

Misgovernment: When Lawful Authority Prevents Justice and Prosperity

Mark Lipse

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Lipse's project is a labor of love written for advocates of individual rights.

Mark Lipse's *Misgovernment* is an in-depth treatise on present day political economies and the barriers that those in power erect to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The book takes the side of individuals and their rights in a perceived battle against "predatory jurisdiction," or the overreach of governments. The law may permit such overreach, the book notes, though it shouldn't; abuse leads to great harm.

The work is sweeping in its scholarly reach. Still, its focus is curiously singular, trained on the question of what it costs to get approval for a small business. It goes deep into the weeds of topics like jurisprudence, constitutionalism, and ethics, arguing that governments go beyond their bounds and obstruct individual citizens' abilities to make money and live with dignity.

But this isn't a text that calls for typical revolutions; it doesn't want the international banking system overturned or a new egalitarian order installed. It simply argues that the established system should be more open in order to help entrepreneurs who are currently restricted by public officials who do either inept or intentionally corrupt things.

The book takes the novel approach by concentrating not on corporate industrialism, but rather on the enormous, informal economies of the developing world, where large populations produce wealth with admirable pluck and pride, outside of national economic systems that are too expensive for them to engage in. This productive capacity is lost to the formal economy, the book argues—though, at the same time, such informal wealth is not what it could be without the restraints of licensing fees and other bureaucratic evils.

The remedy that the book arrives at, after the consideration of a myriad of issues from as many angles, involves a troop of reforming legislators and administrators possessed of a "consuming desire to be the saviors and heroes of their nations." The success of the treatise rests on the belief that such people exist or can be groomed for service.

Still, such judgments come through a text that is overly long, particularly considering that its ultimate conclusions are reached early on. The text avoids rambling and maintains a sense of erudition throughout, but an easy read is not in the offing here.

Misgovernment fits in with other works exploring political economies as a labor of love for advocates of individual rights.

STEPHEN SICILIANO (October 12, 2017)

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