See [1] for a guide.  Use the ports tree if you
# are on OpenBSD.  The other BSDs and GNU/Linux distributions should have it
# available as a package.  On Alpine Linux, it is texlive-full.  On Arch
# Linux and its derivatives, it's texlive-most in the repo and texlive-full
# in the AUR.  On Debian GNU/Linux and its derivatives, it is texlive-full.
# The packages above take a lot of disk space.  You could also just install
# core or minimal versions instead.  We try to keep our code simple, i.e.,
# by implementing the simpler macros that we need rather than calling a huge
# package.  If the minimal distribution doesn't compile this, please give us
# the full log (that is, 'manifesto.log') and system information in the
# lists.  However, we do use bibliography management, so you would need a
# few extra packages.
[1] https://tug.org/texlive/doc/texlive-en/texlive-en.html#installation
... LaTeX output ...
~/libresociety $ git add manifesto.tex manifesto.pdf
# This step stages the changes you added.  Think of this as putting your files
# into a drawer.
~/libresociety $ git commit -m 'commit message'
# Replace 'commit message' with a short description describing what you
# changed.  Avoid commit messages like 'edit' or 'update' because they don't
# give us any useful information.
# This step commits the staged files.  Think of this as scanning the files
# from your drawer in the archive system.  It will also digitally sign your
# commit if you configured Git to do so, which is recommemded.
~/libresociety $ git push
# This step updates the changes to the server, who in turn runs a Git hook to
# update the website (you don't have to mind how this works).  Note that other
# coauthors need to run 'git pull' to 'syncronize' with this new version from
# the server, which will merge the changes.
```

Please also take a look at the style conventions in Appendix A.

0.3   Donations

Text contribution and discussion is our recommended way of contributing. However, we also accept monetory donations, as this could make our lives easier and help us obtain information from paid sources.

We don't have a public account for donations. Please donate to the authors directly and leave a note that it's for Libre Society. A list of authors could be found on page xv. Usually, people put donate information on their website.

Please don't donate if you have trouble affording. Leave that money for yourself!

Contents

Authors

Andrew Yu Website https://www.andrewyu.org, email andrew@andrewyu.org,
irc Andrew on irc.andrewyu.org with SSL (WIP, doesn't work at the mo-
ment).

Part I

A Discussion in the LibrePlanet Mailing List

In order to understand the community's take on this project, to ensure that some people know this exists, and ultimately to better gather ideas, I wrote the following message to the LibrePlanet mailing list.

```
Hi, friends at Libreplanet.

During a discussion in #fsf, we were quite critical of modern society,
especially on copyright, patents, "intellectual property", healthcare
and Capitalism.  A (possibly sarcastic of modern society) suggestion
was raised to build islands in the middle of oceans from plastic waste
and run a free society there.  This is obviously infeasible, but it
reinforced my thoughts that free software isn't enough.  With people
constantly in poverty, healthcare being so expensive in countries such
as the United States, companies and individuals focusing on profit
rather than genuine good for society, etc., free software is a step to
bring us closer to good-old freedom, but with a society that hasn't
woken up from the endless advertising (brainwashing) of cooprporations
and governments, we'll almost inevitably be forced to use nonfree
software, and have our right to freedom violated in countless other
ways.

I thought: Why aren't we doing a great job convincing users to switch to
free software as a replacement to the proprietary software they use?
Some classmates that I tried convincing into using Trisquel GNU/Linux
noted that most modern programs that they use day-to-day only run on
Android, Apple iOS, Apple macOS and Microsoft Windows, and these
themselves are nonfree software that they can't escape using (For
example, school here in China requires the use of WeChat and Tencent
Meetings to have online classes, and does not have a way to let me
dial-in by phone, despite my efforts explaining the Constitution and my
rights to deny a contract I disagree with. [1]  They even went as far as
saying "We don't care what the Constitution says, you play by our
rules", which was a surprise to me.).  I reconsidered the situation,
explained to them what freedom is in this context, and linked them to a
comprimise, Deepin Linux, a (GNU/)Linux distribution targeted at new
Chinese users who need WeChat, Tencent Meetings and all that in the
application center.  This was a comprimise, but this is the best I could
do given their situation.  Personally I use virtual machines that
reset to snapshots every boot to run these programs, sometimes even run
a GNU/Linux distribution inside the virtual machine and use Wine from
there.  They aren't technically skilled and couldn't handle this.
Some sources state that US courts require the use of Zoom, which is
frustrating to think about.

I asked myself:  Why do people choose convenience over freedom?  This is
still a mystery to me, as this one of the problems in the to-solve list
of the upcoming project.   I have a theory that it's a combination of
social pressure and coorporate brainwashing, as companies are taking
advantage of human psycology, creating an information cocoon of
"convenience is the most important thing in your life", pushing products
to users with social engineering in order to profit from sales or the
information of their users.  They do everything for profit; they even
sign contracts with schools to push their products to students, often
with the students unable to reject.  In this case, how the school and
government handles this situation is a good example of short-term
thinking (Or, it might be not caring about their students, I hope it's
the first, but my conversation with school makes me afraid it's the
```

latter.)

