

The Washington Post

Michael Gerson's unfair attack on libertarians

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Michael Gerson ["The GOP rides a risky wave," op-ed, July 9] described libertarianism as "a scandal" because it "involves . . . a retreat from the most basic social commitments to the weak, the elderly and the disadvantaged."

That is, he charged libertarians with a "retreat" from a welfare-state philosophy that is at odds with America's heritage and with basic principles of limited government. Moreover, he charged libertarians with wanting to change policies that have not served the weak and the disadvantaged well because they encourage weakness and long-term dependence.

Libertarians warn that to continue down the current road leads to the Greek crisis, in which the cruelty of making commitments that can't be kept is revealed.

Gerson also charged libertarianism with "rigorous ideological coldness." He considers reason, arithmetic and a realistic assessment of what those "commitments" really mean to be "cold." That says more about him than about libertarianism.

It might be kinder and gentler to try the Founders' vision, the libertarian vision, of a limited state that provides a framework in which we can all enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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