

# I CHOSE LIBERTY

Autobiographies of  
Contemporary  
Libertarians

COMPILED BY

**WALTER BLOCK**

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AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF CONTEMPORARY LIBERTARIANS

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WALTER BLOCK

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## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BOOK PROJECT

SOME YEARS AGO, at the suggestion of Lew Rockwell, I wrote my own short autobiography, and began asking others in our Austro-libertarian movement to contribute their own stories to my collection.

Autobiographies are important. Our movement consists of *more* than merely the ideas of Austrianism and libertarianism, no matter how important those undoubtedly are. What more? It is comprised of *people*, real flesh and blood creatures who extend beyond, far beyond, the thoughts they hold at any given time. The proportion of words written by us, about our ideals and about ourselves, is, overwhelmingly in favor of the former. The present compilation of autobiographies will, in some small way, tend to right this imbalance.

Very few of us will write an entire book-length autobiography about ourselves, nor have complete biographies written about us. One benefit of the present initiative is that it serves as a short substitute for that type of publication. This is a relatively costless way for us to tell the stories of what it was like before we came to our present Austro-libertarian beliefs, what the process of discovery was, who were the people, and which were the books that influenced us in this direction, and how have our lives changed as a result of this political economic odyssey.

As I reach closer and closer to my retirement age, I am more and more concerned that I and others of my generation pass on the precious baton that has been handed to us by those who came before. These chapters can serve as an inspiration to the younger people who only now are beginning to become interested in promoting liberty and economic rationality. Given that we are all already as busy as we can be adding to the Austro-libertarian edifice, how better can we do this than by telling the younger generation of the process through which we arrived at our present states?

This autobiography, all on its lonesome, might be the means of converting some people to the freedom philosophy. That is, all of our arguments, all of our evidence, might fail, and yet, our personal stories succeed, in this regard. Why? One possibility is that, like it or not, Austro-libertarianism comes across to some as “cold.” We are heartless. We are capitalists pigs. We have cash registers for hearts, and dollar signs on our eyeballs. Another dozen *Atlas Shrugged*, *Man, Economy, and States*, or *Human Actions*, for such people, will avail us nothing. They will only further engender the message that we do not care for the poor, or downtrodden, or some such idiocy. However, our own personal stories are, well, personal. When we are *not* seen as cold-blooded and cold-hearted, there is a chance that our substantive message will be given a greater, more sympathetic hearing on the part of such people.

Ordinarily, putting a “human face” on capitalism is to compromise our principles by coupling free enterprise with some sort of welfare program. Here, in this book, we can attain this goal, at least partially, in an entirely different way, without any compromise whatsoever.

What are some of the other benefits? This book can serve as raw material for sociologists, or psychologists who wish to study people with minority viewpoints. We can perhaps better learn how to promote liberty from the commonalities of our paths in this direction. Virtually none of us started out as full Austro-libertarians. What attracted us to this philosophy may in turn attract others.

As far as I am personally concerned, Ayn Rand, Ludwig von Mises, and Murray N. Rothbard are the three people most responsible for creating the movement that has the best chance of bringing about the free and prosperous society. I dedicate this book to their memory.

JAMES C.W. AHIKPOR

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## ON MY BECOMING AN ADVOCATE OF FREE MARKETS AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT

MY INITIAL INCLINATION TOWARD Walter Block's kind invitation to write the story of how I became a "Libertarian" was to decline it. I didn't think I qualified to take on the label. But Walter explained that he defines "libertarianism very widely, synonymously with market advocate, limited government philosophy, free enterpriser, *laissez-faire* capitalist, Adam Smith fan, etc.," all of which indeed fit me. So here is my story.

The saying that "a conservative is a socialist mugged by reality," or something to that effect, pretty much explains my journey toward my present views on the beneficence of market freedom, limited government spending, taxation, privatization and deregulation. I grew up in Ghana, West Africa, during the socialist experiments of the first Prime Minister and President, Kwame Nkrumah, to transform the country from a basically agricultural and mining economy into an industrialized one. The process included nationalizing some private manufacturing enterprises, both foreign and locally owned, establishing a myriad of new state-owned enterprises, including a steel mill, boat building, and farms. To fund the effort, the government raised taxes significantly, besides borrowing heavily from the country's central bank and abroad. The state also took over the control of several primary, middle, and secondary (high) schools previously run by religious organizations such as the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches. The resistance the government's actions generated within the country led to the arrest and imprisonment of hordes of people without trial under a Preventive Detention Act (1958), the establishment of a one-party state, and the emergence of a culture of silence, as reporting on friends and neighbors who voiced opposition to the government became lucrative. Of course, some individuals used the opportunity to settle personal scores. Many had hoped that Ghana's political independence in 1957 would set a model for the transformation of African states, south of the Sahara. The expectation was that the country could be turned into a modern functioning democracy and would enjoy economic development. Instead there was quick disappointment. The country became both a political and economic disaster by 1965. Many other African countries also have followed the same path to political and economic ruin.

Ghana's awful experiment ended with a *coup d'état* in February 1966. Anyone who made the connection between Nkrumah's avowedly socialist means of transforming the country and the loss of civil liberties, the rise of political sycophancy, bribery and corruption as means of getting ahead, and economic debacle, would be disinclined toward that extent of state intervention as I was then. But I had not yet been fully persuaded of the

benefits of free markets and limited government as I would later be. Reading F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* twenty years later (1986) helped to place all of the connections in clearer perspective for me.

At the conclusion of my undergraduate studies at the University of Ghana, Legon in 1971, I proudly called myself a Fabian socialist. The Marxian economics course, which was part of the core of the B.Sc. (Economics) degree, meant very little to me, given the failed Ghanaian socialist experiment. I had been impressed by some of my teachers that J.M. Keynes had fashioned under Fabian socialism an enlightened way of managing an economy. In those days the competing approaches to economic development was between controls over the "excesses of the free market" and "completely free markets." The notion of government failure hadn't gained currency. I took the side of controls in my first graduate conference paper, bad-mouthing arguments for free markets by Harry Johnson, quoted in Gerald Meier's *Leading Issues in Economic Development*. Graduate school gave me little guidance on the choice between free markets and controls, as it involved the usual diet of economic theory, mathematics for economists, statistics, and econometrics.

However, my interest in economic policy at the time led to my writing commentaries in a quasi-academic magazine, *The Legon Observer*, published at the university. I criticized government policies as they caused more grief to the population than relief. My criticisms included the support of import substitution industries and a massive devaluation that pegged the official rate above the black market rate in December 1971. My last article during the 1970s was "The Sugar Problem," published in 1972. In it I argued that the new military government's threat to close down any shops in front of which people had formed lines to buy packets of sugar at the government's dictated price, would hurt more than help the problem of a sugar shortage. The fact was that buying two packets of sugar, which the government's quota allowed, and selling these on the black market would more than pay the official daily minimum wage. I argued that the government would help ordinary people by either abolishing the controlled price or at least raising it to reflect the price of sugar on the world market or in neighboring countries. Of course, the government paid no heed, and sugar soon disappeared from the shops. Other subsequent interventionist policies of the military government, including restrictions on imports, controls over fares charged by private transport operators, pegging gasoline prices, and higher taxes on cocoa and other export products drove the economy into further ruin. The lesson of the harm from such interferences in the market process was there to be learned by anyone who could make the right connection between cause and effect. Thus, by the time I left Ghana in 1976 for further studies in Canada as part of a faculty development program at the University of Ghana, Legon (I had been employed as a Research Fellow/Lecturer there since 1974), all I needed was the theoretical foundation fully to become a consistent advocate of free markets and limited government.

I spent my first year in Canada at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, where, once again, the courses in economic theory, mathematics, applied statistics, and econometrics gave me little insight into free market economic philosophy. After taking an MA at UBC, I continued at the University of Toronto where an excellent graduate course in the history of economic thought given by Sam Hollander in the 1978/79 academic year

opened my eyes clearly to Adam Smith's liberal philosophy and economics. I learned the pervasiveness of self-love (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*) or self-interest (*Wealth of Nations*) in all types of human action, and the prudence of a minimal state in the promotion of economic development. The research paper I wrote for the course was on David Ricardo's monetary analysis, which further reinforced Smith's wisdom of the minimal state and the futility of attempting to promote economic growth through excessive money (cash) creation rather than encouraging private savings and investment. (I published a note and one article from that paper in the *History of Political Economy*, 1982 and 1985, respectively.)

While doing the research and writing my doctoral dissertation on the role of multinationals in manufacturing industry development in the less developed countries in 1979–81, I took time off to study more of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Public debate over the significant economic slump in the U.S. at the time, Jimmy Carter's non-market approaches to solving the problems, the refreshing arguments of Ronald Reagan in contrast, and columns by Milton Friedman all helped to firm up the theoretical underpinnings I needed to take a stand for free markets and limited government. Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, *Dollars and Deficits*, and *Free to Choose* (Friedman and Friedman) were most helpful in updating and applying the Smithian principles to current issues for me. Friends and some colleagues began asking if I had sold my mind to the capitalist West. The typical African student was not known for espousing free market policies, let alone defending multinationals, and siding with Republicans. I would answer that, if I had sold my mind, I had missed receiving the check in payment.

My dissertation was designed mainly to test a variety of hypotheses on the activities of multinational corporations in the less developed countries. I completed it in 1981. In it, I absolved these companies of the usual charges, including their exploiting people in the Third World and ruining their prospects for economic development. I did so both on the basis of empirical evidence and theory. My conclusions were the exact opposite of my supervisor's philosophical disposition. He later told me that he disavowed me as representing his views to people who got to know that he was my supervisor. Another member of my dissertation committee told me that he would have liked to fail me on the basis of my free market conclusions, but he respected the econometric work upon which I had based them. (Some of the results have been published in the *Journal of Development Economics*, 1986, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 1989, and *Multinationals and Economic Development: An Integration of Competing Theories*, 1990.)

As part of my doctoral research I also studied works by Kwame Nkrumah in which he explained his motivations for adopting his socialist approach to economic development in Ghana, books on the politics of Ghana during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, and other public documents on the country's economy. These further enlightened me on how many erroneous interventionist policies tend to be founded on good intentions. The study also provided me a firm background for presenting papers at meetings of the Canadian Association of African Studies, many of whose members were either Marxists or socialists with an interest in African societies. I was engaged in perhaps a vain effort of trying to persuade them against their erroneous beliefs. I was then teaching economics at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia (1981–91). I caused much grief to participants in my sessions, many

of whom wondered how I could have lost my way into their midst. (Some of these papers have been published in *International Organization*, 1985; *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 1988, and *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1991.) I also gave papers on economic development at the Canadian Economics Association meetings as well as the Western Economic Association International meetings, trying to counter the Keynesian and interventionist leanings of development economists.

It was at one of such presentations that I first met Walter Block in Anaheim, California, in July 1985. In my paper titled, “On the Irrelevance of Neoclassical Economics to LDCs: A Clarification of Some Definitions,” I disputed the claims of such development economists as Gunnar Myrdal, Dudley Seers, Paul Streeten, and Michael Todaro that the policies of free trade and non-intervention in domestic markets were inapplicable to the less developed countries. These authors base their contention, among other things, on the fact that neo-classical economics assumes rational choice of individuals and employs the notion of competitive markets. I defended the rationality of individuals in the Third World and explained that competition means rivalrous behavior, which can be seen in these countries, and dismissed the relevance of “perfect competition.” My discussant was quite dismissive of my arguments. I recall Walter coming up to me at the conclusion of the session to congratulate me on my presentation. He got a copy of my paper and asked if we could have a drink together.

During our conversation, Walter quickly diagnosed me as an Austrian. I explained to him that I didn’t know much about Austrian economics besides having taught their positive and negative imputation approaches to evaluating factor inputs in my history of economic thought class. He recommended that I participate in an Advanced Austrian Seminar, which I did in the summer of 1986 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was a bit of a trouble-maker at some of the sessions. I have since come to learn more and write about Austrian economics: (*Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 1997 and *Independent Review*, 1999). But I still take my inspiration from Adam Smith and David Ricardo. My research and publications continue to emphasize the benefits of free markets and limited government in the classical tradition in the pursuit of economic development. The latest of these is *Classical Macroeconomics: Some Modern Variations and Distortions* (Routledge, 2003). I believe it has helped my productivity in free market research and writing to have joined the economics faculty at Hayward since September 1991. This came about when I met Shyam Kamath at a Liberty Fund Colloquium on Liberty and Moral Development held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in November–December 1990. He spoke excitedly of the free market atmosphere in the economics department at Hayward and the opportunities for interacting with others in the San Francisco Bay Area. I was then utilizing a two-year leave of absence from Saint Mary’s University. I put in my application, and the rest, as the saying goes, is history. Having free-market thinkers such as Shyam, Chuck Baird, Greg Christensen, and Steve Shmanske as colleagues with whom to share views easily beats being the lone voice in a department literally tucked away in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. ■

## MY LIFE AS A LIBERTARIAN

I WAS BORN IN THE North End of Hartford, Connecticut, in 1940 and I've been a libertarian for as long as I can remember. I never went through any sort of messy political transformation like some others did. I was never a Marxist or a socialist or even a warm and fuzzy liberal. When I first became interested in political economy in my early teens, individual responsibility and mistrust of governmental authority just seemed natural and right to me. They still do. How did I get started down the libertarian path? Perhaps it was my very negative reaction to being interned in Catholic school for my first six educational years. To put the matter bluntly, I hated the entire experience with a passion. I disliked the regimentation, despised the bossy nuns, and resented being strapped on the hands by a smug Father Bannon for talking in class or thinking impure thoughts or whatever the hell I was NOT supposed to be doing at age ten. A shrink might say that I transferred my anger from the authoritative parochial school to the super-authoritative federal government at some point later in life. Maybe so; I really can't rule that out. (Only kidding.)

Or perhaps I got my initial libertarian leanings from my parents, otherwise hard-working, honest, middle-class folks who survived the Depression and the War and who never asked anyone in authority for a handout. Perhaps, but I doubt it. Both my parents were New Deal Democrats who never, never talked intelligent politics in the home and never doubted that government existed to help the little people. My libertarianism was a total mystery to them—still is—so, no, I absolutely did NOT catch the liberty fever from my family. As best as I can recall, two very different personal experiences may have acted as a catalyst. When I was a young kid looking to earn extra money, I used to do landscape work and move rocks for a next-door neighbor named Jack Harris. Jack was a professional welder by trade, a quiet and precise man, who gave me minimal instructions and then left me free to do the work to the best of my ability. I always admired Jack's own confident demeanor and his trust in my integrity to do the job well. Jack never watched me and he never gave explicit instructions on how to do things. He simply told me what he wanted and he trusted me to do it.

One day when I went to get paid, Jack's wife said "Hold on. I want to give you a book to read that Jack treasures and that I think that you will enjoy." And then, of course, she handed me a hardcover of Ayn Rand's, *The Fountainhead*. Everything that I had always felt intuitively about life I now found explicitly detailed in Rand's wonderfully romantic fiction. Jack and I never spoke about the ideas in that book. I'm not even sure that he could have articulated them. But he lived them (from what I could tell) and those ideas and Jack's

real life example made a lasting impression on me. A second event occurred in early 1958 when I was watching *The Armstrong Circle Theater* on television. This was a live television broadcast and the subject being debated was the reality of the UFO phenomena. I'd prepared a report on UFOs in a high school science class so I knew something about the subject. The government/Air Force position (then and now) was that there was nothing in the nature of the reports that represented anything extra-ordinary or a threat to national security. The Air Force mantra was that UFOs were balloons or mirages or hoaxes and that no information to the contrary was being withheld. Yeah, right.

The "other side" in the debate was represented by Donald E. Keyhoe, who was then the executive director of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomenon in Washington, D.C. Keyhoe, a feisty retired ex-Marine Major, spoke in support of the reality of the phenomenon and of an Air Force cover-up of inconvenient facts such as 90 degree turns and evasive action when pursued by our jets. At one point in the program Keyhoe suddenly broke away from his prepared remarks, looked at the camera and said: "And now I am going to reveal something that has never been disclosed before . . ." but his microphone abruptly went dead. The live TV audience saw his lips moving (me included) but his audio had been terminated by CBS and the U.S. Air Force under prior agreement. I think I became a radical libertarian at that very moment.

While still in high school I attended one of the Foundation for Economic Education seminars in Irvington, New York, and still remember Leonard Read lighting his candle in a dark room. (Later I would become a Trustee of that fine organization.) When I got into college, a good friend and I formed an Objectivist Study Group and I wrote articles for the college newspaper on Rand and her ideas. I began to argue with my professors about monopoly and unemployment and the proper role of government. I was reading Friedman and Hayek and especially Hazlitt by that time and frequently asking "outrageous" questions in class. There were never any serious answers, of course, only smirks and ridicule. I would often make appointments to meet professors after class to pursue issues, but few ever showed. Indeed, what I remember most about those undergraduate years is the almost complete "liberty blackout" in economics classes.

None of my economics professors seemed interested in free market theory or were even aware that there was another viewpoint aside from religious Keynesianism. No reading list from my undergraduate days EVER had a Friedman or Hayek citation, let alone Mises or Murray Rothbard. My only brush with classical liberal ideas and libertarianism came in courses on political philosophy, where we explored the ideas of Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Mill and took seriously the conflict between liberty and power. Graduate school (1962–1966) was a slightly better intellectual experience. Graduate classes were smaller and the cadre of students and professors were more committed to serious pursuits. We all hung out together and constantly debated free market theory, the Great Depression, tax policy, the history of child labor and, of course, the Viet Nam War.

Joel Dirlam, an iconoclast industrial organization professor at the University of Connecticut, sparked my early interest in antitrust law, though our policy views could not have been more different. Dirlam was the first professor to send me off to read "original" documents and trial record material in order to really understand what went on at court

in antitrust cases. And Bill Snavelly, who taught comparative economic systems, formally introduced me to the ideas of Ludwig von Mises and the socialist calculation debate. Later Bill would ask me to contribute a chapter to his book, *Theory Of Economic Systems* (Merrill, 1969) on that important subject and it became my first important publishing achievement. It was also my first formal introduction to Mises and to Austrianism generally. I was hooked.

I received my Ph.D. in economics from the University of Connecticut in 1966 with a dissertation on the political economy of the brilliant, late nineteenth century classical liberal, William Graham Sumner. Sumner taught at Yale between 1870 and 1905 and his ideas and his unflinching attitude toward enemies of the free market had a tremendous influence on me. Sumner was a brilliant writer, lecturer, and debater. Moreover, he had a fierce and fiery tongue and never gave an inch to enemies of liberty on either the left or right. He became my first intellectual hero.

Sumner angered Yale's Republican friends by opposing tariffs and quotas of any kind for any reason. In addition, he strongly opposed the rise of U.S. Imperialism and Empire and wrote and spoke eloquently on why the Spanish-American war was a fatal mistake for American civil society. He opposed any and all welfare programs of government; as he put it bluntly, a drunk was in the gutter where he belonged. Indeed, in almost every area of political economy (save public schools), Sumner anticipated late twentieth century libertarian thought at every turn. That he has been forgotten (like his own "forgotten man") and unappreciated by current academics is a sad commentary on the current teaching of intellectual history. Since I always had a flair for the dramatic—I was in several plays in grade school and high school—teaching economics at the college level came naturally to me. I fell in love with teaching during my first class as a graduate assistant in 1964. I just loved the performing and the give and take with the student audience. And I loved to put words to paper. I had been writing stories since grammar school (one teacher, the very special Leo Cohen, even made extra time for me so that I could write "my stories") and I won an award for a short story in high school with the encouragement of my favorite English teacher, Mrs. Kind, whose spirit and support I remember with great fondness. Thus an academic life seemed ideal for me and for my new wife, Rose LaFont. (We married in 1966, and are still strongly merged; I could not have accomplished what I have without her.) Thus we began our long journey into the heart of intellectual darkness!!