My family has been to the US in 2013. One of my biggest negative
impressions was that health care was terrifyingly expensive. A simple
X-ray, a two dollar checkup in most hospitals in Shanghai, China costs
hundreds of dollars in the US (I do not remember which state or region
it was, I was just 5 years old then. What I do remember is that we had
some kind of medicaid; even then, the prices are in hundreds). A
standard CT scan, around 20--35 dollars in Shanghai, costs hundreds or
even thousands of dollars. A ride in the ambulance costs 10 dollars on
average in Shanghai, but thousands in ths US. (Note that by "the US", I
am referring to the state I was in, I do hope that there are saner ones.)
Apparantly this is caused by the US not having a good system of
medicaid, which I hope gets better implemented with Obamacare, but that
seems to be just a wish. This leads me to the point that governments
are responsible for their citizens in exchange for the citizens giving
up certain liberties (note that liberty isn't freedom exactly),
including keeping citizens healthy---it is impossible to have a
prosperous planet with bad healthcare. (Don't get me wrong, I have more
positive impressions in the US :P)

For a government to be able to handle social needs, it must not be
corruputed. Theories such as the separation of powers exist, but in
contemperory times, implementations such as the US have
sometimes-corrupt but almost always ineffective governments. The Senate
fillibuster is a important reason, but not the culprit. The culprit is
the inherent eager to compete with other political parties and to gain a
political advantage, rather than coorporating, working together, and
actually managing the country with decent manners.

Humanity's system of managing society progressed from the rule of
monarchs to the rule of law. But laws can be unclear and
misinterpreted. The recent development of mathematics and computer
science may as well be utilized to create a system of society and
government, which algorithmicly distributes power in an explicit manner
(Maybe with something like monads, I haven't got into the mathematical
part yet.)

Godel Incompleteness tells us that we can never make a system of
mathematics that gets understood the same way everywhere; math is also
an evolving field (albeit very slowly). If this (currently nil) system
is to be ever used anywhere (may be the island), we'll definitely find a
lot of fissues. In such a system we also have the burden of educating
people in abstract algebra, which is relatively easy compared to
developing the system itself. My intuition tells me that Group Theory
will come in handy, but that's just intuition.

Currently, I host this project at [2]. I've only recently gotten into
Group Theory and abstract algebra, it may take time for us all to come
up with ideas. But it's worth trying.

References
==========

[1] https://lists.gnu.org/archive/html/libreplanet-discuss/2021-10/msg00011.html
    My previous memo on the use of software in education, COVID-19 and
    the courts.

     Ironically, I was still using GitHub at the time. I recently
     deprecated all of my GitHub in a notice, and moved all of my current
     projects to git.andrewyu.org and project.andrewyu.org. The avenir
     repository is moving there some time, after I re-write the website
     with plain HTML---I don't see a reason to use a static site
     generator anymore. This GitHub link is not provided here.

[2] https://project.andrewyu.org/libresociety
     A "checked out" version of the repository. The PDFs are of primary
     interest.

     git://git.andrewyu.org/libresociety
     The repository itself. SSH protocol version also exist, described
     in the PDF itself.

     https://notabug.org/andrewyu/libresociety
     A mirror of the above repository. Links Out
=========

[a] https://stallman.org/there-ought-to-be-a-law.html
     A collection of bills/laws "proposed" or agreed upon by Richard
     Stallman, mostly in support for a freer society, a less
     corrupt/corruptable government, public benefit, etc. I don't agree
     with all of them, but many of these will be taken into account in
     this project.

Some of the thoughts I had during writing this memo will appear in the
next commit of the project.

This memo probably contains spelling errors and odd context-hopping.
When sitting down in front of my computer on the actual book, I'll be
more careful, and have a notebook and a pencil in front of me to plot
relation maps. Please forgive me, a 13-year-old with an undeveloped
brain from a non English-native country.

Sincerely,
Andrew Yu <andrew@andrewyu.org>

:P

     Erica Frank replied:

On Mon, Jan 10, 2022 at 9:44 AM Andrew Yu via libreplanet-discuss <
libreplanet-discuss@libreplanet.org> wrote:

> Hi, friends at Libreplanet.
>
> During a discussion in #fsf, we were quite critical of modern society,
> especially on copyright, patents, "intellectual property", healthcare
> and Capitalism. A (possibly sarcastic of modern society) suggestion
> was raised to build islands in the middle of oceans from plastic waste
> and run a free society there.

This has been tried. Multiple times. It flops horribly because (1) the
people throwing money at it would like to believe that they won't be bound
by international treaties & local laws and (2) it's invariably started by a

group that wants to be a master class, and imagine they will bring in
servant-types at some later date, and that those servant-types will be
content to live and work under conditions that don't give them the
protections they have from existing laws.

