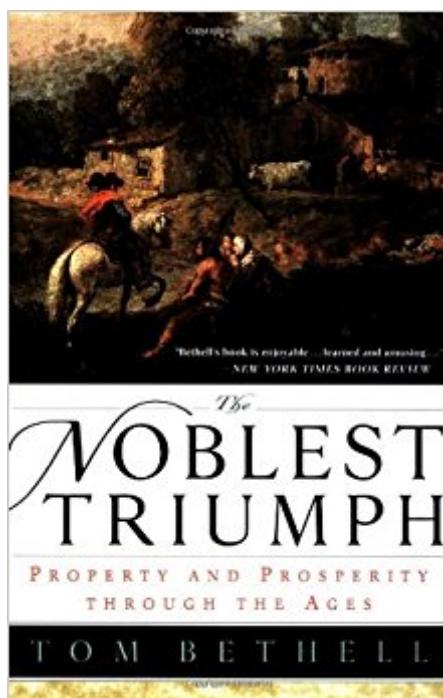


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The Noblest Triumph: Property And Prosperity Through The Ages



Synopsis

In *The Noblest Triumph*, Tom Bethell looks at the history of property rights and shows that the key role played by the institution of private property has been misunderstood by Western elites for more than a century. Beginning with the ancient Greeks and arriving at the present day, Bethell looks at basic ideas about property found in the writings of Plato, Adam Smith, Blackstone, Bentham, Marx, Mill, and others. He shows that the institution of property is inextricably tied to traditional conceptions of justice and liberty, and he argues that prosperity and civilization can only arise where private property is securely held by the people. *The Noblest Triumph* is an indispensable book for anyone interested in this fundamental aspect of civilization and the progress of humankind through the ages.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The point in Tom Bethell's excellent book that struck me most was his discussion of experiments in abolishing private property. Well, yes, we all know that with the exception of religious orders, they have uniformly come to bad ends--from the Oneida community to the Israeli kibbutzim to the Soviet Union. The striking point was that these socialist utopian communities and theories also attempted to abolish religion and the family. Now, you don't have to be an anthropologist or a theologian to suspect that these utopians were in their common hostility identifying fundamental elements of human nature, or as the Founders put it, that men are endowed by their creator with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As the discussion of utopian theories and communities indicates, the *Noblest Triumph* is an intellectual history of the idea of property as well as a history of

the human consequences of the ways different societys have made it more or less secure. Bethell makes clear that the assault on property is far from over. In fact the age of private property has been in decline since about the time that Jeremy Bentham called it man's "noblest triumph", as theorist after theorist has tried to deconstruct it and separate it from its roots in human nature. Marx, of course, declared against historical evidence that the legal system was inevitably determined by economic relationships, and then proposed that economic relationships be reformed by changing the law. In this respect Bethell is, especially for a writer, curiously soft on protecting intellectual property--a topic that is in the information age only in the early stages of development.

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