I taught full-time at the University of Connecticut in 1966–67 and then went to teach at the private University of Hartford in West Hartford, Connecticut, in the fall of 1967. Before I arrived in Hartford, I published my first article for cash (\$75) in a slick trade magazine for the direct mail industry. An editor at the magazine had seen a "letter to the editor" in the *Wall Street Journal* in which I had argued that a private post office would be more efficient than a government monopoly. He asked me to write a longer historical piece on the subject and it appeared as "Do We Really Need A Post Office?, Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising" (March 1967). Seeing my name on an article in print for money had a profound effect on me! I had found my calling.

When I arrived at Hartford, I was immediately handed the Government & Business course (senior level) to teach and had to quickly find a textbook. The standard text at the time was Clair Wilcox's *Public Policies Towards Business* (Irwin, 1955) then in its umpteenth

edition, and I adopted it my first year. As I prepared to teach the antitrust section of the course, however, I discovered a disturbing anti-business bias in the Wilcox text (and other supplementary texts) and the almost complete absence of any historical information about product prices, outputs, and business innovation.

Wilcox, et al. simply assumed that government antitrust policy promoted the “public interest” and that the firms convicted under the Sherman Act had actually raised prices and reduced outputs as standard monopoly theory predicted. Certainly the students who studied the Wilcox text had no way of knowing what actually transpired from an economic perspective in the classic antitrust cases since the author chose not to tell them. At the end of my first year of teaching, I decided to write an antitrust book to fill in the story that Wilcox and other textbook authors had omitted. *The Myths of Antitrust: Economic Theory and Legal Cases* (1972) was an attempt to do a major “revisionist” history of antitrust theory and policy. The State of Connecticut had an excellent law library in Hartford and so I buried myself in legal decisions and trial record material for almost four years. (We had no “research assistants” at the time; I did ALL of the research for *Myths* myself and wrote every word of text. If there are errors or omissions, blame me.) My intention was to discover what actually happened in the classic antitrust cases from an economic perspective. Did the firms abuse consumers and was antitrust a legitimate response to monopolization? Additionally, I wanted to tell the story of the classic antitrust cases in the context of the actual historical development of the industry.

How, for example, did the market concentration in petroleum or tobacco actually arise? Why did firms merge and were there so-called barriers to entry that unfairly kept new competitors out? Absent some historical discussion, the monopoly and price fixing cases made little sense and the actual intent and effect of antitrust regulation remained obscure. Thus, explaining the antitrust decision against Standard Oil of New Jersey (1911) in the context of the history of the petroleum industry would give a unique understanding to my antitrust and monopoly, discussion and sharply separate my book from the competitors. And after more than 30 years in print in various editions, I still think that the perspective that I adopted and the analysis that I attempted in that first book holds up reasonably well.

*Myths* attempted to break several areas of new ground. (I was bold and brash at 32!) It systematically attacked the dominant “structure/conduct/performance” paradigm that dominated industrial organization theory and public policy in the 1960s. *Myths* presented an alternative quasi-Schumpeterian theory of open market competition to replace the orthodox perfectly competitive model. (Israel Kirzner at New York University would lay out a far more systematic theory of market process in *Competition and Entrepreneurship* which was published in 1973, a year after *Myths* appeared.)

*Myths* exposed the soft underbelly of the “public interest” theory of antitrust by demonstrating that the firms indicted and convicted in the classic monopoly cases had actually been increasing outputs and lowering prices. (Where available, I stuck the prices and industry data right in the text.) And in its most radical chapter on price fixing, *Myths* argued that even business collusion was a myth since high fixed costs and legally open markets encouraged price cheating and secret discounts to customers. It even showed that the infamous electrical equipment conspiracy of the early 1960s didn’t really work. *Myths* concluded that

antitrust was a complete public policy hoax, that most cases were brought by private firms against their rivals, and that absent any legitimate rationale, the entire legal framework hurt consumers and should be repealed. So there! The immediate reaction to my book in the business and academic world was . . . underwhelming. Despite some important favorable reviews (especially one by Donald Dewey at Columbia in the *Business History Review*) book sales were modest and the antitrust intellectual establishment did not come crumbling down or even tremble noticeably. Indeed, most economists and law professors in the 1970s simply ignored what I had written or called, instead, for more “vigorous” enforcement of antitrust law and even new laws to limit industrial concentration.

There were at least two exceptions. At Chicago and at UCLA, various scholars (such as Yale Brozen and Wesley Liebeler) were reasonably sympathetic to my arguments and published their own important critiques of antitrust policy. The Chicago crowd was always lukewarm, however, since I had attacked the “perfect competition equilibrium” model and had argued that even prosecuting price fixing was a mistake. But a second group of supporters, the Austrians, led by Murray Rothbard, were very enthusiastic about my work and I was soon drawn into their world in a more systematic way.

My first formal interaction with the world of Austrian Economics came with an invitation to the South Royalton Conference in 1974. There I met several of the Austrian luminaries for the first time and I was blown away by how seriously the youthful audience took theoretical controversies. At the end of the Conference, I boasted to George Pearson (Koch Industries) that I could organize and chair an equally successful conference at Hartford in the near future if they were so inclined to put up the money. That’s how the Austrian Economics Conference at Hartford came about in the summer of 1975. What is notable about that event, aside from some path-breaking papers by John Hagel and Walter Grinder, among others, is that F.A. Hayek was in attendance for several days. I remember driving him around Hartford in my small Honda. Sadly, although Hayek had recently been awarded a Nobel Prize in Economics, I could not convince either of Hartford’s two newspapers to send a reporter up for an interview. Such was the dismal intellectual state of the world in 1975!

Murray Rothbard was also at the Hartford Conference and he became an important intellectual influence on my thinking in the 1970s. His *Man, Economy and State* and *Ethics of Liberty* were, in my view, two of the most important books ever published while his *For A New Liberty* was a breakthrough book in popularizing libertarian political economy. Murray was brilliant, funny, supportive, and the fountainhead of the serious libertarian movement. I loved the guy and still miss him terribly to this day. His intellect, spirit, and capacity for work have proven irreplaceable.

A sabbatical leave in the fall of 1977 brought my wife and I to the Institute for Humane Studies in Menlo Park, California. It also found us often in San Francisco at the newly created Cato Institute on Montgomery Street. I did several book reviews for Cato’s flagship magazine, *Inquiry*, (one was the first published review of Robert Bork’s *The Antitrust Paradox*, then in galley proofs) and I became friendly with its entrepreneurial president, Ed Crane, and Cato’s financial angel, Charles Koch. Crane and Koch and I would work together on several projects including the nationally syndicated public affairs radio program, *Byline*. I wrote and recorded over 150 *Byline* shows over the next seven years on all sorts of

public policy issues. The challenge of explaining rent controls or Federal Reserve Policy in 90 seconds on the radio prepared me well for the many dozens of op/eds that I would write in the coming years. The 1980s found me speaking, writing, chairing conferences, and receiving an occasional award for contributions to free enterprise. Along with fellow economist and friend Gerald Gunderson at Trinity College, I was awarded the Valley Forge Freedoms Foundation Award for “excellence in private enterprise education” in 1980. In the early 1980s I revised and expanded *Myths* and it was published as *Antitrust & Monopoly: Anatomy of a Policy Failure* by a “legitimate” New York publisher, John Wiley and Sons, in 1982. The book is currently published by The Independent Institute in Oakland, California, and has been in print in one form or another for more than 30 years. My thanks to David Theroux.

My controversial positions on antitrust regulation and on the so-called energy crisis led to many radio and t.v. opportunities and frequent invitations for campus talks. I appeared several times on the nationally syndicated PBS television show *Economically Speaking* and did numerous radio shows in Hartford and many other cities. And over the years I gave upwards of 100 professional talks to academic and business audiences on various public policy matters.

In 1982 I conceived and directed a two-week conference (and college credit course) titled “New Directions in Economic Policy.” This brought me in contact with such free market superstars as Tom Sowell (who keynoted the conference), Yale Brozen, Walter Williams, Julian Simon and many others. I also stirred up the pot a bit by inviting John Kenneth Galbraith from Harvard, who received cat calls and boos from the students for recommending wage and price controls as a solution to the then-ailing U.S. economy!! The New Directions Conference attracted national attention and put the University of Hartford Economics Department on the map for a brief moment. I wrote several important journal articles in the late 1980s and early 1990s. “Predatory Practices and the Competitive Process” appeared in the *Review of Austrian Economics* (Fall 1989). In that piece I argued that so-called predatory practices were simply “competitive” practices and ought to be totally immune from antitrust regulation. Several colleagues at the University of Hartford (Hartford is the so-called “insurance city”) got me interested in insurance industry regulation and I published “Antitrust and Insurance: Should the McCarran Act be Repealed?” in the *Cato Journal* (Winter 1989). The McCarran Act exempts insurance companies from the bulk of antitrust law and I argued that the exemption was economically efficient and ought to be continued. I summarized my criticism of the entire antitrust legal framework in an article titled “Time to Repeal Antitrust Regulation” that appeared in the antitrust establishment’s favorite academic journal, the *Antitrust Bulletin* (Summer 1990). The article caused a minor stir and elicited a dissenting reply from Appellate Court Judge Douglas Ginsburg. My response, “A Reply to Judge Ginsburg,” appears in the expanded issue of that same journal.

In 1983 I approached David Boaz at the Cato Institute with an idea for a new antitrust book. The plan was to write a smaller, more “popular” account of my antitrust text material while at the same time incorporating some then-current antitrust controversies. The book titled *Antitrust Policy: The Case For Repeal* was published by Cato in 1984. Thanks, David. (I am now an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute.)

Years later Lew Rockwell of the Mises Institute asked me to revise and expand the Cato book with special attention devoted to the then on-going Microsoft antitrust case. With Lew's generous support, that book was published by the Mises Institute in 1999 as *Antitrust Policy: The Case For Repeal*, and has had some college adoptions and some modest success.

One of my favorite journal articles was written as a response to an attack on my antitrust theories by Professor Frederick M. Scherer. Professor Scherer, a nationally recognized expert in industrial organization and the author of the most influential textbook in the area, pretended to "review" the 1990 edition of my *Antitrust & Monopoly* in a new and interesting journal, *Critical Review*. His review, however, was filled with errors of commission and omission and he distorted my positions at almost every turn. (Our feud goes back to a decade-old Hillsdale College luncheon that was particularly unpleasant; the *Critical Review* hatchet job was payback, apparently.) There is not sufficient space here to explain all of the problems with Scherer's analysis of my antitrust positions nor all of the problems associated with Scherer's own antitrust views. Suffice to say, for those who are interested in such matters, see my "Anti-Antitrust: Ideology or Economics? Reply to Scherer" *Critical Review* (1992) for my definitive thoughts on the Scherer affair.

My scholarly writing was always important but I most enjoyed writing op/ed articles for newspapers. I have been a regular writer of op-eds for over 35 years (I continue to write for the *Press Journal* in Vero Beach, Florida where I live) and have probably written many hundreds by now. My articles have appeared in publications such as *The New York Times* (articles on legalized gambling and merger policy), *The Wall Street Journal* (an article on allowing the air carrier industry to collude on prices), the *London Financial Times*, the *National Post* (Canada) and many other newspapers in this country and abroad. While teaching at the University of Hartford, I wrote many op/eds on such topics as the selective service system, banking deregulation, antitrust policy, and the tax system in Connecticut. These appeared regularly in *The Hartford Times* and, after the *Times* folded, *The Hartford Courant*, the oldest continuously published newspaper in America.

I am most proud of a series of articles that appeared in *The Hartford Courant* just prior to Connecticut's adoption of a state income tax in the early 1990s. Professor Jack Sullivan, a colleague of mine, and I wrote four detailed critiques of the proposed state income tax and these articles were extremely well received around the state. We had done our homework. We knew that the Connecticut's state budget process had been out of control for years and that more taxes would not fix it. We knew what happened in other states when a state income tax was adopted: their economic growth rates declined. We knew that state income taxes did not "fix" budget deficits. Indeed, the states with the highest state income taxes had the highest deficits! So here was a once in a lifetime opportunity to actually prevent government from expanding its power if we could only defeat the demonic state income tax.

After the articles were published, I (and others) spoke before a crowd estimated at 25,000 that gathered on the lawn in front of the State capital building in Hartford to protest the imposition of any new state taxes and to demand that the legislature (and the evil Governor Lowell Wicker) control state spending instead. I gave several talks around the state in opposition to the proposed tax and I testified against the adoption of any state income tax at a special legislative hearing on the matter. For months the battle raged, a

lopsided intellectual battle really, since we had all of the facts, all of the arguments, and all of the public support, while the other side had only one mantra: We want the money. AND WE LOST! The General Assembly caved in and rammed the tax down all of our collective throats. The Governor, the state legislative politicians, the state unions, the teachers and other interest groups that live off of the state, threw their support to the state income tax and it became law. John Rowland, Connecticut's current governor, had pledged to repeal the monstrosity but it still exists and it still steals property.

Losing the income tax battle was emotionally tough for me. Being a libertarian in this society is generally rough enough but this tax defeat bordered on the absurd. For here I had witnessed first-hand the CREATION of government's most awesome power . . . the power to tax. I had seen the entire process from start to finish with my own eyes and was terribly disappointed at our inability—despite the evidence and general public support—to short circuit the process and kill the creature born from that process. It brought home a painful message that I really did not want to hear again: We libertarians have a long, long, LONG way to go in terms of real world political change.

I have certainly seen some modest "progress" in the antitrust area (perhaps my writings have helped at the margin) but the tax and spending policies of government at every level (and U.S. foreign policy) are devastatingly irrational and immoral. On my black days it is difficult to see, given the public choice calculus, how those of us who support liberty can make any reasonable progress in these areas in the near future. A personal footnote on the income tax affair. In the early 1990s I had been thinking of an early retirement from teaching and a move to a warmer climate. When Connecticut adopted its 4.5 percent state income tax, I decided that they would NOT tax me. I would pack up and leave for a friendlier state without a state income tax and with a Constitutional Amendment that prohibits one. Hello Florida! So far so good.

Another factor that led to my move from Connecticut was the increasingly difficult teaching atmosphere at the University of Hartford and in higher education generally in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For decades I had been teaching the capstone course in the MBA program, "Business and Society," with great student evaluations. The course explored some business case histories, some regulatory analysis and legal cases, and more and more over time explored the ETHICS of certain business practices and the government's attempt to regulate them. I lectured for roughly half of the course and the graduate students presented cases (which I evaluated) in the second half. My interest in ethical analysis led me to publish "The Ethics of Anticompetitive Practices" in the *Mid-Atlantic Journal of Business* (March 1991).

"Business and Society" was probably the most popular course in the MBA program. The students worked hard but they loved the challenges. In the early 1990s, however, a faculty backlash developed concerning my theoretical and ethical approach to teaching this course. Some non-economist faculty members in the Barney School of Business began to object to my free market analysis, to my so-called deregulation "crusade," and to the contrasting natural rights vs. utilitarian perspective that I and my students employed to "analyze" business practices (insider trading, for example) and government regulation. Having increasing "trouble" with "my" students in their classes, they attempted to strip the

course from me, from the Department of Economics, and eventually strip it from the MBA program itself. As some of us know, these curricular “wars” were (in part) insidious manifestations of the silly political correctness nonsense prevalent at the time and were a blatant attempt to dumb down academic standards generally. They were propelled forward in business schools by radical feminists and psycho-babble Management professors at various universities in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Nonetheless, though the process proved acrimonious, I dug in my heels and defended my principles and the efforts to deconstruct “Business and Society” failed. When I finally left the University in 1994, I had taught the course every semester for a total of 27 years, exposing thousands of students to classical liberal theory and public policy. Although I retired from full-time teaching in 1994, I have continued to publish widely. I wrote many articles on the Microsoft antitrust debacle for *Investor’s Business Daily*, for the Competitive Enterprise Institute, for the Cato Institute, and especially for the Independent Institute. I wrote a “Viewpoint” for *The New York Times* (January 19, 1997) titled “Don’t Punish Microsoft For Its Brand of Competition” and my article “Or Broken Trust?” appeared in the May 4, 1998 issue of *National Review*. At present, I continue to write on antitrust and other many other regulatory matters for journals, newspapers and Internet websites.

I truly enjoyed the process of teaching and this bio-essay would not be complete without mentioning my debt to the excellent students that I had over the years. Their desire to learn inspired me to search for the truth and to communicate it as effectively as I could. The almost daily intellectual interaction with students kept my mind alive. Without them the process of teaching would have been a sterile monologue. Two of my best students were Roy Cordato and his wife, Karen Palacek, who both went on to earn Ph.D.s in economics and who continue to make continuing contributions to our field of study. (Roy’s critical work on the Coase Theorem is particularly important.) Both had planned careers as base fiddle musicians before they took my courses in economics. Talk about unintended consequences!

Finally, let me close by noting my most personal “unintended consequence” of all. My son, Paul Armentano, born in 1972, has worked hard to become a leading national spokesman for the legalization of marijuana in the U.S. Paul, a policy analyst at the National Organization for the Reform of the Marijuana Laws in Washington, D.C., has already written hundreds of articles and op-eds on the inefficiency and immorality of state and U.S drug laws. I could not be more proud.

Interestingly, Paul’s libertarianism was never consciously instructed by either me or my wife. We never “lectured” him on the subject nor instructed him to read certain materials; he would have rebelled sharply against all of that, anyway. Instead, we just set good life examples and let him discover the importance of political liberty on his own. (Leonard Read was certainly right on that one.) It will now be up to Paul, and like-minded academics and activists, to continue the struggle for liberty and justice against entrenchments of power. ■

## MY JOURNEY TOWARD LIBERTARIANISM

I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT the time, but my first step toward libertarianism was taken during a violent labor union strike, circa 1950, against the factory that employed my father. I grew up in a classic company town, Whitinsville, Massachusetts. Dad's employer, Whitin Machine Works, employed something like 80 percent of the workers in the town, and we lived in a company-owned tenement. The union that, by force of law, represented both willing and unwilling factory workers, decided to call a strike. My father and his older brother were members of the union only because they had to be as a condition of employment by the factory. They and several other workers were opposed to the strike and decided to attempt to cross the picket line. The town police were there ostensibly to keep the peace, but they did not. My father and my uncle, and other workers, were beaten. Union thugs threatened all the "scabs" with violence against their families if they continued not to support the strike. Through violence and threats of violence by the unionists no one made it across the picket line, and the police did nothing. Worse, they blamed the would-be line crossers for inciting the unionists to violence. This puzzled me because my government school teachers taught me that the police were supposed to prevent, or at least punish, the private use of force and violence. I asked my father why the police sided with the strikers against employees who wanted to work. He said it was because of a federal law, the Wagner Act, which gave special privileges to people who ran labor unions. This was the first time, in my memory, that I realized that government laws could be stupid, even unjust. I discovered my civics teacher was wrong: laws are not always passed in the interest of the general public. A year later in school my class was discussing the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. When it came to the bit about "a more perfect union" I raised my hand and asked the teacher why the founders supported bad organizations like unions. The son of the local union president was a classmate. He glowered at me and later denied the legitimacy of my birth. But I was bigger than he, so it went no further.

That experience is the source of my life-long opposition to compulsory unionism. But throughout high school I was innocent of all the other ways that the law can be, in the words of Dickens, "a ass [*sic*]." My government school teachers did what they were paid to do: they convinced me that most of what government does is in the public interest, and those who enter "public service" are noble. Some things never change.

I graduated high school in 1956 and spent one successful, and apolitical, year as a freshman at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. In a vain (and what now seems

silly) attempt to get into Annapolis I enlisted in the U.S. Navy in July 1957. I soon lost my appetite for the military, but I was stuck in the Navy until 1961.