Examples:
2014 https://www.vice.com/en/article/bn53b3/atlas-mugged-922-v21n10
2016
https://www.gq.com/story/the-libertarian-utopia-thats-just-a-bunch-of-white-guys-on-a-tiny-island█
2017
https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/30/colorado-springs-libertarian-experiment-america-215313/█

2020
https://newrepublic.com/article/159662/libertarian-walks-into-bear-book-review-free-town-project█
2021
https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/sep/07/disastrous-voyage-satoshi-cryptocurrency-cruise-ship-seasstead
And the shiny new attempt for 2022: https://cryptoland.is/

A "free" ocean nation is possible... if you don't need wifi or other
technology that comes from land; if you don't need to buy food or get
medical services from land; if you don't need to dock a ship anywhere; if
you don't intend to export goods or services to any country. If you do plan
to maintain connections with the mainland, there's a host of laws and
international treaties that will apply. And most of the "live free"
movements want that to be "live free *and rich*," not "find somewhere that
we can do subsistence farming where no gov't will care enough to notice
us." You can live free by moving to any number of remote, inhospitable
locales. In groups, even. But you can't live tax-free and still participate
in commerce with people who pay taxes. (Well, it's possible, but the setup
for that isn't "invent a country in a spot nobody's claimed"; it's "invent
a business that shuffles money in so many directions that governments get
dizzy trying to find the cup with the ball under it.")

I thought: Why aren't we doing a great job convincing users to switch to
> free software as a replacement to the proprietary software they use?
> Some classmates that I tried convincing into using Trisquel GNU/Linux
> noted that most modern programs that they use day-to-day only run on
> Android, Apple iOS, Apple macOS and Microsoft Windows,

The reason people don't switch to Linux is that support for new users
SUCKS. You'd think that, after 20+ years of Unix-based software, there'd be
a plethora of "How to Dump Windows And Switch To [version] Linux!"
websites. There are not. Instead, plenty of Windows users who try to switch
discover "I have installed this new OS.... and my wifi doesn't work." Or
their audio doesn't work. Or they try to install WINE so they can use the
apps they need for work, and it doesn't work. Or they try to play games and
discover that Steam-for-Linux and Steam-via-WINE have two different feature
sets, and one of them doesn't work for their favorite game. And so on.

(I have two adult daughters who have switched from Windows to Linux. They
both hate Windows. Neither has strong software requirements. Both
occasionally have to wipe their system and reinstall the OS because they
can't figure out how to fix the odd problems that show up. ...Neither of
them has work-related content or settings that would be destroyed by a
reinstall.)

I am on Windows because I'm a power user of several apps with no Linux
versions: Acrobat Pro, InDesign, MS Word, FineReader (you've probably never
heard of it, and that's very reasonable). I'm a regular user of other
programs with no Linux versions. And seeing the nightmares my kids have had
with using WINE does not make me happy at the idea of switching. (I'm aware
that there's LibreOffice and other free software that cover most of what
Word does. They don't cover everything that Word does, and they won't cover
the 25% extra time it'll take me to find everything for a few months while
I get used to them. A big part of my job is "Hey here is a document; it's
got [list of problems]; fix those and get it back to me within an hour
before the client meeting." I can't do that on unfamiliar software.) I do a
lot in PowerPoint, not because I like PPT (nobody who has actual editing
experience likes PPT), but because the company does a lot with PPT. And
opening word/ppt/excel/etc files in non-MS programs sometimes has weird
results - changes the hidden formatting features, and so on. So they'd look
fine to me, and I hand them back, and they discover the fonts have changed
or the images have moved around.

Anyway. If you want free software to be more popular, find a way to make it
easy to switch for people with decent awareness of technology and *no
command-line experience*. I can pick up command-line work - when I started
learning computers, there was nothing else - but there are no simple guides
for "so now you're using Linux; here's the two-page cheatsheet for
Ubuntu/Gnome/Mint/whatever."

You can usually search Google or DDG for "here's my error message; how do I
fix it?" And the answers are often on StackExchange or similar - and they
are often hostile and condescending enough that I am never, ever going to
ask for Linux help for specific problems in public. The result is: I'm
using proprietary software with an unknown amount of data harvesting, that
sometimes changes or removes the features I rely on - but I'm not being
regularly insulted (or threatened) by sexist jerks who think I'm an idiot
for not having encountered this problem before.

> I asked myself: Why do people choose convenience over freedom?

The simple, quick answer is "I see you don't have children of your own."
All of human history has been a matter of giving up some freedoms in
exchange for convenience. It has *always* been possible for almost anyone
to go off alone and survive by scrounging or potentially even farming.
There are exceptions - some types of slavery, most prisoners, etc. But for
most of history, most people have been free to pick a direction and walk
until nobody else is in range. Unsurprisingly, most of of them choose to
remain in contact with others, which means giving up some autonomy for the
convenience of a community.

If you mean, "why do people choose *this particular* convenience over a
freedom *I believe is readily available*" - then you have to get into the
details. Because a freedom that looks obvious and simple to you may not be
as apparent - or as easy - to someone else.

> I have a theory that it's a combination of
> social pressure and coorporate brainwashing,

Humans are social critters. We thrive in communities. All communities
involve giving up freedoms. There is no brainwashing involved in "convince
people to go along with the group instead of following their every
impulse"; that's the socialization that begins in infancy. (The end result
is: we get communities so that a broken leg doesn't mean death, so that
children live past the age of two, so that we can eat something other than
raw fruit in season and meat cooked on sticks over a fire. And, y'know, so
we can have books and houses and chat with people in other countries, but
those aren't *why* we have communities; they're just some of the more
recent benefits.)

