

# The Superman Pathology

In *The Law*, Frederic Bastiat makes a powerful argument against the ability of the state to guide the affairs of the people.

No matter one's politics, at some point a person will usually disagree with an argument for increasing the size and scope of government in the name of either the "common good" or because we need "experts" to do it. To be fair, some things that government does are truly for the common good and some things do actually require experts. But those are not the examples with which Bastiat or others take issue. Rather, it is the idea that for us to have a good society that the *Urbemensch*, the technocrat, the smartest men need to pull the levers of power in government in order to manage the affairs of the common people by guiding their actions through regulations and law.

Essentially, those who seek the power to guide and manipulate the masses have infinite trust in their own goodness and wisdom while doubting anyone else has any of those same qualities.

Here's Bastiat's description and critique of the mindset:

"The claims of these organizers of humanity raise another question which I have often asked them and which, so far as I know, they have never answered: If the natural tendencies of mankind are so bad that it is not safe to permit people to be free, how is it that the tendencies of these organizers are always good? Do not the legislators and their appointed agents also belong to the human race? Or do they believe that they themselves are made of a finer clay than the rest of mankind? The organizers maintain that society, when left undirected, rushes headlong to its inevitable destruction because the instincts of the people are so perverse. The legislators

claim to stop this suicidal course and to give it a saner direction. Apparently, then, the legislators and the organizers received from Heaven an intelligence and virtue that place them beyond and above mankind; if so, let them show their titles to this superiority.

They would be the shepherds over us, their sheep. Certainly such an arrangement presupposes that they are naturally superior to the rest of us. And certainly we are fully justified in demanding from the legislators and organizers proof of this natural superiority.”

Good points all around. Obviously, there is a paradox in that good men are needed in positions of leadership and not all men are capable. Is that not the very reason that we have elections to determine who would be the best to lead? Nonetheless, those leaders need humility in the end.

To be the best does not mean one is perfect or has all of the necessary knowledge and wisdom to guide all of the affairs of the people. There is a balance to be had in leading a free society while also recognizing the need and ability of the people to guide their own affairs.

*(Image: geekandsundry.com)*