My second step toward libertarianism occurred while I was stationed in Pensacola, Florida in 1959. I was in a training program which was almost completed. My classmates and I thought it would be a good idea to have a going away party for ourselves before we were split up and sent to diverse duty stations. There were three blacks in our group. I was given the responsibility of hiring a private facility for our party. I found the right place at the right price, the owner and I shook hands, and I filled out the rental agreement. At the bottom of the form was a statement to the effect that Florida law prohibited mixed race functions in public accommodations. When I explained that there were three blacks in our group, he said that if he rented to us he would lose his license and pay a fine. The deal fell through. I have no idea what the owner's private views were on blacks. He claimed he was perfectly willing to include them, but he was prevented by state law from doing so. I remember thinking that I had found another example of the law being "a ass." I was outraged that this owner could not accept us even if he wanted to because of a law that restricted what he could do with his own property. It seemed unfair to the owner as well as to us. (Tragically, even to this day, the law still doesn't allow a private owner of a public accommodation to make his own contracts with willing exchange partners.)

I was honorably discharged from the Navy in June 1961, and in September I returned to Clark University as a sophomore. I ended up majoring in economics. My first text was Samuelson's third edition, and my economics teachers were very mainstream. I remember a senior honors seminar in which I was assigned to read Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* and Friedman's *Capitalism & Freedom* and to write an essay explaining why Galbraith was right. I received an "A" on that assignment, but Friedman's arguments intrigued me. I resolved to look at these issues more deeply sometime in the future, but I didn't do so until much later.

In the meantime I received both a Woodrow Wilson and a Danforth Foundation Fellowship to pursue a Ph.D. in economics at the University of California, Berkeley beginning in September 1964. At that time (it may even still be true) the dominant view among the Berkeley economics faculty was that economics was simply applied mathematics and statistics. However, one of my professors in microeconomic theory took a brief holiday from mathematics and, for one hour, discussed Austrian economics as an example of an alternative paradigm in the sense of Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. That was the most interesting lecture of the course, but I didn't pursue it because it was clearly intended as an aside. I remained focused on the real stuff—mathematics. I received my Ph.D. in June 1968 (the famous market socialist, Abba Lerner, was a member of my dissertation committee) having received much instruction on market failures and magical government remedies and knowing a lot of mathematics and statistics, but very little economics. As I said to John Baden several years later, as a new Ph.D. I knew how to border a Hessian and invert a matrix, but I had no idea why vendors gave out coupons and green stamps.

Then I got the most important break in my professional life. I was hired as an assistant professor of economics at UCLA to commence in September 1968. Before moving south I taught summer school at Berkeley, and met William Breit, now at Trinity University, who was a guest professor at Berkeley for the summer. Bill was astonished to learn that although

I was going to UCLA I knew nothing about Armen Alchian, Bill Allen, Jack Hirshleifer, George Hilton, et al. Moreover, Jim Buchanan was joining the UCLA faculty at the same time I was, and I had never heard of him. The reading lists at Berkeley didn't include any of these guys (although they did include Friedman on macro issues). Bill soon put that right, launching me into reading *University Economics*, and *Calculus of Consent*. It was a wonderful summer of discovery of free market economics. Bill was a great tutor, and he taught me something else, too—economics could be fun.

I often say that I have the best of both worlds—a Berkeley degree and a UCLA education (although UCLA today is not what it used to be). Bill Breit whetted my appetite for free market economics. During my first two years at UCLA I sat in on courses taught by Alchian, Hirshleifer, Buchanan, Demsetz, Clower, and Leijonhufvud. I was more a post-doctoral student than a faculty member. In my third year I was misdiagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. That greatly shortened my planning horizon, and I turned my attention to writing textbooks to make as much money as possible in a short time. In my fourth year I was turned down for tenure but was permitted to stay on for a fifth year. During those last two years I got to know Jerry O'Driscoll who was writing his dissertation on Hayek under the supervision of Axel Leijonhufvud. Jerry introduced me to Austrian economics through the work of Hayek.

After I moved to Hayward in 1973, I read Israel Kirzner's *Competition and Entrepreneurship* and then Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. I became a convinced minimal state libertarian and acquired a deepening interest in Austrian economics. In 1977 Jerry O'Driscoll arranged for me to be the administrator of a two-week Liberty Fund conference on Austrian economics at Mills College in Oakland, California. That was a wonderful experience. I picked Hayek up from the airport in my VW Beetle and drove him to the Mills campus. I tried to talk with him about his work, but he seemed much more interested in learning about me. I met Murray Rothbard, Israel Kirzner, Roger Garrison and several other Austrians. I learned a lot from all of them. Following that conference I finally read Mises's *Human Action* and began reading more of Kirzner and other Austrians. Notwithstanding several years of friendship and active communication with Rothbard, I have always been more a Hayekian or a Kirznerian than a Misesian. Murray never held it against me, but he always tried to enlighten me.

I never became a pure Austrian (whatever that means) of any type. I have always thought of free market neoclassical economics (at least in its Chicago-UCLA-Virginia expression) and Austrian economics as complements. I wrote two articles, one on James Buchanan and the other on Armen Alchian, making that case. Not all Austrians agree with me.

In 1986 I became a member of the Mont Pelerin Society, and in 2000 I was elected to a six-year term on the MPS Board of Directors. I remain in Hayward running a free market think tank and the department of economics, writing too much about the evils of compulsory unionism, teaching a course in market process economics, another in public choice, and a third I call the law and economics of labor relations. In sum, as Saint James put it, I "look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein." ■

## A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO LIBERTY

I SEEM TO MEET A LOT of libertarians these days: in pub (bar) conversations, bus stop chats and lawn mowing encounters with the neighbors. Political discussions in England usually begin and end with a harangue against the once-revered National Health Service. But I was on a long train ride from Edinburgh to London a few weeks ago and fell into a desultory conversation with an American visitor. We talked a little about his forthcoming trip to Stratford for Shakespeare, I told him that Tom Stoppard is the only Right wing playwright who has ever lived and he wondered whether he would get to see Buckingham Palace. Then it turned out that he had recently been a student at Grove City College and had been taught Austrian economics. I am not sure who was more amazed, him or me, but we both were soon exchanging names and book titles and experiencing that joy that comes from unexpected agreement in unlikely circumstances. I have forgotten the guy's name but he might be famous one day.

Of course, libertarian ideas are as far as ever from seriously influencing politics and despite the alleged death of socialism we in Britain, and Europe especially, are still living in semi-collectivist societies. But at least the ideas are alive and there are many more like-minded people around. It is a lot different from the early 1970s when I began my personal odyssey in search of liberty. At that time everybody I ever met said they believed in liberty but it meant one thing only—sex. The 60s had been and gone and still people didn't see the intimate connection between freedom in the bedroom and the gyrations of the stock market.

I did not have a bad education at the University of Exeter. Marxism had not made its ruinous comeback; that was a feature of the dreadful 70s. I was taught political theory by a man who got his modest anti-Marxism from Karl Popper, so although I might not have learned a lot about liberty I got some sensible philosophy and could spot nonsense quickly.

I knew socialism to be just that but I hadn't worked out precisely why and I certainly did not know of a feasible alternative. Just showing that the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange doesn't work wasn't enough when the enemy could go on about the "alienation" caused by the division of labor in capitalist society and hold up pictures of Che Guevara as if he were a rock star. But I was never taught the meaning of freedom, still less the efficiency properties of markets. The economists at university were a lot brighter than historians, political scientists or sociologists and weren't so obviously Left wing, but they didn't know how to market their product. I took a course in economics and knew that demand curves sloped downwards to the right but did not really understand

why rent control causes homelessness and the minimum wage unemployment. Since these policies were introduced by people who had the interests of the underprivileged at heart they must be OK. It seemed then, and does today, that all kinds of intellectual error are absolved if you have the right motivations. I was to learn later that everybody is a utility maximizer and that, on the whole, the right motivation, or virtue, is a menace to freedom and prosperity. Socialism was also not very funny. It had much more to do with dour Calvinism than that laughter-driven, pleasure-soaked nirvana the Left always promised. Everything came a little late for me and the realization that not only did libertarianism have the best ideas it also had the funniest jokes came the last of all. I guess I got the taste for humor from the aforementioned Tom Stoppard and his brilliant parodies of Marxism and logical positivism.

I started graduate work knowing little about freedom and, like most libertarians, did all the groundwork myself. I picked up the dangers of socialism, Keynesianism and inflation initially from casual reading and personal experience of state education and the National Health Service. My early research was in political theory in the Oxford analytical tradition. That is not as bad as people think and although its leading exponents were Left wing they did manage to separate their values from the analysis. An early, and remaining, influence was the legal positivist, H.L.A. Hart. His *The Concept of Law* is a magnificent piece of philosophical reasoning and his intellectual opposition to Ronald Dworkin, who has done so much to distort the common law tradition while pretending to be faithful to it, was instructive. His substantive moral and political views were similar to Dworkin's but he never claimed that they were derived from his understanding of law. This was another reason for my distrust of "morality," which has turned out to be a license to do anything that costs someone else money. And then I got my first serious academic job.

I was still not a libertarian but a good candidate for instruction. The job was in about the worst place in the world outside sub-Saharan Africa. It was at the Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland. Its permanent political and historical problems have been boring the rest of the world since at least 1690. That was when the Prods licked the Micks at the Battle of the Boyne. In Belfast, it could have been yesterday.

No libertarians there then, though I am told there is an Austrian economist at Cork University in the Irish Republic. But this was Belfast, an outpost of the British welfare state. However, the strange thing was that I learned something about liberty there quite by accident. A graduate student was researching the question as to why Catholics had, then, moved away from Irish republicanism and into "civil rights." Had they been Americanized, I wondered? The answer was obvious. Most of the local governments then were controlled by Protestants, who distributed public sector jobs (of which there were many) and public housing, to their supporters. I said to the student, if there were no public sector at all there would not be so much trouble here. The student had never imagined there could be no public sector and, until that moment, neither had I. But it dawned on me that if people lived with little politics there would be fewer venues for their natural fractiousness. At the same time, the "liberals," with their absurd idea, derived from Rousseau, of the "perfectibility of man," were piously bewailing the fact that the public schools in Northern Ireland are divided into Protestant and Catholic. If children went to mixed schools, the liberals

said, they would learn to love each other and see their common class interests. I thought that was naive and patronizing. The religious groups paid for the schools, anyway, through their taxes, so why should they not choose which ones they wanted? In fact, the classrooms were the safest places in the province precisely because the schools were separated.

So I suggested everything else, including police, should be separated and the inconvenience that brought about would lead the two rival sects to make deals and begin to co-operate naturally. That would be much more just and efficient than forcing them to love each other. I later learned from reading the philosopher David Hume that, if left alone, even the most divisive of people will develop conventions which will enable them at least to get through the day. It is when democracy and egalitarianism are used to compel people to iron out their natural differences that the trouble starts. So, by a combination of personal experience and a little bit of reading I was ready for liberty. After about a year in Belfast, I returned to England to face a different kind of turmoil. The 1970s was an absolutely dismal decade during which Conservatives and Labour took turns at trying to socialize the country. What they did was to hand it over to the trade unions. Strikes were frequent, social disruption a regular occurrence, the rule of law was breaking down, inflation was rampant and completely ineffective regulations were passed all the time. There was a lady called Margaret Thatcher in the Conservative Government of 1970–74 but she was at that time just another rent-seeking politician.

But after my experience in Northern Ireland I was anxious to know more about libertarianism and I was already aware that true freedom was about more than sexual liberation and there was more to it than the fashionable civil liberties: it had to include free markets. In my new post, at the then Birmingham Polytechnic, I was surrounded by the children of the 60s, disaffected and spoilt brats who despised capitalism yet lived parasitically off its fruits. At that time all productive people were being enervated inexorably by an ever-oppressive state. It was an age of general despair. But there were two very important books for any beginner to libertarianism. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* was well-known. It was even mentioned by my undergraduate teachers as a kind of eccentric text that rejected the compatibility of economic planning with personal liberty. Look, they would say, we have had economic control and the welfare state since the 1940s without concentration camps or even the direction of labor: conveniently neglecting the minor but irresistible inhibitions on personal choice that were already taking place and were threatening to worsen as the economy visibly wilted.

But there was another book which was less familiar, even to classical liberals. I refer to John Jewkes's *Ordeal by Planning*. This contained none of the heavy metaphysics and portentous verbiage of Hayek's work but was a detailed account of the errors of the early days of planning by the 1945 Labour Government. It is a beautifully written analysis of the missed targets, artificial shortages and miserable outcomes of that non-communistic, but still socialistic, episode. Jewkes's book was published in 1947 and things were to get much worse as the post-war era unfolded. There were some erstwhile classical liberals, Lionel Robbins in particular, whose early opposition to economic planning in the 1930s had been muted by the war experience. It had worked, they said, and could be a model for post-war reconstruction. But Jewkes had worked in government during the war and knew

it wasn't successful even in the most propitious circumstances. It was certainly not working in peacetime. Also, the intelligentsia ignored the success of post-war Germany which had achieved a remarkable recovery using market methods. Jewkes, in fact, was close to the German Ordoliberal thinker, Walter Eucken, and wrote the introduction to an English translation of one of his books.

By the 1970s there was a certain hope for the resuscitation of classical liberalism. I had already absorbed Hayek's later classic, *The Constitution of Liberty* and the allure of Mill's *On Liberty* was beginning to wane. An important work, Samuel Brittan's *Capitalism and the Permissive Society*, was published in 1973. It was the first attempt by a British author to show that economic and personal liberty had a common intellectual source and that much-valued personal freedoms would be quickly lost if the freedom to exchange and the right to accumulate property were attenuated. Brittan is an interesting and prolific writer. A long-time *Financial Times* columnist, his previous books had been dour and orthodox accounts of the various Keynesian experiments in post-war British economic policy. Now he was introducing readers to Friedman and Hayek and incorporating political philosophy into economic analysis. A lot of slick libertarians these days are quite dismissive of the compromises that Brittan has made, and I for one have never gone along with the modest redistribution that has sullied the rigor of his pure economic analysis, but I would never underestimate the contribution he has made to classical liberal thinking in Britain. He has always resisted popular fads like business ethics, indeed he gave my own highly critical book on the subject a very favorable notice in the *Financial Times*. It is worth commenting in passing on the sad decline of that newspaper (despite occasionally publishing my articles). However, its new chief economics correspondent, Martin Wolf, is a free market advocate and an admirable successor to Brittan. For all its faults, the *Wall Street Journal* still believes in capitalism and publishes informed and committed writers.

But we are still in that dismal era, the 70s, and I thought I was the only libertarian in the country. That is not too far from the truth because although there were economists who believed in free markets there were few writers who bought the whole package—serious anti-statism and personal liberty. There has always been the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and no account of British freedom can ignore the sterling work it does to keep the flag flying in the least favorable of circumstances. The organization regularly published Milton Friedman and Hayek and kept a barrage of really sophisticated and clearly written papers against the latest government folly. It also has the necessary playfulness. I remember in particular a publication by Tony Culyer and Michael Cooper, *The Price of Blood*, in the late 60s, which recommended a market in that precious human commodity. It offended everybody, especially Britain's foremost welfare thinker, Richard Titmuss. Culyer and Cooper are not libertarians but they demonstrated the power of economic thinking. The IEA was early on to public choice and produced important work by Jim Buchanan, Gordon Tullock and William Niskanen. People were slowly beginning to understand the destructive effects that "politics" has. As a politics undergraduate student I had been educated to believe that it was a beneficial activity that kept us free of totalitarianism. I later discovered that only markets can do this and that the emphasis on pressure groups and voting is simply rent-seeking by professors of political science. In 1989 I wrote a pamphlet, *The Invisible*

*Hand in Economics and Politics*, for the IEA on this very subject. It elicited a letter from Milton Friedman who had used exactly the same title for a piece he had published in Singapore. But it was an appreciative note and he didn't claim property rights in the name.

Back to the 70s: having immersed myself in Hayek I was led on to Mises, the Austrians and Murray Rothbard. Of course, I had to take in Ayn Rand but was never enthusiastic. I could get the intellectual substance, in economics and philosophy, from nicer people. She didn't sound at all like a barrel of laughs and the stories I later heard about her "show trials" of deviants confirmed my suspicions. But I do claim to have found her only joke, about a positivist philosopher in *Atlas Shrugged*. It isn't very funny and I am not revealing the exact source. And was the building blown up in *The Fountainhead*, that bad?

It was 1978 and I had nearly completed my first book, on Hayek. There have been hundreds of books and papers since, most of them better than mine. But I was first in the market. Gerry O'Driscoll had written on his economics but my book was then the only synthesis of his philosophy, law politics and economics. My publisher, at Macmillan, knew Hayek's at Routledge, Kegan and Paul and arranged a meeting, in July with the man himself (on a brief trip to England). We had a delightful cup of tea in that bastion of nineteenth century classical liberalism, the Reform Club in London. And yes, he did take some snuff. When my book came out in 1979 he sent me a delightful letter, and an outline of *The Fatal Conceit*. I know all the problems that strict libertarians have with Hayek but I felt I had arrived.

I had already done a few very minor papers before but the publication of my first book gave me confidence to offend my Marxist colleagues. They thought they were so anti-establishment and unconventional but they couldn't have been more orthodox. Libertarians were the real outsiders. And, I must confess, I got utility from shocking the Left. They began to look very old-fashioned as I would blithely recommend the abolition of all welfare, all economic intervention, a free market in addictive drugs, competing police forces and everything else in the litany of freedom. I especially enjoyed demonstrating the efficiency (and virtue?) of blackmail contracts. But surely, the blackmailer would come back for more, they would say. No, I would reply, contracts would be enforced by free market courts. But some Left economists were quite smart. One said, albeit reluctantly, that blackmail contracts made the parties better off and therefore were Pareto efficient. He eventually became a libertarian.

There were other important things in the dire 70s. The most important was my first trip to America. I knew all about the damage to capitalism and freedom caused by Roosevelt, and analyses of the depredations of Johnson's welfare state were beginning to seep through, but the country still seemed to be the last best hope for a world in which the Left was tightening its grip. I also wanted to see some Broadway musicals, for these and liberty were parts of America's many contributions to civilization. So I arrived in New York in early July 1976. I had corresponded with American libertarians but never experienced the country. Not knowing where to go I looked up Laissez Faire bookstore in the New York phone book and found my way to its, then, Mercer Street shop. And what a wonderful experience that was. I had never seen so many books on liberty. But I had to be careful: we still had exchange control in socialist Britain and I was only allowed so many dollars. I bought a few books and saved enough money for a number of good shows. None had a chorus line of beautiful

girls singing “A is A” but I did find out that Rand had done a New York play once. I was pleased it wasn’t being performed.

New York, the home of American Leftism, did seem a wonderfully free place. I bought copies of the *National Review* (I didn’t know then how awful neoconservatism was) and regularly read the *Wall Street Journal*. I even took a tourist trip around the stock exchange. I was also invited to a July 4th party. I had to point out to the host that as a good conservative I didn’t normally commemorate armed uprising against lawfully established authority, but I would make an exception in America’s case. However, I never was a conservative and I re-established my libertarian credentials with an eloquent defense of the Articles of Confederation.

Closer to home, the other event of the 70s that had long term significance was Britain’s entry into Europe, the European Economic Community (EEC), as it was then called. I was never an admirer of European integration despite the EEC’s original free market credentials. I was very much impressed by Ludwig Erhard’s (the great post-war German free market leader) critique of its inexorable tendency toward centralization. Britain had entered the EEC under the Conservatives in 1973 but the 1974 Labour Government had a referendum in 1975 on whether we should stay in. Many of their supporters feared that the EEC was a capitalist plot. Although I knew about rational choice theory and the irrationality of voting, I played the democrat. The polling booth was on my way to work and voting would not involve too great a cost. I voted to stay in mainly because I was terrified of British socialism. It really did look as if we were headed for the Gulag. And the Europeans seemed so much freer—and richer. Now I am associated with the Euroskeptics and write long articles on the benefits of “competitive jurisdictions” and against Europe’s regulatory socialism and centralization. It is no surprise that the Labour Party and the other socialists are now all very pro-Europe. It took them a long time to realize it but the (now) European Union is not a capitalist plot but a socialist project and a rent-seeker’s paradise. I am not really a Euroskeptic but a firm believer in withdrawal—for Britain and every other freedom-loving European country. Europe now is like we British were in the 1970s.