There are corporations taking advantage of that, and warping our social
drives for profit, to the long-term detriment of both communities and the
planet. But the problem isn't "people are prone to accept whatever's
easiest and go along with the crowd."

> My family has been to the US in 2013. One of my biggest negative
> impressions was that health care was terrifyingly expensive.

A ride in the ambulance costs 10 dollars on
> average in Shanghai, but thousands in ths US. (Note that by "the US", I
> am referring to the state I was in, I do hope that there are saner ones.)
>

There are not; the US medical industry's costs are absolutely shocking to
most of the rest of the world. An ambulance trip in the US can run
thousands of dollars even with good insurance; there are no states where
that's not true. Some states are somewhat better about medical costs - or
rather, some states regulate who pays for the costs better - but the costs
are still being set by profit-seeking insurance companies rather than
having anything to do with the actual cost of services.

> For a government to be able to handle social needs, it must not be
> corruputed.

[citation needed]
...can you name some non-corrupt governments as examples?

This is important. Listing problems with a government is easy. If the
solution were simple, we wouldn't have these problems. Even with as much as
the current people in power will fight to maintain that - if there were a
simple solution that resulted in better living for everyone, that *didn't*
result in thousands of small-to-medium disasters (at a minimum) during a
transition phase, we'd have put it into place.

That doesn't mean I think improvement is impossible, just that it's not a
matter of "swap this government system for that other one, and things will
be better immediately and much better in the long term."

For example: Copyright, trademark, and patent laws are currently horrible,
and causing a lot of damage. However, just removing them wouldn't help -
that'd just mean that mega-corporations could use anyone's work to make
profit for themselves without paying for it. It'd mean a return to private

patronage and extensive contracts involved before you can read a book or
watch a movie.... and ordinary citizens would not be the ones with the
advantage in that situation. (...What I want is an end to the Berne
convention, copyright dropped to about 25-30 years automatic, and requiring
registration & growing fees to extend it. $100 US for the next 10 years, in
the US - a nominal fee that covers registration costs. $1000 for 10 years
past that: you have to still be making money to bother. $10,000 for every
ten years past that - if Disney wants to keep *Snow White* in its control,
it can do so, but they have to pay the public to keep the monopoly. And
that's per work, not per franchise: Every episode of *Star Trek* would need
to be registered and extended.)

> Theories such as the separation of powers exist, but in
> contemperory times, implementations such as the US have
> sometimes-corrupt but almost always ineffective governments.

On the one hand: yes, I get that.
On the other: cars do not regularly run people over on the sidewalk in my
neighborhood. The wiring in my house does not cause fires. The food I buy
at local restaurants does not poison me. My neighbors do not burn tires for
heat in the winter. The water in my kitchen sink is safe to drink. And for
all the gun violence in my local area, nobody sits on their front porch and
does target practice on other human beings. My family's doctors do not
demand intimate favors in exchange for health care services.

My government has a lot of flaws, but it also has successfully provided
enough safety regulations that I can be comfortable enough to criticize it.

I don't mean, "we should just celebrate the good that governments have
done." I mean that saying "it's horribly corrupt; we should throw it out"
needs to start with an awareness of the thousands of small benefits that
laws have brought. Any anarchist/libertarian "free community" needs to
first decide, "can you burn waste in your backyard? If so, what kinds; if
not, who's going to enforce that rule?" ...Will you have private land
ownership, and if so, can you cut down all the trees on "your" land? Can
you throw waste into "your" river?

...Can you have a business selling heroin to teenagers? How about alcohol?
Tobacco? Caffeine?

What toxins are acceptable to sell to anyone, which are restricted, and
which are forbidden? Who decides, and who enforces those rules?

I am firmly in favor of free software. I would like to see governments be
required to use free, open-source software for government purposes - to not
be beholden to any business or company for essential government functions.
(Or even optional government functions.) But I am aware that the visible
government--currently-elected legislators--is a small portion of a complex
system, and that there is no possible simple, sweeping reform that will fix
the current batch of problems (and there are so, so many problems) without
bringing in a host of others. And I am not so sanguine as to trust the
people who say "eh, we'll deal with those when they come up."

if you want to build a government that's free-and-equal, start by talking
to single mothers with kids under 5 years old, and asking what they need

from a government. Design a system that works for them, and you'll have a
foundation that can be extended to support any size of community.

(Sorry this has gotten rather far from "free software" discussion. I think
it does all tie together - one of the reasons free software has problems
catching on, is corporate influence over governments, so the very structure
of government is part of the discussions. But it does wind up getting
pretty far from "why can't schools just use Linux-based laptops?")

Then there was my reply.

At the time of writing this reply, Erica's original message hasn't
reached the list yet, shouldn't be a problem.

The Libre Society Project
=========================

On 22/01/10 01:06PM, Erica Frank wrote:
> On Mon, Jan 10, 2022 at 9:44 AM Andrew Yu via libreplanet-discuss <
> libreplanet-discuss@libreplanet.org> wrote:
>
> > Hi, friends at Libreplanet.
