

The United States: A Case for Political Relevance

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The world is, and has been since the emergence of life, a tumultuous place to exist. The simple fact of being alive guarantees suffering and death. For most living beings, life consists mostly of minimizing suffering and prolonging the time between now and death. Humans, over the course of many years, have become particularly adept at these two endeavors due in no small part to their employment of the political community to allow for safety in numbers and the advancement of agriculture and medicine. However, the size and complexity of modern political communities has accentuated those problems still left unsolved by humanity. These problems of justice in the modern world include scarcity and greed, prejudice, and the diversity of human thought. The most relevant political community is that which best addresses these unsolved problems and delivers the highest overall value to the conscious beings it supports. In this essay I will argue that despite its imperfections, the United States of America is the political community which best achieves this goal.

The term “highest overall value” is admittedly vague and must be defined before we can continue. In nature, there are many sufferings and gruesome ends to be met. It is fair to assume that if asked, most people would prefer modern (western) life to foraging food in freezing temperatures or having a limb rot away due to untreated infection. These are conditions mostly avoided by living in a modern (western) country such as the USA. This preference of circumstances is value in the utilitarian sense that will be implicit in the arguments used throughout this essay to argue the superiority of the USA as a political community. However, this utilitarian calculus will be extended further than the purely sensual and hedonistic concerns utilitarianism typically argues by. Modern humans don’t just desire to survive, they desire purpose and narrative to their lives. Living in a country where one’s dreams are achievable through hunger and strife, for many people (but not all) is more valuable than a totalitarian regime that makes sure all are well fed. These emotional contributors to pain (oppression, unfulfillment) and pleasure (freedom, fulfillment) are included in considerations toward the

achievement of value creation and highest total “good”. Let us first address two problems of justice too intertwined to discuss separately, scarcity and greed.

Scarcity has been ubiquitous in the existence of mankind. Perhaps the modern world has crept closer to taming the beasts of famine, thirst and starvation, however even if there were an infinite amount of resources, scarcity would remain. Humans are strange creatures in their ability to remain dissatisfied in the face of excess. It is not enough for those born with ambition to have enough to live, they must have *more* than the person next to them, and there are many such people. A fact of behavioural economics is that some people are willing to trade more time and labour than others. In a free-market capitalist system such as the USA, these ambitious individuals employ their work ethic to create value for others with the promise of being rewarded increasingly with the extent of their creation. The problem arises when the result of these incentives shifts from more production to over-exploitation, or in the words of Marx “It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single unconscionable freedom – Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct brutal exploitation.”¹ However, it is the same greed that fuels capitalist exploitation that has made the ideals of communism seemingly impossible to achieve without devolving into totalitarian control. The free-market system is not perfect. Nobody who works full time should struggle to live and that is an issue that will hopefully one day be fixed with policy. However, to raise equality over freedom as virtue is a folly. The fact is that humans are born unequal in intelligence, ability, and ambition for material wealth. If wealth were distributed equally in a commune, there would be no utopia, only a shift in the disaffection to those ambitious ones who are ready and willing to work harder for more wealth. Sometimes the simpler solution is better. In the free-market USA there is not perfectly equal opportunity, but enough so that with enough grit, one can maneuver from being the impoverished to the wealthy. For many people, dreams amount to *no amount* except having a *larger amount* than others, and these positions of *more* are scarce by nature and necessity. Without the banishment of human greed, scarcity will remain unsolved, and a free-market system that inches closer to the elimination of abject poverty while allowing for human ambition to flourish will remain the best way to co-exist with each other.

Therefore, the USA, land of opportunity, and king of global industry, leads mankind in this metric of value creation and has met the problems of greed and scarcity with a noble effort.

Prejudice is not a recent invention. Humanity has been slaughtering itself tribe against tribe for hundreds of thousands of years. For this reason, it makes plenty of sense in an evolutionary context to favour those who look like you over those who do not. However now that humans needn't poke holes in each other over mammoth carcasses, we must overcome these obsolete instincts that are remnant of bygone times in favour of an attitude of kinship and cooperation across all mankind. By no means is the USA free of prejudice, but it is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse places in the world. Cultivating a culture that overcomes evolutionary programming is not an easy task, however the USA has done a more amicable job than it receives credit for. In a 2013 study done by the Washington Post, the USA scored among the lowest in racial prejudice.² Not to say one study is representative, but it is preposterous to claim that the USA is "one of the most racist countries" as I have heard many people say. In the US, all races and genders are welcome to own land, vote in elections, and raise their socioeconomic standing through resourcefulness and hard work. This is more than can be said for many places on Earth. One may argue that the USA is no further along regarding the considerations of animal welfare than other modern political communities and that is true. However, as said by Moore "...except by occasional individuals here and there whose emotions are more civilized than the rest, or whose conceptions are more ample and clear, ethical relations are not extended by human beings beyond the bounds of their own species."³ It is true that animal welfare has not captured the sympathy of the American public as much as issues such as racial and gender discrimination have, but this is true across the vast majority of the planet. The great strides the USA has made in order to make all men and women equal within its borders should not be discounted because the case of animals has not yet been properly addressed.

It is probable that the reader will disagree with at least some of what is said in this paper, and that I may disagree with their disagreement. Thanks to the tenets of political liberalism, myself and the disagreeing individual can walk away while also acknowledging each other as reasonable individuals, "Whatever the full explanation, early modern times saw the ever more

widespread realization that people reasoning sincerely and carefully about questions of faith and about the nature of the human good in general are likely to disagree, often because they differ about what it means in these cases to reason well.”⁴ The USA is a shining example of this liberal attitude implemented in a modern political community. For decades the USA has been one of the most popular immigration destinations and known globally as the “land of the free”. The USA is a place where people with different sets of beliefs and customs and come and live together in relative peace. The fact that the US is seen so pervasively as “the land of opportunity” means something important. It means that the environment the US cultivated over its history transformed it into a global symbol of possibility that drew people from all over the planet to sacrifice their old lives for a chance at a new and better one in the US. This status would never have occurred if the US was generally an unaccepting and bigoted place. This freedom people in the US enjoy and the reputation it has given the country make another reason why the USA is the most relevant political community.

The United States has, despite setbacks, blemishes and inadequacies, put forth an admirable effort into dealing with the problems of justice that continue to plague mankind. Walking the tightropes between political extremes is a precarious task when the millions of Americans have such diversity of beliefs and opinions. While perhaps not the singular best country at addressing each individual problem of justice, through a utilitarian lens that appreciates both tangible outcomes and the intangible worth of freedom and self-determination, America has, in my analysis, the best argument for being the most relevant political community that exists in contemporary times.

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 - **“It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single unconscionable freedom – Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct brutal exploitation.”** *Communist Manifesto* p 53
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 - **“But, except by occasional individuals here and there whose emotions are more civilized than the rest, or whose conceptions are more ample and clear, ethical relations are not extended by human beings beyond the bounds of their own species.”** (Moore, Page 273)
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 - **“Whatever the full explanation, early modern times saw the ever more widespread realization that people reasoning sincerely and carefully about questions of faith and about the nature of the human good in general are likely to disagree, often because they differ about what it means in these cases to reason well.** (Larmore P2)