But at last the 80s came along—the much-maligned “decade of greed.” It was good for me and the rest of the world. For a few months I really thought that capitalism and freedom were becoming popular. It was the best modern example of Bernard Mandeville’s famous paradox of “private vice and public virtue.” For everybody was for the first time concerned with getting rich and behaving selfishly. As Mandeville said, back in 1705: “Each part was full of vice/But the whole an earthly paradise.”

I know libertarians have written at great length about the errors of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher but for me, having been raised on welfare and socialism, those two brought a new beginning. Mrs. Thatcher defeated the trade unions, privatized much of the economy and began an (unsuccessful) cutback on welfare. And she also once famously said: “There is no such thing as society.” Of course, nothing much changed in the US and the UK in many areas but psychologically the era was very significant.

And it was good for me, too. I wrote a textbook on political theory which had a definite libertarian stance. There was no other text that had Rothbard in the index, though Nozick was creeping into some. There was an up and coming young political theorist from Oxford who gave it a terrible review in *The Times Literary Supplement*. He said it was just free

market propaganda and would not be used. That was twenty years ago and the book is now in its fourth edition. One Left wing student said he was very suspicious of it but at least he now understood people like Rawls and Dworkin. He obviously hadn't noticed that I had criticized them on the way. The original hostile reviewer now has a prestigious position in legal philosophy out in California.

And I did write some genuine libertarian stuff, *On Classical Liberalism and Libertarianism* in 1986 and *The New Right* in 1987. I also began to notice the possibility of picking up some rents (I am a normal person) and saw that welfare and business ethics were likely to be fashionable subjects: so I began to write about them from an explicitly libertarian perspective. I genuinely believed in my anti-welfare state and pro-business stance but it was nice to make a little money too. So I wrote a book on welfare and many defenses of business.

Business ethics began to thrive as the Soviet system and other socialist regimes began to fall apart. However successful capitalism is it could always be criticized morally: and otherwise unemployable philosophers had to be found work. So I ended up defending various hate figures of the 1980s, Michael Milken in particular. I have found the villains of the early twenty-first century very reprehensible and I have attacked them—but on good capitalist grounds. A new, pro-market newspaper, *The Business*, published one of my articles, which was basically a defense of Gordon Gekko and an attack on Enron.

Back in the early 1980s I became a libertarian for real. I left the state and got a job in Britain's only private university, Buckingham. Like Hillsdale and Grove City (and unlike Harvard, Yale *et al*) we don't receive a cent from the state and are permanently struggling. It is not a hotbed of libertarians; most staff regard it as just a job and would soon rejoin the state if a better opportunity came along. But I did meet the great libertarian economist, Martin Ricketts. He really can do the high class technical wizardry of modern economics and also discourse on Austrian subjectivism at the same time: almost in the same sentence. We produce brilliant and original libertarian solutions to every conceivable problem every night in the pub (bar) on our way home from work. But we use the same theory; it really does have great fecundity. Martin is a splendid replacement for the apostate John Gray, who was once a very close friend (I was best man at his second wedding) but he has since departed, for who knows where. More lese-majesty, I suspect. Whatever career sacrifices I might have made by going private I do get utility by simply saying loudly that I do not work for the state: so I am just as well off.

A lot has changed since I began this intellectual adventure over thirty years ago. The Soviet menace has disappeared and most really existing forms of socialism have taken a battering. In Britain the present Labour Government is the first one in my lifetime that doesn't make me think I will wake up in the old East Germany by the morning. But much remains the same. The state is as strong as ever and, in Britain especially, rent-seeking by the civil service has reached new heights: administrators, office coordinators and outreach workers multiply daily. And we still have the National Health Service. What began as a kind of vacation from my regular work has become a serious business. ■

## MY JOURNEY TO LIBERALISM

FROM 1982 TO 1986 I attended a Quaker boarding school, The Friends' School, Saffron Walden in East Anglia, not far from Cambridge. Quakerism was formerly a persecuted religion. Consequently, the modern teaching purposely took a broad-ranging attitude to the study of religion and social systems. From the ages of 12 to 16, we had classes relating to the study of all the world's major religions, and their social and political systems. Permeating the Quaker school was an overriding respect for individuals, and tolerance for their "space." At all times, pacifism and non-aggression were taught as first principles. Suffice it to say, I was given a broadly liberal education.

During this time, two localised external events and the wider realisation of one titanic struggle between the West and Communism represented by the former Soviet Union, moved me away from this path.

In 1973, the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, was faced with the three-day week, introduced via strikes from various Trade Unions, including the power workers and coal miners. When these unions caused electricity to be available for only two days out of the five-day working week, the Prime Minister decided to call a general election. This was the famous one, becoming known as the "who governs Britain?" election. It became the rallying cry of Ted Heath and the Conservatives. The British people told Ted Heath and the Conservatives very firmly that he didn't govern Britain, and that the Unions did. A Labour government, under Harold Wilson, was duly elected.

During the early 1980s, Mrs. Thatcher and her government were determined not to fall foul of this situation again. Elected governments should rule, she continued to maintain—not unelected Trade Union officials. Consequently, from the day she took office in 1979, large stockpiling of coal in the UK and South Africa took place as various acts of Parliament were introduced to break the union closed shop and various monopolistic privileges, which at the time seemed to me to smack of gangsterism. In the face of this, the unions became agitated. At that time, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) had some 900,000 members, representing 1/30th of the workforce of the UK. They were producing coal that was too expensive for industry to use, and therefore fuel that nobody wanted. It was patently obvious that in the private sector a business faced with this situation would go to the wall. The saving grace for the NUM was the fact that the industry had been nationalised after the Second World War. Their members, via various coercive and monopolistic practices, had managed to squeeze out of the government very high prices on a guaranteed basis, plus exceedingly high wages. The NUM called its members out on

strike whereupon a period of industrial action took place on a scale of brutality that had not been seen in the UK before, and, hopefully, will never be seen again.

During this uprising, businesses were burned down, and the practice of intimidating workers who wanted to work would make any Mafia style protection racket look on with great admiration. What amazed me was the miners' only moral case (on their terms) seemed to be the right to work. Of course, whenever there's a right there's a duty—and, following this logic it became the duty of the rest of us to provide them with money for products we didn't require because they were too expensive. This struck me as monstrous unfairness toward the other workers in the UK at the time. Margaret Thatcher took this view as well, and proceeded to break the back of the NUM, de-nationalising the coal industry so that elected governments could govern. The market, not labour hooligans, now determines energy prices in the UK.

In the early 1980s, an entrepreneur from Manchester, Eddie Shah, launched—using new technology (computers)—a national newspaper called *Today*. It was a low-cost newspaper, taking maximum advantage of technological innovations in printing, and it employed very few production workers. This gauntlet was thrown down to Fleet Street workers: reform restrictive practices or other newspaper proprietors will follow the example of *Today* and restructure their businesses accordingly, to the detriment of the print unions. Rupert Murdoch's News International during this period of dispute did not produce a copy of *The Times* or *The Sunday Times* for many months, due to strike action. Meanwhile, The News International Corporation had bought land in Wapping in the Docklands area of the East End of London where it constructed a large, modern, computer-driven printing press. The new production was started there, and the unions, taking great offence, embarked on a campaign of brutality and gangsterism, which echoed that of the miners' strike but was focussed on a smaller scale in Docklands. The principle printers' union was The Society of Graphical and Technical workers (SOGAT). It was led by the particularly pernicious Brenda Dean, (now a Baroness in the House of Lords and part of the Blair hegemony). After many months, she came to the negotiating table with Rupert Murdoch. To my great surprise and delight, News International offered all the Fleet St workers it employed a most imaginative solution: a very large redundancy package amounting to some fifty million pounds, plus it would give the whole of *The Times*' and *The Sunday Times*' printing works and buildings to the union gratis for them to print their own newspapers if they so wished. The unions, in a rare moment of wisdom, decided to turn this deal down as they realised they could never hope to run a newspaper operation for profit with their archaic and restrictive practices. (Needless to say, they had demanded, with threats of violence and intimidation, that Murdoch's News International Corporation do just this.) But once the tables were turned and they were faced with the choice themselves, the deal was impossible. This action also summed up to me the madness of trade unionism. In more recent years, I have met former members of the print workers' unions who had to retrain and go on to do other things. One gave me the story of how he used to be in charge of delivering newspapers hot off the press to news agents, and how there was a restrictive practice ensuring four individuals always went out in one van: one to drive, one to sit in the passenger seat just in case there was an accident, one to sit in the back of the van to watch the newspapers and open

the door, one to go out of the door and deliver the papers to the doorstep of the newsagents. It was their practice that they each would work one night in every four, and only one person would take the vehicle out and do the entire task. The rest of the time each of the other three would have another job altogether—the man I spoke to was a taxi driver earning lots of cash. Recalling the good old bad old days, this gentleman refreshingly told me that you would be absolutely mad, as a member of a print workers' union, if you didn't have two jobs. The one protected by the union would take up a maximum of 25 percent of your time—even though this was the full time job that paid your bills. Then there would be the cabbage, working on the meat, fish and fruit and vegetable markets in London, or on building sites—or other part time employment, all off the books.

As a side note, I own businesses that sell meat and fish to hotels and restaurants in the southeast of England. Until 1997, at Smithfield Meat Market, London's premier site for meat wholesaling, it was the custom that when you purchased meat there you were still *required*, as the buyer, to give your order to a salesman, who would then give it to a cutter, who would cut your various portions, who would then give the meat to the scale man, who would weigh the goods, who would then give it to a porter, who would then take your goods the six to ten feet between the back of the wholesale shop and your vehicle. And if anyone did not perform their role, all hell would break loose and the thugs would ban you from the market. In Billingsgate today, the fish centre for wholesale, you still have to pay "bobbing," a portage charge of 3p per kilo, to a union official, in order to move fish from the said shop to the back of your vehicle when making a pick up. It follows that these markets, with a history in London stretching back for eight to nine hundred years, are in massive terminal decline, as buyers like ourselves bypass these restrictive practices and purchase direct from the source. It never ceases to amaze me why, when we hear the odd conversation from Billingsgate or Smithfield, how they moan about the decline of these once fine market places and they can't put their finger on why. Some things become a way of life to people.

During my early teens, we were brought up to be conscious that there was a real possibility of a third world war, the Soviets being the bad guys and the allies the good guys. Deployment of Cruise missiles in the UK acted as a so-called defensive precaution against Soviet attack, and the policy of MAD—Mutually Assured Destruction—seemed to me to fight fire with fire. Ultimately, the superiority of the capitalist west in being able to produce more missiles or military might, and the inability of the Communist east to produce as rapidly, ensured that the Soviets collapsed under their own weight.

The moral bankruptcy of the Communist system and its sheer perversity was, to me, in denial of fundamental rights. In politics there was a sharp contrast between a western, or Judeo-Christian system, and Communism. It was a stark choice—there could be only one right answer. I stood very firmly with the Thatcher-Reagan axis of power and what they stood for.

The above three events put me firmly in political allegiance with Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party.

During the 1960s and 70s, Arthur Seldon and Ralph Harris ran the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA). Friedrich Hayek was a great influence on Seldon who was one of his pupils at London School of Economics (LSE). The IEA single-handedly changed the

course of world history by putting on the table realistic policies for the privatisation and de-nationalisation of large sections of the British economy. They attacked closed shops, restrictive practices and monopoly privilege wherever they existed. They vociferously attacked the Keynesian hegemony.

In the early 1970s, Sir Keith Joseph, in conjunction with the IEA, introduced Margaret Thatcher to market liberal ideas. These led to the formation of her huge programmes of economic liberalisation of the British economy from 1979 to 1990. Successes were that huge tracts of the British economy, which had been in the hands of the state, were returned to the private sector. The IEA, however, was steeped in monetarist doctrine concerning macroeconomics, and Margaret Thatcher pursued vigorously these policies. While they were an improvement on Keynesian policies of fiscal demand management, still the economy helter-skeltered through various business cycles as the government continued to maintain command of the central economic pillars of the economy. Interest rates were cynically used during the run-up to elections to create boom environments, and *vice-versa* post-election. This is known as the political boom and bust cycle.

From where I sat in the British Conservative Party, I was very much aware that people of my views who supported economic liberalism (e.g., free enterprise) were viewed as usurpers within the party. There was a whole history of *noblesse oblige*, one-nation Toryism and aristocratic snobbery, which was particularly annoying, and frustrating at times. I could have no truck with its support for historic privileges, all in the name of tradition, which always seemed mysterious to me. Blue-collar monopoly privilege was attacked by Thatcher successfully, but white-collar closed shop practices were not. One example was the failure to challenge the monopolistic traditions of solicitors and barristers and the entire judicial process. I recently was a respondent in a high court case when the plaintiff was trying to have a winding up order (e.g. a judgment) placed by me on them removed. We won the case and the other side paid up all the monies owed, but I had to pay £3,000 for our barrister's representation in court on the day, which could have been covered by our very competent solicitor. I asked why this could not be the case, being aware that this is a centuries old stitch up in the legal profession and was told that it is "in my interests dear boy" that I cannot give instruction nor communication to the barrister, but only to the solicitor who will then relay my presumably incompetent requests to the barrister. In the dying days of Thatcherism there were proposals to end this closed shop, but as a very large majority of the Houses of Parliament are made up of lawyers and judges, it would have had no chance of passing into statute.

No one (including Thatcher) was prepared to attack the five pillars of Soviet style provision left in our country: education, the National Health Service, the supply of money, the provision of defense and the judicial process. These great institutions smacked of monopoly privilege and guild-like practices. Nevertheless, the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher still seemed to be the best political party to join.

When I was 16 years old, I was in charge of the Hammersmith Young Conservatives. I organised a speaker meeting with the then-Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd. It was to be held at the Polish Club on King Street, Hammersmith. After the Second World War, a number of RAF Poles had become naturalised citizens of the UK and many had settled in this area. As you can imagine, these were all pretty enlightened people regarding the threat of socialism

as they had seen how the National Socialists, and then the International Socialists, had torn apart their own country. I went into their bookshop. An elderly gentleman, a war veteran, noticed I was looking around fairly aimlessly and directed me to a book by Eamon Butler, head of the Adam Smith Institute, which was an introduction to Freidrich Hayek. Everything in that book seemed to make sense, fuelling my interest in political philosophy.

I went to LSE from 1988 to 1991 to study in the Government Department, for a joint honours degree in Politics and Law. My economics papers in the first year were tiresome and tedious. We read a textbook by Richard G. Lipsey called *Positive Economics*, the UK equivalent of Samuelson's Principles textbook in the USA. Getting rapidly bored with the Alice in Wonderland nature of Keynesian economics and not feeling entirely comfortable with the monetarist alternative, I gave up the study of economics and pursued courses that related largely to political philosophy and law. By the second term of the first year we had moved into the world of macroeconomics. I closed the page of the textbook and gave up economics never to attend a class again when I was faced with a grown man, a professor indeed, trying to teach the class about the multiplier. You all know the story; the multiplier is the sum of a convergent series. Spend £1m today with a marginal propensity to consume of 0.8 and the new people who have received the 1st £1m get £800,000 and so on and so forth. Therefore £1m injected by government into the economy could become £5m of spending in the economy. For about two seconds I thought that there was suddenly presented to me a cure for all the world's problems, poverty abandoned overnight. Reality struck in the third second and I could not look with seriousness at any person who tried, with a straight face, to teach such appalling nonsense. Like a militant trade unionist, I downed tools and refused to be taught such crap. During this time while I was an undergraduate, I participated in a buy-out of a private members' night club in the Kings Road in Chelsea—the 151 Club—and then also in the establishment of a restaurant in Chelsea, Le Casino, with two other partners. This career was taking off fabulously and my academic studies were being put on the back burner.

But I was taking some very good political thought courses and this confirmed in my mind that I was a natural rights/natural law person. I followed the tradition of Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and then the great Enlightenment thinkers: John Locke, and Immanuel Kant. On the law side, I did jurisprudence, again confirming my position as a “natural” lawyer. I had no truck with the positivist doctrines of people like H.L.A. Hart. In our history of modern political thought I was delighted to come across Freidrich Hayek again through his *Road to Serfdom*, *Constitution of Liberty* and *The Fatal Conceit*. These are his latter writings and they provided a justification for a pro liberty society based on spontaneous order. Hayek seemed to come to the natural rights position via a conservative route, the empirical position of the Scottish Enlightenment and Hume. This left a clear gap in my thinking, the natural law position coming very much from a rationalist standpoint and the Hume/Hayek position seeming to be based in the empirical tradition.

When I graduated from LSE to pursue a business career, I vowed that once my entrepreneurial situation had settled down I would rekindle my interest in these debates and try to solve in my own mind why I was a natural rights/natural law advocate. My overall political philosophy favored Hayek, via the empirical tradition; this seemed to encompass my

whole political outlook. By 1996, my business affairs were going well. Sitting down at my computer and looking at my books I thought it might be time to stimulate those philosophical gray cells again. I thought of some of the works of Hayek and how he repeatedly refers to an individual called Ludwig von Mises. I put that name into the search engine and—bingo! The Ludwig von Mises Institute came up. All of a sudden, the mist in my mind began to clear and a great clarity began to develop as I delved more and more into the work of Ludwig von Mises, and also Friedrich von Hayek when he was an economist at the LSE. Articles on the website were so sound, crisp, clear in their exposition, I thought I must look deeper into who von Mises was and to this end I bought my first book of his, *Human Action*. This amounted to a false start, because as I read the first few chapters I thought: what the hell is this all about—there are too many long words here. So I put it aside while my business went through a massive growth spurt.

Next, I took the opportunity of buying Percy Greaves's *Mises Made Easier*. It gave me the key, I realised, to understanding the first two hundred pages of *Human Action*. After a certain amount of dogged determination, the genius and simplicity of the book became apparent to me.

You start with one irrefutable axiom: that humans act purposefully. Within this premise is implied all the laws that govern purposeful behaviour, just as a right-angled triangle implies Pythagoras's Theorem. So Mises's theorem, though the axiom of action is: people act to remove uneasiness at all points in time and this is purposeful. They prefer goods now rather than later, from this you get the Law of Diminishing Returns, The Laws of Supply and Demand, the theory of interest etc, etc. From this, you can deduce the—indeed, the laws of everything in economics, which *Human Action* so beautifully does.

One of the problems I carried from the LSE was the notion of having to justify a truly free and liberal society on the basis of the Hayekian evolutionary spontaneous order. This in turn had its foundations in the rather unfortunate mystical notion of the “invisible hand” of Adam Smith and each individual, seeking his own personal benefit nevertheless served the general good. This last point had been fine to justify the end point of where I wanted to be, but as a weapon in the critique of any social engineering or socialist system, I did not feel it hit the nail on the head. Hayek's final work—*The Fatal Conceit*—attacked the rationalistic ambitions of central planners who sought to manage the economy and efficiently allocate resources amongst competing ends by saying—this is impossible; the knowledge to do it could never be held within the hands of central planners. Also, individuals utilizing the price mechanism succeeded in efficiently allocating resources through a process of spontaneous evolution.

Mises's *Human Action*, starting from the axiom of action, showed me how man, through his very reason, actually produced the most robust “planned” economy possible. The free market coordinated the actions of billions of rational humans, each seeking to remove uneasiness. They take goods and services from those people who remove these feelings to form the greatest of all things: societies based on human co-operation and the division of labour that massively enriches all its participants. It became clear to me how any intervention in this process whatsoever is detrimental to the good of that society. According to the irrefutable logic of action and economic laws that emanate from this, the process of logical

deduction is a very robust defense of the free society and indeed allows you to go on the offense against any socialist or collectivist system.

This rationalistic approach, then, has allowed me to square off or to hook up nicely with my natural law and natural rights way of thinking. The epistemology of Ludwig von Mises is an advance over the point where Kant stopped by setting the axiom of action firmly in reality; the positivist onslaught becomes blunted. The logical deductive method of Mises has been a true eye-opener and a pleasure to read. I am very grateful to the Mises Institute in bringing it to my attention.