> >
> > During a discussion in #fsf, we were quite critical of modern society,
> > especially on copyright, patents, "intellectual property", healthcare
> > and Capitalism. A (possibly sarcastic of modern society) suggestion
> > was raised to build islands in the middle of oceans from plastic waste
> > and run a free society there.
>
> This has been tried. Multiple times. It flops horribly because (1) the
> people throwing money at it would like to believe that they won't be bound
> by international treaties & local laws and (2) it's invariably started by a
> group that wants to be a master class, and imagine they will bring in
> servant-types at some later date, and that those servant-types will be
> content to live and work under conditions that don't give them the
> protections they have from existing laws.
>
> Examples:
> 2014 https://www.vice.com/en/article/bn53b3/atlas-mugged-922-v21n10
> 2016
> https://www.gq.com/story/the-libertarian-utopia-thats-just-a-bunch-of-white-guys-on-a-tiny-island█
> 2017
> https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/30/colorado-springs-libertarian-experiment-america-215313
>
> 2020
> https://newrepublic.com/article/159662/libertarian-walks-into-bear-book-review-free-town-project█
> 2021
> https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/sep/07/disastrous-voyage-satoshi-cryptocurrency-cruise-ship-seasste
> And the shiny new attempt for 2022: https://cryptoland.is/

I should have made things clearer. The whole island thing is just a
intro to what made me think of this project. I am not trying to build
an island, make specific policies to how it runs, or similar things.
I'm thinking of a theoretical base for a modern nation should such
oppurtunities open up. Of course, setting up a new government at any
country is unlikely. This doesn't matter to this project; a general
base is good enough, for example, on how to handle power, how to vote
(blockchains might be good here, but proof-of-work and proof-of-stake

do harm to the environment or causes polical inequality) and the way we
write laws. We're not defining the legal system itself; we're creating
an algorithm to define such legal system indirectly via legislators.

> A "free" ocean nation is possible... if you don't need wifi or other
> technology that comes from land; if you don't need to buy food or get
> medical services from land; if you don't need to dock a ship anywhere; if
> you don't intend to export goods or services to any country. If you do plan
> to maintain connections with the mainland, there's a host of laws and
> international treaties that will apply. And most of the "live free"
> movements want that to be "live free *and rich*," not "find somewhere that
> we can do subsistence farming where no gov't will care enough to notice
> us." You can live free by moving to any number of remote, inhospitable
> locales. In groups, even. But you can't live tax-free and still participate
> in commerce with people who pay taxes. (Well, it's possible, but the setup
> for that isn't "invent a country in a spot nobody's claimed"; it's "invent
> a business that shuffles money in so many directions that governments get
> dizzy trying to find the cup with the ball under it.")

Aside from the fact that this is theoretical, a real implementation (if ever)
would need to be a fork (branch) of the theoretical model, usually taking
account of nearby countries, trade, and other things that deal with "normal"
countries.

The amount of money you have mostly depends on how your parents are
doing, at least for two generations. The amount of work they do (and
the intelligence they put into it) compared against their wealth in
money doesn't give a constant result---the poor have a much higher
ratio. Money is an ancient system of economics, I don't think using
money to request for social stuff is appropriate.

Free Software
=============

The replies below are mainly targeted at free software, doesn't have
much to do with Libre Society any more.

> > I thought: Why aren't we doing a great job convincing users to switch to
> > free software as a replacement to the proprietary software they use?
> > Some classmates that I tried convincing into using Trisquel GNU/Linux
> > noted that most modern programs that they use day-to-day only run on
> > Android, Apple iOS, Apple macOS and Microsoft Windows,
>
> The reason people don't switch to Linux is that support for new users
> SUCKS. You'd think that, after 20+ years of Unix-based software, there'd be
> a plethora of "How to Dump Windows And Switch To [version] Linux!"
> websites. There are not. Instead, plenty of Windows users who try to switch
> discover "I have installed this new OS.... and my wifi doesn't work." Or
> their audio doesn't work. Or they try to install WINE so they can use the
> apps they need for work, and it doesn't work. Or they try to play games and
> discover that Steam-for-Linux and Steam-via-WINE have two different feature
> sets, and one of them doesn't work for their favorite game. And so on.

On the topic of free software, this is true. My new strategy that works
better (seems so to me) is to convince friends to use OnlyOffice when
they can, use my Jitsi instance instead of Tencent Meetings when they're
hosting meetings, etc. The Jitsi part isn't doing well, probably

because people are bought into the ecosystem of Tencent, but it has
helped two or three people.

> (I have two adult daughters who have switched from Windows to Linux. They
> both hate Windows. Neither has strong software requirements. Both
> occasionally have to wipe their system and reinstall the OS because they
> can't figure out how to fix the odd problems that show up. ...Neither of
> them has work-related content or settings that would be destroyed by a
> reinstall.)

Yeah that happens some times, some people say it's a side effect of the
freedom we have, which is understandable. I've also had issues with my
Windows VM and I have to reinstall (actually, restore from snapshot).

