

self-interest should enable you to prosper.

Now, Dobson was very clear about the connection between the strict father worldview and free market capitalism. The link is the morality of self-interest, which is the conservative version of Adam Smith's view of capitalism. Adam Smith said that if everyone pursues their own profit, then the profit of all will be maximized by the invisible hand—that is, by nature—just naturally. Go about pursuing your own profit, and you are helping everyone.

This is linked to a general metaphor that views well-being as wealth. For example, if I do you a favor, you say, “I owe you one,” or “I’m in your debt.” Doing something good for someone is metaphorically like giving him money. He “owes” you something. And he says, “How can I ever repay you?”

Apply this metaphor to Adam Smith's “law of nature”: If everyone pursues her own self-interest, then by the invisible hand, by nature, the self-interest of all will be maximized. That is, it is moral to pursue your self-interest, and there is a name for those people who do not do it. The name is do-gooder. A do-gooder is someone who is trying to help someone else rather than herself and is getting in the way of those who are pursuing their self-interest. Do-gooders screw up the system.

In this model there is also a definition of what it means to become a good person. A good person—a moral person—is someone who is disciplined enough to be obedient to legitimate authority, to learn what is right, to do what is right and not do what is wrong, and to pursue her self-interest to prosper and become self-reliant. A good child grows up to be like that. A bad child is one who does not learn discipline, does not function morally, does not do what is right, and therefore is not disciplined enough to become prosperous. She cannot take care of herself and thus becomes dependent.

When the good children are mature, they either have learned discipline and can prosper, or have failed to learn it. From this point on the strict father is not to meddle in their lives.

This translates politically into no government meddling. Consider what all this means for social programs: It is immoral to give people things they have not earned, because then they will not develop discipline and will become