Although Mises replaced Hayek as my most favourite philosopher cum economist cum political scientist, Mises had rekindled my interest in Hayek—but as Hayek the economist rather than Hayek the social and political thinker.

Ludwig von Mises's 1912 book *The Theory of Money and Credit* had set out the first formulation of the Austrian theory of the business cycle, showing how an artificial lowering of interest rates could cause a change in people's time preferences and misallocate capital away from consumption and into investment-orientated projects. As entrepreneurs know, with the availability of cheap money bringing marginal projects to fruition, this ultimate capital overhang brings overinvestment to certain sections of the economy at the expense of under-investment in others—hence the boom-bust cycle is born. Little did I know that Lionel Robbins, at the LSE in the 1920s and 1930s, adopted the Misesian position on epistemology and in general economics; having studied at the LSE one would have thought one would have been made aware of this. Robbins invited von Mises's most prominent student, Hayek, to lecture, and the *Prices and Production* lecture series was created in 1931.

Hayek presented and reformulated the Austrian theory of the business cycle; both Hayek and Robbins, came into great conflict with Keynes and his followers in Cambridge in the 1930s. Keynes wrote a treatise on money, which Hayek attacked very successfully, and Keynes acknowledged most of the criticism, modifying his position. When the *General Theory* was published, however, Hayek did not bother critiquing it, as he thought Keynes would change his position. On the contrary, this book of Keynes's was instrumental in creating the climate for central government, planning and control as the Second World War began. After this war, Hayek left the LSE largely to write on political philosophy in America; indeed, at the University of Chicago he was prevented from joining the economics department. Ironic that he was a first rate economist and his work at LSE resulted in the award of the Nobel Prize in economics in 1973. My delight and pleasure in reading Mises has lead me to discover the works of professor Roger Garrison, which are a continuation of Hayek's. In his book *Time and Money: The Macroeconomics of Capital Structure*, Professor Garrison presents us with an accurate and up-to-date picture of the Austrian theory of the business cycle and how it critiques the Keynesian system and indeed the monetarist system as well.

I was delighted to set up, with the help of the Mises Institute, the distinguished Hayek visiting fellowship at LSE. The debate in the UK is largely sterile; although the great intellectual work of Hayek proceeded via the IEA, and with Margaret Thatcher's great contribution the climate has moved in the direction of a liberal free society, much more work needs to be

done. My chosen path lies in reinvigorating the study of the Austrian school, and particularly the economic works of Hayek and the general works of Ludwig von Mises, following the way they were so judiciously studied throughout the 1930s, 40s and early 50s.

Lionel Robbins, in his 1971 *Autobiography of an Economist* writes:

I cannot leave this theme without expressing further indebtedness to von Mises, both for what I have learned from his writings in other connections and for many days of pleasant and entertaining companionship in Austria and Geneva. There are features of his intellectual positioning in regard to pure theory and also in regard to public policy which I am not in agreement. But I should be sorry to let differences of this sort obscure recognition of the importance of his work. Although excluded by sectarian animus from the position in the University of Vienna which, on intellectual merits, was his due—he was neither a Catholic nor a Social Democrat—he represented in his generation, with Schumpeter, the great traditions of Menger, Böhm Bawark and Weiser; and as a thinker in his own right and as a teacher of such men as Harbeler, Hayek, Machlup and Morgenstern, he is one of the significant figures in the history of economics in the first half of this century. It is true that he has a sharp pen with departures from what he believes to be correct views—I myself have been a victim on one occasion. It is true also that he has adopted some positions which have shown, I think, an unwarranted degree of opposition to hostilities which, whether right or wrong, deserved more sympathetic consideration. But I fail to comprehend how anyone not blinded by the political prejudice can read his main contributions, his *Theorie des geldes und der Umlaufsmittel*, long stretches of *Die Gemeinwirtschaft* and the magisterial general treatise *Human Action*, without experiencing at once a sense of rare quality and intellectual stimulus of a high order, however much he may disagree either with the assumptions or the conclusions. And I think that the disparagement which so often accompanies references to this distinguished man, particularly in some circles in the English-speaking world which pride themselves and being dispassionate and enlightened, is most discreditable and mean-spirited.

A dedication to a true master and I could not agree more. Lionel Robbins accepted large parts of the thought of Mises. His most famous book, *The Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, is purely Misesian in its outlook. Being exposed in the Second World War to central government planning and the immediate short-term gains that can be had with the right type of determination and application, Robbins drifted away from the Misesian position. Mises is largely unheard of in the UK. Apart from the Mises Institute in Auburn Alabama, New York University, George Mason University, Loyola University New Orleans, San Jose State University and perhaps two or three others I know of no

institution that teaches his works and those of the Austrian School with particular reference to economics, let alone epistemology.

The distinguished Hayek visiting fellowship is our first attempt to rekindle this liberal teaching. This is where the next stage of my new journey for liberalism begins. ■

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Toby Baxendale is an entrepreneur who owns, amongst other things, two successful food businesses in the UK.

## 6

JAMES T. BENNETT

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### MALICE IN BLUNDERLAND: THE TRANSFORMATION FROM SOFT-HEADEDNESS TO HARD CORE

MOST OF MY EARLY ECONOMIC-ISSUE troubles started with my parents who were highly skeptical of government. My mother used to tell me that if the Republicans got in office, there was a recession; if the Democrats got in, there was a war. Dad had roughly the same views—one did not lightly disagree with Mom. But then, these were my parents, so what could they possibly know that was intelligent? I was getting another treatment at Messick High School in Memphis, Tennessee, where our aging and very earnest teacher gave a twelfth-grade civics course that was scripted from the movie, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Of course, my parents paid taxes; my teacher, Mr. French, was paid by taxes and had to follow religiously the pabulum produced by the curriculum committee of the Memphis Public Schools which in the good old days of the 1950s brooked no Communist nonsense; after all, there must have been some modicum of truth in all the insinuations of Senator Joseph McCarthy.

In those halcyon days of high school, with hormones raging on all fronts, I really didn't think much about government or, in fact, the world about me at all. The whole scene was summed up in a joke about President Eisenhower that was popular at the time: Question: What does an Eisenhower doll do when you wind it up? Answer: One of two things: It either does nothing or it plays golf. One could reasonably conclude that if the president was on the golf course or doing nothing most of the time, the government couldn't be doing much of anything important. And, in relative terms, there was some truth to that. Camelot

(or whatever) hadn't come to the nation's capital with the Kennedy clan, and the ask not question hadn't been asked as yet.

In any event, I stumbled into an engineering school, then known as Case Institute of Technology (now Case Western Reserve), in Cleveland (how clueless can a guy get?). My undergraduate degree required a single course in Principles of Economics, i.e., both micro and macro in three hours. Samuelson's principles book, then in single-digit edition, was the text, and everything was done mathematically so consumption theory, production theory, and all that took a total of about three weeks. Macro had a decided Keynesian orientation, and the multiplier and consumption functions and the simplistic thinking (it was Samuelson's book, after all) were *de rigueur*. It was all so neat and came in a complete package that appealed to the engineering mindset. Monetary and fiscal policy were just wonderful; computers were coming into their own in the technical institutes; a new day was dawning in the economic sciences.

Somehow, I again managed to get another diploma without thinking very much at all about government, public policy, or the world around me. I headed to Columbia University's School of Business for an MBA. Mistake! New York City wasn't my idea of the idyllic student setting (well, I was a native of Tennessee, remember—that explains a lot) and in many respects the courses were boring for a person who had undergone the rigor of an engineering degree. Frankly, I knew about as much as the grad student who taught the statistics course that I was required to take. Eli Ginsburg who taught the macroeconomics course mumbled (he was always sucking on lemon drops or something during his lectures) about his great role in policy making and advising the federal government. Things weren't in very good economic shape at the time, so I didn't know whether Eli knew what he was talking about or whether he knew, but he was being ignored. Neither I nor anyone else learned much of the economics then in vogue, so little damage was done.

Also in vogue at Columbia at the time was James W. Kuhn's course on the Ethical Foundations of Business. In the early 1960s a number of big electrical equipment firms were found guilty of price fixing, and the business schools of America (Columbia as an Ivy League school probably one of the leaders of the pack) needed to inculcate ethics and such in students. I got an overdose of the corporate social responsibility stuff from this course, and it never quite set well. But, that's another story.

Fed up with the Big Apple, I returned to Case Institute and the beauty of Cleveland winters (Yes! In some areas of life, I'm a slow learner) where I sought my Ph.D. in economics. (In my defense, I got fellowships the whole time and left school with no debt; Sputnik was a bonanza for engineering schools and their students.) And, with no malice aforethought, my professors were pushing the latest topics about externalities, social welfare, the role of government in curing everything but the heartbreak of psoriasis (that too was likely in the public sphere because externalities supposedly abounded). I wasn't really a hell raiser in grad school, so did what most good students did—I soaked the Keynesian dogma up like a sponge and regurgitated it back on exams and comps.

With degree in hand in 1970 and in the footsteps of Mr. Smith, Dr. Bennett went to Washington to teach at George Washington University while living in the relative safety of the Virginia suburbs. Given my technical background, I was teaching graduate and

undergraduate econometrics (yes . . . but read on before getting out the Wolfsbane, garlic, and wooden stakes) and doing research for the Office of Naval Research on Navy and Marine Corps problems during the Viet Nam War.

There is nothing like living close to, if not being in, the belly of the beast. In the Virginia 'burbs, most of my neighbors were federal bureaucrats; at GWU, most of my graduate students were federal bureaucrats getting their degree at taxpayers expense; many of the GWU faculty were doing various work on some government contract or project or other. Forget about social welfare, externalities, the public interest, and all the other buzz words that were so prevalent at the time and used to justify the growth and intrusiveness of government. Trust me, casual conversation at every turn showed that private self-interest was rampant throughout the public sector; government largely served the interests of those in government. But where did all my Keynesian training and the public policy and the . . . fit in? Simple answer: It didn't.

Something was totally out of whack. I needed a new perspective, a new paradigm. So, in desperation, I hiked over to George Washington University's Gelman Library and started checking the card catalog (that's what it was back in those days) for books about bureaucracy. I found Ludwig von Mises's classic work, *Bureaucracy*. Mises made perfect sense. Reading *Bureaucracy* was my equivalent of Saul seeing the light on the road to Damascus. Then, I found Gordon Tullock's book, *The Politics of Bureaucracy*. My thinking was transformed. To me, Mises's arguments were cogent, persuasive, and totally compelling. Tullock's work confirmed Mises's brilliance and supplemented his insights.

After five years of fighting traffic to get to work, and tired of the socialist bilge prevalent there, I left GWU and came to George Mason University in 1975. Even back then Mason's economics department had a very strong market orientation. GMU was young and growing, and it had a tremendous advantage: Very little bureaucracy to encumber your efforts and an economics department (very much in the Virginia mold) where ideology and philosophy were not issues. The atmosphere was most congenial to a free-market promoter. Bill Snavely was chair of the Department at the time, and he had been tutored well by his father, Tipton R., long-time chair of the University of Virginia economics department. "And, I might add, Tipton's book, *The Department of Economics at the University of Virginia, 1825–1956*, remains famous for what was judiciously omitted."

In my early days at GMU, I was still teaching primarily econometrics. But one day, roughly 1978 or so, a colleague came to me with a problem: the regression coefficient in his model had a positive sign and was greater than one; his theory required a negative value less than one. Like the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, I started throwing poisoned entrails into the empirical cauldron. Instead of eye of newt and wing of bat, I transformed the data by taking logarithms and stuck in a couple of plausible dummy variables to bring some outliers back into the fold. Voila! The deed was done; he got the coefficient that he wanted. I got a revelation: I was a data Nazi. Torture the data enough, and it will tell you precisely what you want to know. Truth: I swore that I would never teach econometrics again, and I haven't run a regression since. My metamorphosis was complete. Aside: I'd make a lousy politician—at root, I am honest.

My first face-to-face experience with a dyed-in-the-wool, certified libertarian was the fateful day when I met The Great One late in the 1970s. No, not Jackie Gleason, but Gordon

Tulloch. I was in awe, and El Gordo quickly sensed this. I was convinced that he liked me because he immediately insulted me “and still never misses an opportunity.” Digression: My wife is one of Gordon’s greatest admirers. Before the Public Choice Center came to George Mason, Gordon came up several times from VPI for seminars and stayed in our home which my wife lovingly furnished with beautiful antiques—many family heirlooms. As soon as Gordon came in, met my wife, and looked around, he told Sally, Why don’t you get your husband to buy you some decent furniture? Sally has been his fan ever since.

The end of the 1970s was a rather interesting period in my professional development. Not only did I eschew mathematical pyrotechnics and hemorrhoidal least squares, but my move in new directions also got financial support. In 1979 the John M. Olin Foundation provided a generous grant to initiate the *Journal of Labor Research* which I have edited ever since. Olin has also supported much of my research over the years, and in 1992 provided substantial funding for me to establish the John M. Olin Institute for Employment Practice and Policy at GMU. The Olin Institute publishes books, conducts symposia, and sponsors research related to employment issues. If even a few more foundations were as supportive and committed to free market ideas and institutions as Olin has been over the years, so much more could be accomplished.

My success at fund raising can be partly attributed to my association with the Heritage Foundation. I became an Adjunct Scholar in about 1977 or so when Heritage was operating out of a small building (I heard that it was formerly a veterinarian’s office) on C Street. Through Heritage, I met other scholars and public policy types, and through these connections, I became a member of the Philadelphia Society in 1981 and the Mont Pelerin Society in 1982. Many fascinating people were then and still are members of these two organizations. Of course, the usual suspects are also active members: Tullock, Buchanan, Friedman, to name three. My thinking was strongly influenced by a British member of MPS, Dame Barbara Shenfield, who understood all too well what happens when socialism takes root and flourishes in a nation.

Another major epiphany occurred when I met Tom DiLorenzo at the Public Choice Center’s cocktail hour at the annual meeting of the Southern Economic Association in 1981. Tom saw my name tag and told me how much he had enjoyed reading my (then) recent book, *The Political Economy of Federal Government Growth*. No convincing was necessary: DiLorenzo was obviously both astute and brilliant. Trained at the Public Choice Center then at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg, Tom and I were in complete accord in our thinking. We shared a simple, basic premise: Government is rarely the solution to the nation’s political, social, and economic difficulties; rather, government is far more likely to be the problem. Intellectually, Tom and I were soul mates from the outset. Eight books and numerous journal articles followed.

We set what I think must be a record worthy of Guinness (or at least Bass Ale): I never recall an argument or even a serious disagreement with Tom about our research. I vividly recall many times that we laughed and the many trips down the hall between our offices to share yet another Can you believe this idiocy! anecdote. I was always surprised at how attuned we were to each other’s thinking and writing styles. For each book, we divided the work up by chapter, and I defy anyone to determine which of us wrote which chapters.

Anyone who has the privilege of working with DiLorenzo will be pleased by his prolific and high quality output—and his never-failing sense of humor.

Working and living in the national capital area provides wonderful lessons in absurdity, banality, and inanity, and Tom and I exploited the craziness to the fullest. We also have tried to use humor and ridicule in our work—some of what goes on is so ludicrous (just sample the doings in the D.C. government, if you doubt my assertion) that it is impossible to treat it seriously. Long ago, we abandoned the idea of preaching to the choir or trying to convert the economics profession to some form of intelligent thinking. Rather, we have tried to write for general audiences and students who have not yet developed vested interests in the status quo. We know that we have made some progress, for we have made many enemies. For example, several of our books were reviewed by the *New York Times*; all were roundly trashed. Conclusion: We must be doing something right.

In the end, when all is said and done, I'm basically just a guy who got mugged by reality, and Mises and Tullock explained to me what happened and why. If only others would tread the same path. ■

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## 7

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BRUCE L. BENSON

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## ANOTHER PATH TO LIBERTARIANISM

WHEN WALTER BLOCK ASKED ME to contribute my autobiography sketch to a collection from people explaining how they came to be libertarians and/or Austrians, I replied that I would read those that he had already received. Then, if it appeared that I could put something together that might be interesting enough to fit, I would be happy to do so. I probably cannot match the interesting stories he has gathered, but after reading them I was struck by how different most paths to libertarianism appear to be than my own. Many contributors describe early intellectual stimulation after reading Rand in high school or Rothbard in college, and/or early interests in political/philosophical issues. My path was probably more emotional than intellectual, at least initially. Early in my life I developed a strong

dislike for discretionary power and an admiration for independent individualism, but I did not recognize that these feelings might be a foundation for a political philosophy until after I discovered economics in college, and then free-market economics and public choice in graduate school. In fact, for the most part I was indifferent to political and philosophical issues until I was in graduate school, and I did not read Rand or Rothbard until after I was out of graduate school.

I spent the first 18 years of my life in Harlem, Montana, a town of about 1,000 people. Despite its size it was a community of considerable contrast. Harlem is located in the Milk River Valley about four miles from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The area north of town was dominated by dry-land wheat farming, while cattle ranching was the primary activity southwest of town, and the valley was irrigated farmland. The Reservation covered a large area southeast of town. So Harlem's businesses served the needs of farmers, ranchers, Bureau of Indian Affairs employees, and members of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Indian Tribes. The population in the area could be roughly categorized as: (1) very independent ranchers and business people, (2) farmers who were increasingly dependent on government farm programs, (3) government bureaucrats, and (4) wards of the state on the reservation. I had friends whose families were in all of these groups, but the adults who were held in high esteem in the community generally were from the first group, those who "took care of their own."

My father was one of those people. His parents had homesteaded on a 160 acre dry-land farm that was not capable of providing for the family, so his father started a freight business, hauling just about anything that could be hauled with a wagon and team of horses. My father, born in 1922, was pretty much on his own at 14, when he went to work for one of the large ranchers in the area. He did manage to finish high school before the U.S. entered World War II and he volunteered for the army. He ended up in the 101 Airborne Division, dropping into Normandy the night before the D-Day Invasion, and was wounded about three weeks later. After returning home and working at various jobs for a while, he bought a used truck and became an independent trucker, hauling freight of all kinds (he also rode saddle broncs in the rodeos that occurred on summer weekends).

You might say that relationships were "hands on" in Montana at that time: bargains were settled with a handshake and disputes were solved with fists. My father quickly built a reputation for hard work, honesty, generosity, and refusing to back down from anyone (he was a "rough hand"). He also hauled cattle, and in the process, got to know a cattle buyer in the area who asked him to go into partnership. They worked together for several years, and then, after his partner retired, my father continued on his own. He lived off his reputation, becoming one of the most successful and long-lasting cattle buyers in the state's history.

I obviously admired my father in many ways, but at the same time, our relationship was very strained. My father worked hard and partied hard, so he was not home very much. Perhaps more important, while he would never let someone else tell him what to do, he had no qualms about telling me what to do. That is probably when my strong dislike for discretionary authority began. I didn't like doing the chores I was expected to do, but I understood why I had to do them. I really hated it when he would come home after working

and partying and tell me to clean the cow shit off his boots, however. And I resented the fact that he seemed to punish me for every fight that my sisters and I got into because I was “the oldest and should have known better.” I suppose that a lot of this resentment is typical of children growing up with a domineering parent, but I never really got over it.

I loved to read when I was young, but I was not reading Rand or Rothbard at the time. I read for escape, not enlightenment. I devoured stores of “rugged individuals” and underdogs who stood up to the bad guys: Zane Grey novels, books about Davy Crocket (I remember reenacting the Disney programs on Davy Crocket with my friends), and later, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Robinson Crusoe*, all of the Sherlock Holmes stories, H.G. Wells books, everything by Jack London, and the Tolkien novels. I also loved the movies for the same reason, and especially “westerns” (still do—*Shane* may be the best movie ever made).