> I am on Windows because I'm a power user of several apps with no Linux
> versions: Acrobat Pro, InDesign, MS Word, FineReader (you've probably never
> heard of it, and that's very reasonable). I'm a regular user of other
> programs with no Linux versions. And seeing the nightmares my kids have had
> with using WINE does not make me happy at the idea of switching. (I'm aware
> that there's LibreOffice and other free software that cover most of what
> Word does. They don't cover everything that Word does, and they won't cover
> the 25% extra time it'll take me to find everything for a few months while
> I get used to them. A big part of my job is "Hey here is a document; it's
> got [list of problems]; fix those and get it back to me within an hour
> before the client meeting." I can't do that on unfamiliar software.) I do a
> lot in PowerPoint, not because I like PPT (nobody who has actual editing
> experience likes PPT), but because the company does a lot with PPT. And
> opening word/ppt/excel/etc files in non-MS programs sometimes has weird
> results - changes the hidden formatting features, and so on. So they'd look
> fine to me, and I hand them back, and they discover the fonts have changed
> or the images have moved around.

Comptaibility is the biggest issue in terms of users switching to free
software. There are projects like OnlyOffice that does this pretty
well, and if put on Nextcloud or its own document server can match MS
products (actually more like Google Docs) in terms of collaboration.
Personally I use LaTeX2e, but I do support developing office suites.

> Anyway. If you want free software to be more popular, find a way to make it
> easy to switch for people with decent awareness of technology and *no
> command-line experience*. I can pick up command-line work - when I started
> learning computers, there was nothing else - but there are no simple guides
> for "so now you're using Linux; here's the two-page cheatsheet for
> Ubuntu/Gnome/Mint/whatever."

Absolutely! I've met people who needed help bring up the Help
application in GNOME 3. Distributions that are designed to fit new
users are awesome, like Linux Mint. Obviously they don't provide
"future links" to completely free distributions, understandable, but I
hope some distro does that---when the user switched to totally free
software already, that's a good step. I'll note down the idea on
cheatsheets.

> You can usually search Google or DDG for "here's my error message; how do I
> fix it?" And the answers are often on StackExchange or similar - and they
> are often hostile and condescending enough that I am never, ever going to
> ask for Linux help for specific problems in public. The result is: I'm

> using proprietary software with an unknown amount of data harvesting, that
> sometimes changes or removes the features I rely on - but I'm not being
> regularly insulted (or threatened) by sexist jerks who think I'm an idiot
> for not having encountered this problem before.

In my experience, things have gotten better over the years. Currently
I'm mostly on BSD systems, and reading the manuals help a lot. These
manuals are mainly for command-line programs(1,8), system calls and
functions(3,9), file formats(5,7) and what not. I like reading these,
but I can imagine the feeling of a new user reading a manual page
telling them to add themself to a UNIX group in order to use serial
ports (maybe for accessories).

Social Stuff Again
==================

> > I asked myself: Why do people choose convenience over freedom?

> The simple, quick answer is "I see you don't have children of your own."
> All of human history has been a matter of giving up some freedoms in
> exchange for convenience. It has *always* been possible for almost anyone
> to go off alone and survive by scrounging or potentially even farming.
> There are exceptions - some types of slavery, most prisoners, etc. But for
> most of history, most people have been free to pick a direction and walk
> until nobody else is in range. Unsurprisingly, most of of them choose to
> remain in contact with others, which means giving up some autonomy for the
> convenience of a community.
>
> If you mean, "why do people choose *this particular* convenience over a
> freedom *I believe is readily available*" - then you have to get into the
> details. Because a freedom that looks obvious and simple to you may not be
> as apparent - or as easy - to someone else.

Yup. This reminds me of the veil of ignorance by John Rawls. When I
vote for something, I use the best of my knowledge of society,
notwithstanding who I am and my personal interests*.

  * It should be noted that my view on freedom, as explained by Erica,
    could be considered something of personal interest. However, I mostly
    believe that it's my stance on social freedom, not anything of
    personal interest per se.

> > I have a theory that it's a combination of
> > social pressure and coorporate brainwashing,
>
> Humans are social critters. We thrive in communities. All communities
> involve giving up freedoms. There is no brainwashing involved in "convince
> people to go along with the group instead of following their every
> impulse"; that's the socialization that begins in infancy. (The end result
> is: we get communities so that a broken leg doesn't mean death, so that
> children live past the age of two, so that we can eat something other than
> raw fruit in season and meat cooked on sticks over a fire. And, y'know, so
> we can have books and houses and chat with people in other countries, but
> those aren't *why* we have communities; they're just some of the more
> recent benefits.)

The social contract stuff has been stuck in my head for long. Of course

we need to reach a comprimise between liberty and security, but exactly
how is up to discussion. It's also questionable to what extent should
we help people.

My drama teacher in Grade 7 (who comes from the US) had a pretty bad
time with the heat when he came to Shanghai the first time. He even
threw up at the door of a small restaurant. He said that the staff of
the restaurant asked if he was okay and gave him a cup of water. This
is not rare here and is a good demonstration of socialization as in
helping others. My intuition tells me that if this was to happen in the
US, it'd have been much worse for the him.