I managed to get through 18 years at home and I did pretty well in high school (despite problems with one teacher in particular who clearly hated his job and took it out on students, especially if they stood up to him), so I entered the University of Montana in Missoula during the fall of 1967, supported by a small scholarship. I decided to major in pre-law, but I was a very unhappy freshman. Perhaps I did not know how to deal with my new-found independence, because about all I learned was how to party. As a result, I failed to maintain good enough grades to keep the scholarship, and decided to drop out of school in the fall of 68. I called my uncle who was on the draft board and asked if I would be drafted after dropping out of school. He said yes, so I asked when and he replied that it would be about three months. I asked him if he could draft me earlier than that since I did not want to spend three months at home with my father after dropping out of school. He was very understanding: I was on my way to Fort Lewis, Washington about a month later.

I disliked discretionary authority before I got to Fort Lewis, but thanks to the United States Army, I quickly learned to really hate it. I will never forget the drunk drill sergeant who took me into the supply room and tried to make me mad enough to take a swing at him (I was never sure whether he wanted an excuse to beat me or to charge me with striking a superior). After basic training I was informed that I had done so well on the exams the army had given me that they wanted to see if my congressman would appoint me to West Point. I politely declined. So they offered officer’s candidate school, and a long series of other special programs. All I had to do was sign up for another year or two! What a deal! I turned everything down. Finally, one of the officers got frustrated and said, “If you don’t sign up for more time you’re going to the infantry!” I said OK, and in short order I was moved across the base for advanced infantry training.

I completed my infantry training and spent a month at home on leave before I was off to the Americal Division (D Company, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry Regiment, 196th Infantry Brigade) in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, where I spent the next year reinforcing my growing hatred for arbitrary authority. Officers, often fresh from ROTC or officer’s candidate school, were assigned to the unit, and after spending two or three months learning that what they needed to do to be effective was different from what they had been taught, they would get reassigned to some job “in the rear,” only to be replaced by other green officers. These officers dangled nice jobs “in the rear” (e.g., working in the company’s

office or supply room in Chu Lai) in front of me too, if I would “just carry the machine gun for a little longer” or “just serve as squad leader until we can get someone with the rank that a squad leader is supposed to have.” I never got those jobs, however, and spent my entire tour in a combat platoon either as a machine gunner or a squad leader.

The company I was in suffered about 40 percent casualties during my 12-month tour, including over 40 killed (others lost limbs, eyes, internal organs, etc. but lived to tell about it) in what I saw as a totally illegitimate war. As a squad leader I learned to avoid dangerous situations whenever we could (by not doing what we were told to do if we could get away with it; e.g., spending our nights well off the trails that we were ordered to set up ambushes on) and to be very aggressive when a situation arose that could not be avoided (in hopes of either surprising the enemy and getting things over with quickly, or quickly running them off). I managed to get home without being injured (at least physically), proud of the fact that my squad suffered very few casualties compared to the rest of the company.

After a bout of malaria (we were ordered to take malaria pills but I never did, hoping to get sick so I could “get out of the field” and spend some hospital time in Vietnam, only to catch it just before leaving so it appeared after I was back in the States), I spent a few months at Fort Carson, Colorado, trying to keep a low profile. I could get an “early out” to start college at the beginning of a term, so that gave me a reason to go back to school. I applied for early release and returned to the University of Montana in January of 1971. I really was not any more motivated as a student than I had been before entering the army, but I had learned how to party hard and still get up in the morning, so I managed to get reasonably respectable grades. I also realized that a pre-law degree might not be worth much if I did not go to law school, so I shopped around for another major in hopes of finding something that could be valuable by itself but also get me into law school if I wanted to go. I tried the introductory courses in several disciplines before I took a microeconomics class. I loved the course and immediately changed majors. This turned out to be an important event along my path to libertarianism, although I did not realize it for several more years. It maintained my position on the path, at any rate. I also became a more serious student, even though I continued to seriously pursue my primary interests—partying and trying to talk to girls (objectives changed if one happened to be willing to talk, of course).

Close to 1,000 of the students out of the roughly 8,000 at the University were veterans, and I fell in with a group of them. Many, including me, were pretty much indifferent to the politics of the day and considered most of what the other students (and a lot of the faculty) were concerned with or excited about to be trivial. Mainly, I guess I just wanted to be left alone. I supported myself financially with part-time and summer jobs to supplement my GI bill benefits, so I was pretty much on my own. I shared a house trailer with two other veterans. We lived in near anarchy I guess, with a diet of wild game, potatoes, canned vegetables and beer, and time allocated between hunting (often illegally), fishing, hiking, rafting the rivers, driving fast (Montana had no day time speed limit and very few highway patrol officers, and I had a Dodge Charger), bar hopping, part-time work when money got tight, and attending classes (most of the time).

The University of Montana economics department was probably pretty typical of economics programs at small state universities at the time. Micro courses were neoclassical,

macro courses were Keynesian, and most of the applied courses were about how the government could cure market failure. There was even an avowed Marxist on the faculty. I was attracted to the logic of economics more than the uses that various faculty members were putting it to, but I guess I pretty much accepted the “policy prescriptions” that were presented to me. Perhaps I learned to think in a logical way, however, in preparation for the realizations that would follow.

In the winter of 1973 I was also attracted to Terrie Johnson and I was startled to find out that the attraction was mutual. By spring we had decided to get married in August of that year. It was at that point that I came to the disturbing realization that I had to worry about something more than making sure that I had beer money. My father always says that I “became a man” when I was in the army, but the truth is, I was shocked into semi-adulthood by the pending responsibilities of marriage.

I received a B.A. in the spring of 1973, not knowing what I might be able to do to make a decent living. After looking at my options and deciding that they were not at all attractive to me (they all involved working for someone else, probably while wearing a necktie), I decided to ask my father if I could go to work with him. He said that I could, but my mother took me aside and urged me not to. She pointed out that my father and I are too much alike and that if we tried to work together we would end up fighting. I told her that I did not know what else to do since I did not like the kinds of jobs that appeared to be available to someone with a B.A. in economics. I had some GI Bill benefits left, though, so I suggested that I might try graduate school. She pushed me to do that, so I applied for entry into the Masters program at the University of Montana. I was accepted, and whether she knows it or not, my mother put me back on my path to libertarianism. My new wife found a job as a secretary, and I got a job driving a school bus in the mornings and afternoons to supplement my GI bill benefits, so I could enroll without an assistantship. I quickly realized that the employment options with an M.A. degree did not look much more attractive than they had been with a B.A., so I decided to try to get into a Ph.D. program. My advisor at the University of Montana, John Wicks, told me that I needed to strengthen my math and statistics skills, however, if I wanted to get into a reputable program. He recommended that I take several additional classes beyond those that I was required to take and helped me get an assistantship for a second year in the Masters program. I applied to a number of Ph.D. programs and decided to go to Texas A&M because it was one of the most reputable programs that offered me an assistantship and John Wicks suggested that I would like the program better than the others (I was also attracted to A&M because I was interested in location theory and M.L. Greenhut was at A&M). This decision had a profound impact on me. Had I gone somewhere else, I might have never moved along the path to libertarianism.

I did not know it at the time, but the economics department at Texas A&M was one of a relatively small number of strong “free-market” programs in the country. People used to say that it was the “southern branch of the University of Chicago.” My first-semester macro course systematically destroyed the Keynesian model, for instance, and Greenhut undermined the “market failure” arguments about “oligopoly and imperfect competition.” No longer working much on location theory, his courses were on “spatial price theory,” and

his version of that theory stressed the efficiency of free market competition while simultaneously emphasizing that the model of “perfect competition” is irrelevant as a description of real world markets. The micro sequence was neoclassical price theory, although the second course in particular was taught by a free-market economist (Charles Maurice), and both courses really assisted me in developing an “economic way of thinking.” I also got to take “public finance” (actually public choice) courses from Steve Pejovich and Randy Holcombe, a property rights workshop from Eirik Furubotn, and a course on economic regulation from Bob Ekelund. These courses had a profound effect on me. My dislike for arbitrary users of power was finally justified and articulated in the language of public choice and property rights economics! And it was articulated very effectively, not just by some of my professors, but by a group of very good fellow students who were libertarians (e.g., Bobby McCormick, Bill Shughart, and Phil Porter). Long before I completed my Ph.D. I was convinced that markets virtually always worked much better than government, and that people used the discretionary power of government to do a lot of undesirable things. For want of a better term, I guess I would say that I was a “Chicago-style libertarian” (or perhaps more accurately, a Milton-Friedman-style libertarian). I called myself a libertarian and believed that if government would just limit itself to establishing and enforcing the rules of the game, the market could take care of most everything else. Even though I never heard of Hayek, let alone Mises or Rothbard in my Ph.D. program, I moved a long way down my path during the two years and nine months that I spent at Texas A&M. I still had a long way to go, however.

I cannot say that job options were much more attractive with a Ph.D. than they had been with the B.A. and M.A. degrees. I still am not my own boss, but at least academics offers a considerable amount of control over my own time. As long as I meet my classes most of the time and publish a steady stream of papers in the “reputation” journals, I am free to allocate my time pretty much as I want to (and I don’t have to wear a necktie very often). That might provide more independence than about anything else that I am capable of doing, and it has certainly provided me with the opportunity to explore and articulate my beliefs about the state and the economy.

My first academic position out of graduate school was at Pennsylvania State University—not a hotbed of libertarian thought (the only real fellow libertarian on the faculty was probably Mac Ott). I did “spatial price theory,” but I also wrote a few public-choice papers. One was a short paper that I titled “A Note on Corruption by Public Officials: The Black Market for Property Rights.” I did not know where to send it, however, so I wandered around the library looking at journals. I stumbled onto one called the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* (*JLS*) and decided that it looked like a possible outlet for the paper. This was a very fortuitous decision, because a few weeks after submitting the manuscript I got a strange but wonderful letter from the *Journal’s* editor, Murray Rothbard. The letter was hand typed, full of white out and crossed out words, with hand written words inserted here and there. But it was also full of encouragement and insight. I had never met Murray, and in fact, I knew absolutely nothing about him other than that he was the editor of the *JLS*, but that letter was, and still is, one of the most thoughtful and helpful that I have ever received from any editor or reviewer. His recommendations and suggested references were tremendously

helpful, making the paper much better than it had been. I still have that letter somewhere in a file even though the paper was published in the *JLS* over 20 years ago. Importantly, I had also learned, for the first time, that there actually was a literature on libertarian thought about issues other than free-markets and bad government (public choice). I read the journal, and learned about the much larger literature by searching for the interesting sounding references cited in its articles.

My contact with Murray turned out to be a very important event that accelerated my movement along the path I was on. I was about to be pushed beyond the Chicago-style libertarian that I had become. Not long after receiving Murray's letter, I got a call from David Theroux, then president of the Pacific Research Institute. He explained that he was trying to put together a book on gun control that Don Kates was editing for him. Kates, a modern liberal lawyer who also happened to be anti-gun control, had gathered together a lot of other liberals to write papers for the book and David was looking for a libertarian perspective to add into the mix. He told me that he had asked Murray for recommendations, and Murray, who I still did not know other than through our correspondence regarding my paper, had suggested that David contact me. David offered me \$1,000 to write a paper and I jumped at the opportunity even though I did not know much about the gun control debate (\$1,000 was a lot of money for someone fresh out of graduate school whose wife was a student—she had worked to support us while I went through both my Masters and Ph.D. programs and now it was my turn to support her while she earned her B.A.). My plan was to attack the frequently made claim that “increases in guns cause increases in crime” by contending that growing levels of crime resulting from government failure actually causes gun ownership to increase as people attempt to protect themselves (i.e., correlation does not imply causation). To support this argument, I wanted to stress the failures of the criminal justice system and point out that increasing gun ownership was occurring simultaneously with increasing investments in all sorts of other private-sector crime control and protection activities.

I found so much evidence of private sector crime prevention and protection, and of police misbehavior, that I had to call David to ask what I should do. I remember telling him that I already had about 100 pages typed, and suggesting that I could do one of two things: cut the 100 pages down so it could fit as a book chapter or add even more material to it that I had discovered and write a book. David replied, “Do both” and sent me a contract for a book on private sector involvement in the enforcement of law. I soon learned that I actually knew very little about the topic that I was to address, and that many people (including Murray) had already given the subject a great deal of thought. Nonetheless, several drafts, reviews, and years later *The Enterprise of Law: Justice Without the State* was published.

Between the initial contact from David Theroux around 1981 and the publication of *The Enterprise of Law* in 1990, I moved a long way further down my philosophical path. Chicago-style libertarianism is now a long way behind me. I no longer believe that the state has to provide the rules for free markets (private property, contract law) to function. In fact, I realize, not only that private-sector institutions can provide and enforce such rules, but that the state can not be counted on to provide them, in part because the discretionary power of those who work for the state will actually be used to create rules that prevent free markets (there are many other reasons as well).

There were several valuable reviews of various drafts of *The Enterprise of Law* that helped me to this realization, but one stands out. Randy Barnett's review was pretty much a book manuscript by itself. In addition to large numbers of excellent and detailed comments and suggestions to improve the manuscript, he pointed me to several readings that really changed the way I think about law and the state. It may not be surprising that Randy, a lawyer, suggested Lon Fuller and Harold Berman, for instance, but he also urged me to read F. A. Hayek (in particular, the first volume of *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*) and Murray Rothbard. Even though I had been very impressed with Murray's comments on the paper mentioned above, I did not know that he had written so extensively on the issues I was exploring, and did not discover much of his work until Randy pointed it out to me. My first exposure to Austrian economists resulted from these suggestions from a law professor, then, rather than any of the economists I knew. By adding the Austrian perspective to my public choice background, I found that I had even better intellectual justifications for my long-standing dislike of discretionary power. I also found much stronger justifications for my admiration of individualists.

There were other important influences on my evolving views of the state and law during this same period of discovery. I moved to Montana State University in 1982 where I was able to interact with P. J. Hill, Terry Anderson (although Terry was actually away from the University for much of the three years that I spent there), Ron Johnson, John Baden, Rick Stroup (also away from campus for most of my stay), Jeff Lafrance, and a number of other very good free-market people, several of whom were clearly willing to seriously consider the possibility of law without the state. I also began to correspond with Leonard Liggio when I applied to the Institute for Humane Studies for one of their F. Leroy Hill Faculty Fellowships. Leonard has probably read everything ever written on the topics I was working on for *The Enterprise of Law* and he was very willing to advise me and steer me in the right directions (in fact, one of my ongoing long-running projects is a book on the evolution of law, which, if I ever finish it, probably should be titled: "What Leonard Liggio has told me About the Evolution of Law"). Thus, I drew freely from many of the paradigms in economics, including the "property-rights" school, "neo-institutional economics," Chicago-School economics, and Austrian Economics, looking for ways to help me articulate my views.

I continued to correspond with Murray, asking his advice about what to read as I worked on my book. I sent him a few more papers for the *JLS* too, each of which produced "Murray letters" (totally unique letters like the one described above, that only Murray could write). I finally got to actually meet him in person at a conference that we both attended in the mid 1980s. He was just as gracious and encouraging in person as he had been in his letters. After that we ran into each other at several more conferences. In addition, I went on the job market in a limited and selective way after two and a half very productive years at Montana State with virtually no raises due to tight University budgets. While I ended up accepting an offer from Florida State University, I also had an offer from Auburn, where I met a number of people affiliated with the Mises Institute (after that I decided that I should read Mises as well as Rothbard and Hayek). They have been kind enough to invite me to some of their conferences, where I got to interact with Murray some more.

I do not know if my intellectual journey is complete, but my general economic/political/philosophical views have not changed much over the last fifteen years or so, although my ideas are constantly being refined and clarified (at least in my mind). Some ideas have been fleshed out, and others have been adjusted in light of new insights or information (e.g., as in my book on *To Serve and Protect: Privatization and Community in Criminal Justice*, also supported by David Theroux, now at the Independent Institute). My growing understanding of the Austrian and neoinstitutional paradigms (which are quite complimentary in many ways) has played a very important part in this process of refinement (and neoclassical economics has largely fallen by the wayside). The more I read about and wrestle with the issues I explored in *The Enterprise of Law*, and other related issues, the more I am convinced that my general views are valid. There is virtually no chance that I will veer off my path now. ■

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DAVID BERGLAND

MURRAY, THE LP, AND ME

I WAS INTRODUCED TO Murray Rothbard the economist long before I came to know him as a radical libertarian anarcho-capitalist activist. Reading Rothbard, beginning in the early 1960s, was a great experience for me, but that was not my introduction to libertarianism.

I have been asked many times when I became a libertarian. After answering the question in different ways, I finally decided the right answer was June 4, 1935, the day I was born. Now, that's a flip answer but it does give one a platform from which to launch any number of oral essays, and it is fundamentally true. Some of us are simply more temperamentally suited to liberty than others. We are comfortable with anarchy, the unknowable future, and whatever spontaneous order might develop out of freedom's chaos. We don't feel insecure in the absence of a state-created social safety net and we welcome the opportunities that maximum liberty brings. I believe (based on a great deal of published research by neuroscientists and psychologists) that our temperament is a complex combination of tendencies, or predilections, that are largely innate.

Given a relatively free context in which to develop, and access to the writings of people like Rand, Mises, Rothbard, Hayek, et al., it was a damn good bet that I would find classical liberalism most congenial and certainly preferable to the New Deal philosophy that prevailed when I was a kid. Indeed, I can recall that during my adolescent years, long before encountering libertarian writing, whenever political discussions arose in school or among my young friends, I invariably analyzed my way to positions that I now recognize as libertarian. It all seemed sensible to me at the time, though I was no doubt perceived as politically loony, hopelessly so, by my teachers and classmates.

After two years in the U.S. Army, a couple of years of undergraduate study as an English major, getting married and starting a family, I found myself on the Los Angeles City Fire Department as a fire fighter. I had for years been enjoying science fiction and someone recommended *Atlas Shrugged*, a novel set in the future. As with many libertarians, *Atlas* was one “Aha!” experience after another for me. Not everyone liked it. An LAFD Battalion Chief saw my copy and commented that it was the worst book he had ever read. We discussed it a bit and it emerged that he viewed all the Rand heroes as villains and Rand’s villains as victims of the horrible Rearden, Galt, et al. Dagny was “that broad who slept with everybody.” So, even though I was delighted to find an author who so eloquently stated the case for liberty and humanity, I was also aware that Rand and I belonged to a very small minority.

In the early sixties, Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden began publishing *The Objectivist Newsletter*. It was a lifeline of sanity that I read avidly each month. It must have been there that Rand recommended Mises’s *Human Action*. I bought it and dove in. Now, this is weird. Without any formal education in economics, I loved that book. The experience of learning so much in a conversation with a great mentor was exhilarating. I was most impressed by its logical order. Over and over again, as I read, a question would arise in my mind and Mises would address that question in the next paragraph. Realizing that I could learn much of value from further study in economics, I sought out other authors. And that’s how I first found Rothbard’s *Man, Economy, and State*. The more I read, the more I was motivated to return to my formal education. My preference would have been to study economics, but I already had two years invested as an English major so, pragmatically, I decided to finish that course of study and go on to law school. With a wife and three kids, it was the right decision.

During the completion of undergraduate studies at UCLA, I did take some economics courses. What I had learned from Mises, Rothbard, and Hayek helped me in critiquing the Keynesian pap contained in the standard texts such as Samuelson. UCLA’s economics department had not yet become the market-oriented school that developed later. The questions I raised in class frequently puzzled the professors who seemed eager to move on without dealing with them. Maybe they were just dumb questions. Nah! But, by comparison to economics, the silliness encountered in the humanities classes was really entertaining. I took a class entitled Intellectual History of the U.S., in which most of the readings were Marxist oriented. Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* was representative. I recall the professor making a big deal about Little Orphan Annie being the last fascist comic strip. But, I digress.

My time at UCLA was interrupted somewhat by Barry Goldwater’s 1964 Presidential Campaign. Rand was a big Goldwater supporter and that influenced me. My wife and I

got very involved in the campaign and that took a bite out my studies, probably slowing my graduation by a semester. I also continued my reading, including Mises's *Socialism, Omnipotent Government*, and *The Anti-Capitalist Mentality*, and more Rothbard, including *Power and Market* and *America's Great Depression*. Finally, I graduated in 1966 and entered USC Law School that fall.

During the sixties, Rand, Branden and the Objectivists were a big factor in my libertarian education, although they didn't call themselves libertarians. Living in Southern California, I could not attend the New York-based Nathaniel Branden Institute lectures until they came out on tape. Some may recall the way that was done. An authorized agent of NBI would rent a space and make contact with the usual suspects who could then sign up to attend the taped lectures. It was valuable education, but the meetings were deadly serious. Some of us would gather afterward for coffee and further discussion. I recall that a friend and I, neither of the deadly-serious persuasion, had fun, enjoyable discussions, with copious laughter. Others were offended by our lack of seriousness. That made it even funnier. All in all a very positive experience.

Another positive influence was the local newspaper, the *Santa Ana Register*, published by R.C. Hoiles, about as hardcore a libertarian as one could find. For example, during World War II he editorialized against the internment of Japanese Americans, a truly courageous stand. Lincoln would have jailed him. The *Register's* editorial policy was pure libertarian. My public school teacher friends were appalled that I liked the paper. R.C. Hoiles is gone now, but he remains one of my heroes, and what is now the *Orange County Register*, continues to hew to the libertarian line editorially.

I did meet Rand, Nathaniel, and Barbara Branden sometime about 1965. That would have made me about 30 at the time. They were the main attraction at a major Objectivist event in Los Angeles and I was a Senior Fire Inspector with the L.A. Fire Department with responsibility for public assemblages. So I showed up at their event in my official role. It was packed to the rafters, with exits blocked and various other life hazards violating the Fire Code. Barbara Branden spoke to me, asking if they could pay a fine and go on with the show. Very New York. I told her that would not be necessary, I was an Objectivist and on their side. We went to work unlocking the exits, clearing aisles, etc., and the show did go on. I had brief conversations with Nathaniel and Ayn Rand during the intermission and was thrilled to meet them and tell them how much I appreciated their work. For me, very memorable.

Many will recall that, ultimately, things went badly in Objectivist-land. Rand and Branden split in 1968 and all Objectivists were called upon to choose sides. Branden came to Southern California and was a guest lecturer in philosophy at USC, having been invited by John Hospers, the new head of the Department of Philosophy. I just happened to be in my last year at the USC Law School and was Editor-in-Chief of the *Southern California Law Review*. I contacted Professor Hospers and reintroduced myself to Nathaniel. Then I arranged for Nathaniel to publish an article in the *Law Review*. Fortunately, it was not difficult for him to produce it. He used a chapter from his forthcoming book, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, modifying it to fit the *Law Review* article format. I considered publishing the article quite a coup, but some of the professors at the Law School were upset, as were

some of the other *Law Review* editors. Delicious. I was the alpha dog with the final call. For me, it also meant a continuing friendship with Nathaniel Branden, which I cherish.

The late sixties and early seventies were a very busy time for me, getting through law school and then working at a large Los Angeles law firm while helping raise a family. Consequently, I was not really keeping abreast of libertarian movement activities. I was unaware of the formation of the Libertarian Party or of John Hospers' 1972 Libertarian Party presidential candidacy. Then, in 1973, I was contacted by someone who told me that there was a new political party that I should join. He invited me to a founding meeting of the Orange County chapter of the California Libertarian Party. Some of the people there were my old Objectivist acquaintances. Not a large group, you understand, maybe a dozen. I attended my first LP convention the next year, the California LP Convention in Berkeley. What a rush. Here was a room full (maybe 75 or 80) of articulate young people, debating libertarian platform planks. Everyone who spoke sounded great to me. In attendance were some of the early LP heavyweights: Ed Crane, Ed Clark, John Hospers, Karl Bray, and many more I am sure. The Convention nominated John Hospers to run for Governor and I was nominated as the Attorney General candidate. The party did not have ballot status, so we were all write-in candidates.

Here's my favorite story from that campaign. The Attorney General candidates, including me, the write-in Libertarian, were all invited to a debate on a San Francisco PBS TV station. Not long before, the Symbionese Liberation Army (remember them?) had kidnapped Patti Hearst and, as ransom, demanded that the Hearst family deliver food to the poor. The Hearsts sent trucks of food to poor minority neighborhoods where crowds gathered to receive the loot. At the debate, the moderator asked what each of us candidates would have done about the situation if we were Attorney General. I answered that all the people lining up at the trucks were receiving stolen property and I would prosecute them for that crime. The moderator nearly choked. "But, but, but, they are POOR," he squawked. I still think I gave the right answer.

I believe it was also in 1974 that I read Rothbard's *For a New Liberty*. The experience was exhilarating. This is probably the one book of Murray's best suited to be read by people without much formal education in economics or political philosophy. It's a great text for LP activists who need some foundation in the freedom philosophy. It sure helped me in that way.

It is important to understand what the LP was in those early days. The total number of people who really knew libertarianism-Objectivism-classical liberalism, and counted themselves as adherents to that philosophy, might have been a few hundred. But some of them, Dave Nolan being the ring-leader, started a new political party to advance the libertarian philosophy by using the political system to spread the word. (Naïve, yes. But the LP is still going after 30 years.) The LP was a social organization as well as political. At state and national conventions, libertarians could hang out with philosophical brothers and sisters for a few days, make contacts and plans for activism and then go back to the real world where most of them were solitary, isolated lovers of liberty. It was rejuvenating and energizing to be with other libertarians. And damn near all of them were young, which helps explain why I was the LP's Vice Presidential candidate in 1976.

At the LP presidential nominating convention in New York in 1975, the convention had nominated Roger MacBride as the presidential candidate. It got complicated when it came to the VP nomination. One of the leading candidates was John Vernon, a good-looking, articulate, successful restaurateur who also happened to be gay. MacBride opposed having him on the ticket, afraid that the campaign would bog down on the gay issue. (More naïveté. Precious few were going to pay attention to the LP presidential campaign in 1976.) Many of the delegates were furious at Roger and, consequently, no decision was made that day. I was not then at the convention. My friend Karl Bray called me at home and persuaded me to grab the redeye from LAX to seek the nomination the next day. So I did.

Being one of the few people in attendance over 35 (as the Constitution and the LP Bylaws require to be vice president), I had at least that going for me. Also, there was the libertarian cultural divide. The LP had many Objectivist business school—former conservative—coat-and-tie types. It also had the antiwar flower-child free love and dope types. Roger MacBride, a former Republican state legislator, was clearly associated with the former group. I was perceived as more aligned with the latter. Maybe it was because I had long hair at the time (there are no surviving pictures, I hope). Anyway, the delegates apparently saw Roger and me as a balanced ticket and I was nominated.

I took a few campaign trips in 1976 (limited funding allowed very little travel) and spent most of my actual campaign time on talk radio. Very educational. I learned that I didn't know nearly enough to answer all the questions, at least not succinctly and in a way that satisfied listeners. More importantly, I learned that no one had ever heard of libertarianism or the Libertarian Party. In fact, I was told on several occasions that there were three parties in America: Democrat, Republican, and Communist. If you weren't a Democrat or Republican, you were a Communist—no matter what you called yourself. So I learned that we had a hell of a long way to go. The experience motivated me to learn more.

One turning point for me was the issue of money. I had gone pretty far on the road to being 100 percent libertarian, but I had not figured out how money would work in the absence of government to organize the system and make the rules. Murray Rothbard came to the rescue with his pamphlet, *What Has Government Done to Our Money?* Some time later I read Hayek's *Denationalization of Money* and became completely comfortable with the idea of a free market in money. Cool. I was an anarchist.

In 1977 I was elected National Chair of the LP. Let's put this in context. Up until that time, Ed Crane had been the National Chair and an extremely effective, autocratic ruler. It really was his show and he ran it well. Crane had a substantial advantage in that he was tight with Charles Koch and other members of the ultra-wealthy Koch family who were major funders for the LP and other libertarian causes. Charles Koch was on the LP National Committee. But, in 1977, The Cato Institute was founded with Koch money and with Crane as its President. Cato was a new libertarian think tank. Murray Rothbard and Bill Evers joined Cato, Murray as a founding board member who even named the institute. For a few years, there was considerable overlap between Cato and the LP leadership.

But Murray and Crane fell out, and Murray was kicked out. Thereafter Murray referred to the Cato libertarians as "Craniacs." He was good at such memorable labeling and loved doing battle. I also recall him explaining that the LP had been affected by the

Koch money in the same way that the economy is affected by inflation. The Party had an easy money period and grew rapidly until Cato was created and the Koch's directed their funding away from the LP. The Party fell on difficult financial times and its growth slowed. Boom and bust.

As LP Chair from 1977–1981, and thereafter, I came to know Murray quite well, as we were both on the LP National Committee, off and on, until the mid-to-late eighties. Another good friend on the NatComm was Bill Evers. Let it be known that Murray and Bill were the main architects of the LP Platform. Over a number of years, particularly at national conventions (where the delegates debate and vote on platform planks), they did the key drafting and debating. It's a great platform and a powerful tool for educating new libertarians and keeping LP candidates in line. I view what they did to make that platform what it is as a major contribution to our movement.

In 1980, the Koch money came back into the LP, temporarily, with the appearance of David Koch as the VP candidate on the Ed Clark presidential ticket. As a candidate, under the federal election laws, David could make unlimited contributions to the campaign. He anted up over \$2 million as I recall. And with no fund-raising expense. Some great things happened. Probably the most significant was obtaining 50-state ballot access in that election. It set a standard for all future LP presidential campaigns. The bad news was that it was boom and bust again. After the campaign, LP activists had to look into their own pockets to keep the Party going. They weren't used to that and didn't do it very well.

In 1984, I was the LP presidential candidate. The nominating convention was in New York in 1983 and I was a last minute candidate for the nomination (again). We had tremendous help from Bill Evers, Murray, and Burt Blumert. It was the last hurrah of the Cato group (Murray's Craniacs) in the LP. Their candidate, Georgetown professor Earl Ravenal, was viewed as a moderate with good inside-the-Beltway connections. This time I was perceived as the hardline radical, lacking the necessary pragmatism (too damn principled) to be an effective candidate. I won the nomination on the fourth ballot by one vote.

One significant factor in the outcome was Murray's research on Ravenal (who truly was a gentleman and a scholar), which disclosed his membership in the Council on Foreign Relations, among other things. Ravenal's history did not sit well with many of our more right-wing conspiracy theorist delegates. (Yeah, the LP has some of those.) After Ravenal lost the nomination, the Craniacs left in a huff. The good news is that they all have done great work at Cato since and the movement has certainly benefited from that. They have even come back to calling themselves libertarians. For a while they wanted to be known as "market liberals."

The 1984 presidential campaign was a great personal experience for me. Because we were so underfunded (relative to the 1980 campaign), I decided the best strategy was for me to spend my time educating journalists about the libertarian philosophy and the Party. It was still the case that most people, journalists included, knew next to nothing about us, and what they did know was wrong. My objective was to counteract that ignorance to the fullest extent possible, at least with media people. It went fairly well, considering the starting point.

One benefit of campaigning as a libertarian is all the great people one meets. For example, Lew Rockwell invited me to speak at Auburn University, and I think it was there that I first met him. Later, Lew, Murray, and Burt Blumert were all on the LP National Committee, as were I and my wife, Sharon Ayres. That led to some excellent socializing along with doing the Party business. Truth to tell, Murray was a rather quiet person on the National Committee. He was not temperamentally suited to the spontaneous debate format of such bodies. But, he would quietly get his ducks in a row and line up support, usually from Bill Evers, and then come out on the winning side once the dust settled.

In 1988, Ron Paul was the LP presidential candidate, with Lew running his campaign and Murray, Burt, and others playing major roles. I thought it was an excellent campaign, particularly because of Ron's moral persona and his extensive knowledge of the money and banking issues. But, as you know, Ron went back to being a Republican Congressman. And in 1989, Murray, Lew, and Burt left the LP to devote their time to such things as the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report* and the Mises Institute. A few brickbats were exchanged after the parting. But, as anyone who knows Murray, Lew, and Burt might expect, they were successful, and the movement has benefited by their choices and efforts.

One more story about what I did in the war. In the early nineties I was teaching at Western State University College of Law in Irvine, California. There was no course in jurisprudence, so I persuaded the Dean to allow me to create a seminar for senior students. Since there was no available text, I selected all the readings. We opened with an onslaught on the concept of the state with a selection from Oppenheimer's *The State*, followed by Rothbard's *Conceived in Liberty*, the section where he describes the period in Pennsylvania when there was no government.

Later on, when learning about natural law, the students enjoyed relevant material from Hayek's *Law, Liberty and Legislation*. The course covered the history of prevailing jurisprudence from natural law, natural rights (the basis of the *Declaration* and Constitution), positivism, law and economics, and some of the more recent silliness: critical legal studies, black legal studies, and gender based jurisprudence. Most gratifying was the response from the students at the end of the course. Some said it was what they expected from law school and wished they'd had it in the first year. I also asked them which theory they found most satisfying and useful. To one they answered: natural rights. Damn, that felt good. In the great, unending battle for liberty, it was a minor skirmish that ended with a win for the good guys.

At the 2002 LP National Convention in Indianapolis, I was on a panel of old-timers (John Hospers, Tonie Nathan, Ed Clark, and me) who were there to recount stories from the earlier days of the Party; giving the newcomers some institutional history. During my presentation, I took the opportunity to give thanks to some no longer with us. I was grateful to be able to fill these new libertarians in on the profound and lasting effects of Murray Rothbard's contributions to the Party and the movement. He will be remembered. ■

## ON AUTOBIOGRAPHY

ONE OF THE (VERY FEW, perhaps the only) problems I have with the publication output of Murray N. Rothbard is that he never wrote his autobiography. Don't ask me which of his articles or books I would wish not to have been written, so as to leave room for this non-existent autobiography. Given that there are alternative costs of time in the very nature of things, such a work could only have been written at the expense of one or more of his actual publications, on the assumption that the part of his life he devoted to writing is otherwise fixed. I regard this as an impertinent question, and refuse to answer it.

Although denigrated by some, autobiography is an important part of literature. Often, it can even help to make substantive ideas of an author such as Murray “come alive.” For many people, knowing about the life of a scholar—whether a Mises or a Keynes—can focus attention on his substantive contribution. But autobiography is not merely an aid in promoting understanding of and interest in scholarly output. It is also of intrinsic value besides, also inspiring the next generation to greater efforts.

These remarks, unfortunately, cannot rectify matters regarding Murray. He lives, now, only in his own writings, and in the minds, hearts, and thoughts of all those whose lives he impacted. (Hint, hint: while no autobiography of him can now be forthcoming, matters are far different with regard to *biography*. The more of these the better, as far as I am concerned.)

There are numerous auto and biographies, seemingly, written by and about every Marxist, interventionist, feminist, politician, gay activist, etc., known to man, and some not, in this category. One of the problems with libertarians and Austrians, in my opinion, is that we have under-allocated intellectual resources to this end. In order to remedy this lacunae, I should like to make a “modest proposal” to the members of this list: that a bunch of us, followers and students of Murray, resolve to let the world become acquainted, not with the intellectual stories of our entire lives, merely with the beginnings of them. Specifically, I invite all those who have been heavily influenced by Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard, either personally or through their writings, to write up a bit of their autobiography, focusing on how they first were introduced to this philosophy. If we can no longer have this autobiographical information from Murray, perhaps we can from the rest of us, and this can in some small way make up for that lack.

Born in 1941 in Brooklyn, I was brought up amongst Jewish liberals (almost a redundancy) and naturally fell into this mode of thinking. Everyone around me could hardly be wrong, especially to a teenager who had never read, nor even heard about, any alternative

philosophy. I went to grade school, high school, and then college, always pretty secure in these beliefs. In 1963, when I was a senior at Brooklyn College, Ayn Rand came there to give a lecture. I attended, along with about 3,000 of my fellow, mainly leftist students, in order to boo and hiss her, since she was evil incarnate. Afterward, the president of the group that had invited her to campus announced there was to be a luncheon in her honor, and anyone was welcome to take part, whether or not they agreed with her ideas. Not having had enough booing and hissing at Ayn in her formal lecture, I decided to avail myself of this opportunity to further express my displeasure with her and her views.

When I arrived at the luncheon, I found that the group was sitting in “pecking order:” Ayn Rand at the head of the table, Nathaniel Branden and Leonard Peikoff, first along the two sides of the table, and the lesser lights ranged alongside. I was of course relegated to the foot of this august assembly, whereupon I turned to my neighbor, a neophyte as it turned out, and tried to argue the socialist side of a debate against capitalism. He replied that he really wasn’t very knowledgeable about this issue, but that the people located at the other end of the table certainly were. At this point, I betook myself there, stuck my head between Ayn’s and Nathan’s, and announced that there was a socialist here who wanted to debate someone on economic issues pertaining to capitalism. (I was a bit of a chutzpanick in those days.) They politely asked, Who was this socialist, and I replied that it was me.

Nathan very graciously offered to come to the other end of the table with me for this purpose, but he imposed two preconditions: first, I would be honor-bound not to allow this conversation to lapse with this one meeting, but would continue with it until we had achieved a resolution: either he would convince me of the error of my ways, or I would convince him of his. Second, I would read two books he would later recommend to me (*Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand and *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry Hazlitt). I agreed, and we spoke for an hour or so upon that occasion, followed up four or five times more for a similar duration at his apartment, where some of the other Randians took part, including Ayn, Leonard Peikoff, Barbara Branden, and Alan Greenspan.

At the end of this process, I was converted to libertarianism. I devoured both books and became a strong adherent of what I now know as the limited-government libertarian position, or minarchism. I began attending Nathaniel Branden Institute (NBI) courses, first at various hotels, and then in the basement of the Empire State Building.

I was a philosophy major, but when I graduated, I couldn’t decide whether a master’s degree in economics or philosophy would better enable me to learn more about, and eventually be able to professionally contribute to, my new love and passion. Not knowing which was better, I pursued both: a masters degree in philosophy at Brooklyn College, and a masters in economics at City College of New York. I would take five courses each semester, sometimes 3/2 favoring the one, sometimes the other. Finally, just when I was on the verge of almost completing both courses of study, I decided upon economics, and applied to and was accepted by the Ph.D. program at Columbia University. (As a philosophy major undergraduate, I had had only two economics courses; my part-time graduate study in economics, I think, was the equivalent of an undergraduate major in the dismal science.)

During this time, I continued to attend NBI courses, but was quickly becoming disaffected. The economics and political philosophy (*laissez-faire* capitalism) was good, but there

was all too much insisting upon the fact that “A was A” and that Brahms was better than Mozart. I wasn’t much interested in objectivist metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, or culture. Then, too, I had noticed a certain robotic adherence to the hierarchy. Hardly anyone would vouchsafe an opinion in an uncharted area without first checking up the line in the pecking order. The term “randroid” became a reality for me. I continued to attend NBI, since they were still the only people in town known to me to favor free enterprise, but less frequently and with less enthusiasm.

My first year as a graduate student at Columbia University was a disaster. They kept us so busy with work that it wasn’t until late in the spring that I realized that I hated economics and was bored by it. What was taught there under that rubric had very little connection to the content of *Economics in One Lesson*. Most of it consisted of statistics, mathematical economics, econometrics, and matrix algebra. I stuck it out since I had a student deferment from the Vietnam war, and neoclassical economics, as boring and stultifying as it was, seemed far better than that alternative. One bright spot in my first year was Professor Gary Becker. His insistence on applying economics to all sorts of weird things it had not been applied to before (family, marriage, crime, discrimination, etc.) seemed like a breath of fresh air. However, while he had a reputation as a free enterpriser, I was disappointed at the level of his moderation. I remember once arguing with him that the minimum wage should be abolished. His view, in contrast, was that it should be frozen in place, and then inflation would dissipate the real value of it. When I replied that inflation, too, was immoral, and that as long as the minimum wage in real terms was greater than zero, it would create forced unemployment for all those with marginal revenue product below that level, and that was illicit, he looked at me, appalled at the extremist I was already becoming.