> There are corporations taking advantage of that, and warping our social
> drives for profit, to the long-term detriment of both communities and the
> planet. But the problem isn't "people are prone to accept whatever's
> easiest and go along with the crowd."

I'd say most coorporations that normal people know today count.

> > My family has been to the US in 2013. One of my biggest negative
> > impressions was that health care was terrifyingly expensive.
>
> > A ride in the ambulance costs 10 dollars on
> > average in Shanghai, but thousands in ths US. (Note that by "the US", I
> > am referring to the state I was in, I do hope that there are saner ones.)

> There are not; the US medical industry's costs are absolutely shocking to
> most of the rest of the world. An ambulance trip in the US can run
> thousands of dollars even with good insurance; there are no states where
> that's not true. Some states are somewhat better about medical costs - or
> rather, some states regulate who pays for the costs better - but the costs
> are still being set by profit-seeking insurance companies rather than
> having anything to do with the actual cost of services.

That's indeed pretty shocking to me. Capitalism has enabled the
development of our economy and has propelled industrilization (Today we
think of it as something good, except environmentally.) and general
welfare, but leaving everything to the invisible hand causes things like
this. There are things that are rare in supply (ambulance services),
rare in demand, but when there is demand, it's an emergency with the
life of a fellow somewhere.

> > For a government to be able to handle social needs, it must not be
> > corruputed.

> [citation needed]
> ...can you name some non-corrupt governments as examples?

I mean, for a government to do things efficently. I'd say most
governments handle things badly, so the point is kind-of there.

> This is important. Listing problems with a government is easy. If the
> solution were simple, we wouldn't have these problems. Even with as much as
> the current people in power will fight to maintain that - if there were a
> simple solution that resulted in better living for everyone, that *didn't*++>
> result in thousands of small-to-medium disasters (at a minimum) during a
> transition phase, we'd have put it into place.

>
> That doesn't mean I think improvement is impossible, just that it's not a
> matter of "swap this government system for that other one, and things will
> be better immediately and much better in the long term."

Agreed.

If you take a look at China's revolution in the 1910s, people didn't
bother with it. It was just a thing of the people who understand what
democracy is. Therefore people started the social movement in the
1920s, educating the general public about democracies, science, and the
very monarchy they've been living in.

Outright just changing the system of government is no use for sure. Of
course we need social changes, especially of how people think of money.
I don't have much to talk about in this aspect yet, when I have more
spare time I'll include it in the project.

> For example: Copyright, trademark, and patent laws are currently horrible,
> and causing a lot of damage. However, just removing them wouldn't help –
> that'd just mean that mega-corporations could use anyone's work to make
> profit for themselves without paying for it. It'd mean a return to private
> patronage and extensive contracts involved before you can read a book or
> watch a movie.... and ordinary citizens would not be the ones with the
> advantage in that situation. (...What I want is an end to the Berne
> convention, copyright dropped to about 25-30 years automatic, and requiring
> registration & growing fees to extend it. $100 US for the next 10 years, in
> the US – a nominal fee that covers registration costs. $1000 for 10 years
> past that: you have to still be making money to bother. $10,000 for every
> ten years past that – if Disney wants to keep *Snow White* in its control,
> it can do so, but they have to pay the public to keep the monopoly. And
> that's per work, not per franchise: Every episode of *Star Trek* would need
> to be registered and extended.)

Yes.

> > Theories such as the separation of powers exist, but in
> > contemperory times, implementations such as the US have
> > sometimes-corrupt but almost always ineffective governments.
>
> On the one hand: yes, I get that.
> On the other: cars do not regularly run people over on the sidewalk in my
> neighborhood. The wiring in my house does not cause fires. The food I buy
> at local restaurants does not poison me. My neighbors do not burn tires for
> heat in the winter. The water in my kitchen sink is safe to drink. And for
> all the gun violence in my local area, nobody sits on their front porch and
> does target practice on other human beings. My family's doctors do not
> demand intimate favors in exchange for health care services.
>
> My government has a lot of flaws, but it also has successfully provided
> enough safety regulations that I can be comfortable enough to criticize it.

Not false.

Though here where I live you can't be sure about the last point.

> I don't mean, "we should just celebrate the good that governments have

> done." I mean that saying "it's horribly corrupt; we should throw it out"
> needs to start with an awareness of the thousands of small benefits that
> laws have brought. Any anarchist/libertarian "free community" needs to
> first decide, "can you burn waste in your backyard? If so, what kinds; if
> not, who's going to enforce that rule?" ...Will you have private land
> ownership, and if so, can you cut down all the trees on "your" land? Can
> you throw waste into "your" river?
>
> ...Can you have a business selling heroin to teenagers? How about alcohol?
> Tobacco? Caffeine?
>
> What toxins are acceptable to sell to anyone, which are restricted, and
> which are forbidden? Who decides, and who enforces those rules?

I'll reply to this when I get more of social contact theory.

> I am firmly in favor of free software. I would like to see governments be
> required to use free, open-source software for government purposes - to not
> be beholden to any business or company for essential government functions.
> (Or even optional government functions.) But I am aware that the visible
> government--currently-elected legislators--is a small portion of a complex
> system, and that there is no possible simple, sweeping reform that will fix
> the current batch of problems (and there are so, so many problems) without
> bringing in a host of others. And I am not so sanguine as to trust the
> people who say "eh, we'll deal with those when they come up."
>
> if you want to build a government that's free-and-equal, start by talking
> to single mothers with kids under 5 years old, and asking what they need
> from a government. Design a system that works for them, and you'll have a
> foundation that can be extended to support any size of community.

Good idea.

> (Sorry this has gotten rather far from "free software" discussion. I think
> it does all tie together - one of the reasons free software has problems
> catching on, is corporate influence over governments, so the very structure
> of government is part of the discussions. But it does wind up getting
> pretty far from "why can't schools just use Linux-based laptops?")

The LibrePlanet mailing list isn't just a place to discuss about free
software, I suppose. Social ideas are of course good here, there've
been people discussing about nonfree software requirements in COVID
tests, which went on to social stuff.

Regards,
Andrew

Part II

Problems in our Current Society

Chapter 1

Nonfree Software

1.1 What Free Software is

As background, free software is software where the user is free to:

1. Run the program for any purpose;

2. Learn how the program works and/or modify the program to their needs;

3. Redistribute the original and/or modified program.

1.2 Profit from Free Software

Critics of free software, who tend to call free software "open source" in order to remove the link to freedom and liberty, argue that it is impossible to profit developing free software, especially with copyleft licenses such as the GNU General Public License. The Free Software Foundation argues that software developers could still profit, since they are allowed to sell the software while redistributing. Common practice also includes paid support for systems that ought to be reliable. Even along with donations, people earn much less selling and supporting free software than leasing nonfree software. If we were to go for profit, developing nonfree software is obviously the way to go, but it is unjust.

There are indeed good ways to make money off free software. However, I Inconsistant use of pronouns argue that in perfection, profit and money as a

Chapter 2

Capitalism

Chapter 3

Copyright

Part III

A Formal System of Society

Appendix A

Style Conventions

In order to keep this book consistant and understandable, these language and source code conventions should be followed.

1. General use of language

   (a)

2. Sectioning

   (a) Here, sectioning, unless otherwise specified, includes all structure layers, such as parts, chapters, sections, subsections, subsubsections, paragraphs, and subparagraphs. The paragraphs and subparagraphs mentioned in this list item refers to structuring inline titles with `\paragraph` and `\subparagraph`, not `\par` or text separated by empty lines. However, almost anywhere else, paragraphs mean logical paragraphs in terms of Linguistics, i.e.,

   (b) Section titles should be in Title Case, where all words are capitalized except for pronouns, articles, prepesitions, and similar language compoments. The first letter of a title must be uppercase, unless if it is a proper noun where uppercase is inappropriate.

   (c) Cross reference labels go immediatly after the TeX group containing the section name. For example, use `\section{Section Title}\label{section:section-title}.`▮

   (d) For numbered sections, i.e., these in the mainmatter and appendix, use .

3. Abbreviations, spacing, and punctuation

   (a) A single comment symbol must be used at end of lines where a space is inappropriate.

   (b) A non-breaking space must be used inside of people's names. For example, write `Andrew~Yu` instead of `Andrew Yu`, and for other places where a line break between these words is inappropriate, such as book names.

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(c) A comma proceeds i.e., e.g., and similar abbreviations. These abbre-
biations have a dot in each of those letters and after the last one.

(d) A peroid proceeds Mr., Mrs., ans similar abbreviations.

(e) Most abbreviations in common English should have periods after
them.

(f) Abbreviations after proper nouns should probably not have periods
after them.

(g) For all abbreviations that end with a period and a space but are not
at the end of a sentence, the space proceeding the period must be
written as \␣ (a space followed by a backslash) in order to stress that
this is an inter-word space, not an inter-sentence space.

(h) For all sentences that end with a capitalized word, no matter if the
word is fully UPPER CASE or is just Capitalized, the space after
the period (unless if it is at the end of a paragraph, where a space
must not be there) must be written as \@ in order to stress that this
is an inter-sentence space, not an inter-word space.

(i) For lists written as "a, b, [...], and/or/etc. z", a comma proceeds
the last item before the connective.

(j) In the source code, for the style of the source code itself, interword
spacing should be one space, while intersentence spacing should be
two spaces. This convention does not take priority when in conflict
with other conventions.

4. Fonts

(a) Use `\nameofbook` for book names, `\nameofperson` for name of persons,
and `\emph` for emphatics.

(b) Use the `quote` environment for one-paragraph quotes. Use the `quotation`
environment for multi-paragraph quotes.

(c) Use the `point` environment to illustrate a major point being discussed.

5. Source

(a) Do not load extra LaTeX packages unless necessary. If all is needed
from a package is a simple macro, implement it in the preamble.

(b) Nested lists' environment declarations should be indented right under
the text content of the parent item. Items inside the list environment
and most environments in general should be indented two spaces from
the start of the 'begin' control sequence, including the backslash.