In my second year of graduate school, Larry Moss entered Columbia University as a first year graduate student. He immediately saw an affinity between what he and I were saying in class. He offered to introduce me to one Murray Rothbard, but I declined. For one thing, I was far too busy. They were still piling work on us to an incredible degree. For another, Larry made Murray sound like some sort of weirdo, at least to my ears as they were then. Imagine: government not needed at all! Why . . . that would be anarchy. Preposterous.

One highlight of my third year at Columbia was the Industrial Organization course that Larry and I took along with several Randians. The professor, Donald Dewey, started off the semester by stating that there were three respectable views on anti-trust, and called for a show of hands of those who supported each. First were those who advocated much more stringent anti-monopoly laws and penalties. No takers. Second, there were those who opted for the *status quo*. Again, no agreement. Third, and finally, there were some, derisively dismissed by Dewey as free-market extremists, who wanted to actually reduce the coverage and severity of these laws. Much to his consternation, again there was no support. Not a single solitary hand was raised in behalf of this option. Flustered, Dewey finally came up with a fourth alternative, which he said no rational person would defend: complete abolition. At this, the entire class raised their hands, with a grin. Great moment.

The second highlight of this academic year for me was an event that changed my life forever: I finally met Murray. Larry, and his then-roommate Jerry Woloz, ganged up on me. Using on the government the same Hazlittian arguments about profit and loss, the

weeding out process of inefficient entrepreneurs, that had convinced me of the merits of private *vis-à-vis* public provision of all other goods and services, they shook me up on this anarchism business. (I had previously thought, only, that it wouldn't work, that it couldn't work, not that it was morally wrong.) After I met Murray, it took him probably all of 15 minutes to convert me to the same anarcho-capitalist position I have held ever since.

Austrianism was entirely another matter. In retrospect, before I had met Murray, I was nine-tenths of the way toward embracing *laissez-faire* capitalist anarchism; all I needed was a little push in the same direction I had already been going for some time. But with regard to praxeology, this was not at all the case. For one thing, my philosophical training, such as it was, was centered on logical positivism. The idea that truth could be attained in the absence of empirical evidence, seemingly in the face of empirical evidence, was anathema to me. For another, I had had an intellectual investment of several years duration, now, in mainstream economics; I was now writing my dissertation and was well on the way toward attaining the Ph.D. degree. To embrace Austrianism would be to reject all that I had learned in the past half-decade and more. Further, there were praxeologists who were not anarcho-capitalists. When I criticized Murray for having a picture of one such on his wall, Mises by name, as it happened, he only smiled.

Murray was always exceedingly kind to me, tolerant of my foibles, endlessly patient. By now, I was reading *Man, Economy, and State*. I had this weird reaction to the experience of reading the book by day, and seeing the author, regularly, at night. On the one hand, *MES* was wonderfully written, excruciatingly brilliant. To me, the economics of it was as beautiful as Bach, Mozart, and Handel, my three favorite composers, all rolled into one (and this is before I became an Austrian). To compare this to neoclassical economics was to contrast a plough horse with a thoroughbred. On the other hand, this guy, the author of this book, was actually friendly to me, a punk kid who had done nothing to be worthy of it. (He kept telling me to call him "Murray," not "Prof. Rothbard," something that was very difficult for me). How could I ever deserve such treatment? The only thing I could think of was to attack him. If I could successfully criticize him even on one small point, then, perhaps, his treatment of me could be justified; I could then become worthy of at least being in the same room with him.

Fortunately, there were others there, too, to take some of the pressure off, that I had placed on Murray with this sort of behavior. Even saints have their limits, and I'm nothing if not a world-class nudge. Who were the other people I met through Murray, who became my guides, friends, who counseled me through the thickets of *laissez-faire* capitalism, revisionist history, Austrian economics, anarchism, etc? They were, in addition to Larry Moss and Jerry Woloz, Leonard Liggio, Joe Peden, Ralph Raico, Ron Hamowy, Walter Grinder, Fr. James Sadowsky, Art Carol, Bob Smith. Later on, some younger people joined us, including Jerry O'Driscoll, Mario Rizzo, Frank Richter, Larry White, Roy Childs, John Hagel, John Sotirakis, Murray Sabrin, Bob McGee, Dale Grinder, Chuck Hamilton, Joe Salerno, Wilson Clark, Jerry Tuccille, Don Lavoie, Richard Ebeling, Richard Fink, Jack High. Out-of-town honorary members of this group included Roger Garrison, Bill Evers and much later, for a time, Karl Hess. Walter Grinder, in particular, became my mentor in all these things, particularly in Austrian economics. Also important

in my Austrian education was a *Human Action* seminar, where we read and discussed this book chapter by chapter, the most regular attendees of which were Richard Ebeling, Don Lavoie, and myself.

It took me a matter of hours to be converted to libertarian minarchism. It took a matter of minutes, I was so ready for it, I had invested so much into the preliminaries of it, to see the light on anarcho-capitalism. Austrianism took months, maybe years; in a sense, many years later, now, I am still working on it. Such is the story of my beginnings in the movement. ■

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## 10

BURTON S. BLUMERT

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### WHERE DID I GO WRONG?

MY GOOD FRIEND WALTER BLOCK has embarked on a noble project, but by encouraging libertarians to tell their life's story, he risks narratives as exciting as my next door neighbor's slide show, "Two Years in Tibet With the Katz Family."

Also, with many of the libertarians I know, instead of inquiring, "How did you become a libertarian?," Walter might have asked: "Where did you go wrong?"

Yes, viewing the world through a libertarian lens is exhilarating: the realization that all those around you are brainwashed or brain-dead; that they are tax-paying pawns, conned by criminals to march in lock-step, and in desperate need for a dose of truth. Only the libertarian message can set them free. You must help them, one at a time or en masse. This is your mission.

The Mormons only send you out for two years, but the libertarian is stuck for a lifetime.

As his confidence builds, the fledgling libertarian welcomes being on stage and may even become the life of the party. (There was a time when my presence at a social function was advertised in advance. "Come meet Blumert. Some of his views are good for a laugh, but don't get too close as he sprays spittle when agitated.")

"Let's see if I have this right, Blumert. No police, no fire department, in fact, no government at all. You're an anarchist!"

It was clear this fellow wasn't ready for radical Rothbard. The libertarian position on decriminalizing drugs would have been an easier sell, but, alas, I was young and such subtleties were still to be learned.

And then, suddenly things begin to go wrong, particularly in your career and social standing.

At first, they were shocked by your radicalism. With the erosion of time what was shocking became "quaint." Finally, some began to regard you as "odd" (there's that word—see below), and invitations to the good parties dwindled.

The libertarian soon finds himself in a sort of exile with others who suffer the same imprint. This leads to an uncomfortable observation about libertarians.

In many respects they are superior people, but (it's time for candor) libertarians are—how do I say this—well, they're different. No, it's more than that. Actually, they are odd.

Small wonder that our movement attracts whackos and crazies of varying stripe and degree. No, let me amend that and draw a sharp distinction between the whacko and the crazy. A crazy is exactly that. He is nonideological and should be avoided. When avoidance fails, handle him with caution and kindness. The whacko, by contrast, is purely ideological and usually committed to a single issue. He will remind you of that *ad nauseam*.

As an aside: Murray Rothbard, that inveterate New Yorker, had difficulty identifying crazies in California. In Manhattan, the harsh weather made the crazies visible. They lived in cardboard boxes and wore clear plastic sheets as overcoats. In California, almost everybody wears short-sleeved shirts year round.

Another reason to be wary of Californians.

At almost every phase of my libertarian odyssey, the whackos and other fringe players were always evident. See if you don't recognize some of these birds from your own journey.

He rarely attended the libertarian functions in San Francisco but could be found in a freedom bookstore in the Castro district. He wore black and could be heard muttering, "Live Liberty, Live Liberty."

He was also an enforcer. "Do you use the U.S. mail system, or walk or drive on government roads? Do you carry a driver's license?" It may have been easy for him, as he owned no car, never received or mailed a letter, and hardly ever left the bookstore.

There were few others who could measure up to those standards.

On any libertarian journey, an encounter with the John Birch Society was inevitable. Although some of the local-level Birchers are inclined to oversimplify the cause and solution to the world's ills, I was fortunate in knowing JBS founder Robert Welch, and the great Gary Allen was a pal.

Hardly libertarians, these folks always seem to be on the right side of important issues, if not always for the right reasons.

The JBS advocates a vast military state, yet they are rock solid on the key matter of the U.S. maintaining a non-interventionist foreign policy.

If this sounds a bit schizophrenic, well—as Murray used to say—"Everybody is entitled to one deviation."

Tax protests are as American as apple pie. Indeed, America was born in opposition to the looting called taxes. But this guy doesn't seem a part of this glorious heritage. And like the monster in a scary movie, he never stays dead.

Generally, the U.S. Constitution is the basis for their beliefs and the instigation of lawsuits their main strategy. Some federal judge will listen to their arguments, and declare taxation illegal. Unfortunately, when they gain converts, they almost invariably land in jail.

It is difficult for me to generate any enthusiasm about the tax-dissenter movement. The tax-funded court branch of the U.S. government will never threaten its ability to collect taxes.

Yes, there are some whackos in the hard-money world, and a few crooks, but, by and large, these folks are true friends and supporters of libertarian causes and Austrian economics. They revere Ron Paul and Murray Rothbard. 'Nuff said.

How can a libertarian be critical of the Randians? After all, that fervent band spawned so many of us. To some, the Rand influence was part of their adolescence. To others, Ayn Rand's Objectivism is as potent today as it was 40 years ago.

I still enjoy being in the company of committed Randians, but every now and then I encounter some with that 1,000-mile stare. When they're around I feel like it's "Invasion of the Body Snatchers."

These types are typically pro-war. Indeed, they are often so bellicose and strident that they make the neocons look like Quakers. Talk about whackos.

In its early days, I was friendly to the LP. As a modest donor, I got to know many of the functionaries. There was a purity about the whole thing. Never winning or even coming close in a significant election meant that principles were never jeopardized.

In David Bergland's recent, "How I Became . . ." he covers his 1984 presidential campaign and my small role in it, but it was Ron Paul's 1988 Libertarian presidential campaign that brought our little clique of paleos into the LP as activists.

Once Ron made the decision to run, he did so without any reservation. He viewed the experience as an opportunity to remind Americans of their tradition of liberty. He campaigned vigorously in every state, including Alaska.

Lew, Murray, and I made similar commitments to the LP. We became part of the National Committee and were involved with every facet of the campaign, from raising the money, to getting Ron on the ballot. (I believe we missed in two states).

Can you imagine what a dream candidate Ron Paul was for this rag-tag third party? Here was a real-world libertarian, a former U.S. Congressman, a successful medical doctor, an Austrian economist, and a candidate with the ability to raise millions of dollars.

Did the party functionaries welcome Ron with open arms? Nope.

I remember one typical state LP leader (this one in Ohio) who was openly antagonistic to Ron. After all, Ron was an interloper, had never gone through the libertarian political process (like running for dog catcher and getting 1.2 percent of the vote). Also, Ron had served in the U.S. Congress as a Republican. What right did he have to come and usurp the Libertarian Party?

As you may surmise, I don't hold out much hope for the LP. The "two-party system" has turned so ugly that third parties don't have a ghost of a chance.

I used to think it would be better if the LP shut down. Think of all those dollars wasted on political campaigns, dollars that would be better spent educating the masses through teaching organizations, publications, and web sites.

I don't think that anymore. However hopeless, a principled political campaign can expose new people to libertarian viewpoints.

I might even contribute a few bucks to a worthy LP candidate, but PLEASE don't tell me that with more of my dollars, you just might win the election.

There are whackos I haven't even mentioned; the Science Fiction Crowd, the Racialists, and even some Nazis who harass us. Maybe I'll cover them next time. Meanwhile, I am wanted on the phone. Chances are it's a whacko, or at least someone a bit odd. I wouldn't have it any other way. (Not that I have a choice.) ■

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Burton S. Blumert was publisher of LewRockwell.com and president of the *Center for Libertarian Studies*.

# 11

PETER BOETTKE

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## REFLECTIONS ON BECOMING AN AUSTRIAN ECONOMIST AND LIBERTARIAN, AND STAYING ONE

I AM FLATTERED THAT WALTER invited me to contribute to this list of reflections on how one became a libertarian. Like most things in life, there is a simple answer, and a complicated one. The simple answer is that, in 1979, I ended up at Grove City College and was exposed to the lectures and then writings of Dr. Hans Sennholz. Within a very short period, I was a convert to the principles of the private-property order and saw government as more the source of problems than the solution to them. Sennholz pointed me in the direction of the Austrian School of economics, and I decided to become a professional economist. But everyone at Grove City was exposed to Sennholz's wonderful lectures in classes and a few times every year in our morning church obligation. His lectures sang to me from the first time I heard them, and unlike many of my classmates, I loved the tune. So much so, in fact, that I decided to become an academic economist.

Why Sennholz's lectures resonated with me is something I've thought about for close to 20 years. To be honest, his lectures made sense to me because they fit with lessons I had been taught by my father and my athletic coaches since I could remember. Simple lessons about the dedication to individual excellence and the personal responsibility one must take in achieving success or experiencing failure. Competition, I was taught, brings out the best in us, and Sennholz seemed to me to be simply applying that lesson to economic life. My father is without doubt the greatest influence on me. He was not an intellectual, but he was a staunch individualist. He was an independent businessman and a great outdoorsman who was probably more comfortable on the ocean deep-sea fishing than in doing anything else. In his youth he was a standout athlete (tennis and basketball) and then served in the U.S. Army Aircorp during World War II. He spent the last 18 months of this episode in a prisoner of war camp in Germany. While he was proud of this service to the U.S., my father refused to take advantage of any of the benefits due to him afterward (G.I. Bill, etc.) and even later in life when financial hardship hit, he refused to take advantage of any government help available to him. He believed that you were responsible for your own life and should not be beholden to anyone else. I cannot say whether my brother and sister got the same lesson from my father, but that is one of the lessons I got from him—create your own opportunities in this world and capitalize on them. If you fail to capitalize or your project fails, look in the mirror and bear the responsibility. My Dad thought sports taught you these lessons, and that they were vital to leading a successful life. As he often said to me, "I was not put on this earth to praise you, but to raise you." My father respected excellence and encouraged his children to excel in whatever endeavors they engaged in—"The cream will rise to the top." Though he was not an intellectual, my father respected academic success and encouraged it in me.

Academically speaking, I was a late bloomer. I was not very studious in high school and instead devoted myself to athletics, and in particular basketball. I practiced basketball for endless hours throughout my teenage years. The only books I read were basketball stories, and my choice of colleges was limited to those schools where I was expected to play basketball. After graduating from high school, I worked that summer at Lehigh Valley Basketball Camp in Pennsylvania and then headed off to Thiel College in the fall of 1978 with the idea of majoring in education so I could coach high school basketball upon graduation. I found only two courses of value at Thiel College—a philosophy course (which I took pass/fail), and a philosophy of education course where we read Plato's *Republic*. My basketball playing that year ended early in the fall with a broken ankle, and the injury would reoccur in the spring as I was trying to recover from the first break. My first year of college was one of disappointment and disillusionment. As a boy from New Jersey, the rural Pennsylvania town of Greenville did not possess the charm to me that it did to many of my classmates. I didn't find my classes illuminating. Basketball wasn't working out on several fronts—the team was lousy, and my injuries prevented me from achieving goals I had set for myself. My disillusionment with Thiel College was compounded by the death of my maternal grandfather who I was very close to, and my homesickness for New Jersey, family, and especially my girlfriend (now wife) Rosemary. One of the assistant coaches, Glen Salow, who had played for the Christian Fellowship team of Athletes in Action, noticed

my depression and took me on as a special project. He would visit me in my dorm room, talk basketball and cajoled me to attend Bible Study classes with him. He realized well, before I did, that my future would not be at Thiel College. He convinced me to try to transfer to Grove City College and he communicated with the coaching staff of the basketball team at Grove City, and a faculty member he was friendly with through Christian Outreach, Reed Davis. My decision to transfer to Grove City College was solidified when Rosemary decided to attend the college as well. So I transferred in the summer of 1979 and began college over again that fall as a freshman at Grove City College—my grades at Thiel were not exemplary, and except for the intervention of the coaching staff, I never would have been admitted.

Reed Davis taught my mandatory course in Religion and Philosophy, and both the reading material and his engaging style caught my imagination and sparked an interest in me in thinking abstractly and seriously about pressing issues of the day. Through Reed, I was introduced to the writings of theologians and philosophers. We read classic works like St. Augustine's *City of God*, as well as more contemporary works like Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man* (we also watched the video series) and Michael Polanyi's *Science, Faith and Society*. In high school, I found history, biology, and geometry to be of interest, though I didn't exert much energy into pursuing those interests at that time. At Grove City, I started to realize that, if I exerted a little bit of effort to read the material, the material became more (not less) interesting.

I also had my first course in economics. Being introduced to the logic of economics was a truly transformative experience for me. The summer before I headed off to Grove City College, I had held a job digging pools for a short stint (before switching to a job at a factory producing electronic parts for communication systems). This was the summer of 1979, and there was a gasoline shortage. In order to fill up the truck to go on our jobs, we had to wait in long lines or siphon gasoline from one truck to another. During the first week of economics, supply and demand curves were drawn on the board explaining why there was a shortage of gasoline (because of the artificially low government-set price), and I was hooked. Economics explained the world to me. I was also that semester introduced to the writings of Milton Friedman, Henry Hazlitt, and Ludwig von Mises. For Christmas that year, I gave my father a copy of Milton and Rose Friedman's *Free to Choose*. I still was more concerned with athletics and social life than academics at this point. My ankle injuries would continue to plague my basketball playing at Grove City, but during my rehabilitations I discovered a new sports outlet—tennis (a sport my Dad had introduced me to as a young teenager but which I did not take to at the time), and I ended up playing on the tennis team at Grove City all four years and worked at various tennis jobs in the summers throughout college (never again digging a pool, or working on an assembly line). Moreover, I enjoyed an active social life in my fraternity and would serve as president my senior year. As I look back on my years at Grove City, however, it was during that first year that I became overwhelmed by the arguments in economics and philosophy. My career goals shifted over the next few years from high school basketball coach, to sports agent, to academic economist. After a trip to the Foundation for Economic Education in the beginning of my junior year, Sennholz invited me to join his graduate seminar, which I did for the last three

semesters of school. I was the only undergraduate in that seminar as the other participants were all studying under Sennholz for advanced degrees through the International College in California. In Sennholz's seminar, we read Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Eugen Böhm-Bawerk, and of course, Ludwig von Mises. I did my senior year project on the *methodenstreit* and, in particular, the relationship between Max Weber and Mises. During this time, I also started to become aware of the Austrian movement outside of Grove City College.

The Mises Institute was founded during my senior year of college, and a Ph.D. program at Auburn seemed promising. Through the Institute for Humane Studies and in particular Walter Grinder (a Grove City College alumni himself), I found out about the program at George Mason University and of course all of us who wanted to study Austrian economics knew about the New York University program under the direction of Israel M. Kirzner. I also consulted with Bettina Bien Greaves at the Foundation for Economic Education. So after graduation from Grove City College, I decided to forgo law school (which I was set to do to pursue my career as a sports agent) and instead took a job teaching tennis at a local tennis club in New Jersey and prepared for the GREs and headed off to graduate school in economics the following year. Oh, I also got married that summer to my high school and college sweetheart, and this past June Rosemary and I celebrated our 20th anniversary. (We also have two wonderful boys Matthew and Stephen, and live in Fairfax, Virginia.)

By the time I graduated from Grove City College, I was deeply committed to Austrian economics, especially the teachings of Ludwig von Mises, and the political philosophy of libertarianism as found in the writings of Murray Rothbard. Between college and graduate school, I also had a fascination with the writings of Ayn Rand, though even then I was more impressed with her novels than her philosophy. I had read Menger, Böhm-Bawerk, Mises, Hazlitt, Rothbard and, of course, Sennholz. I also read Milton Friedman (who I loved) and F.A. Hayek (who I hated) at the time. My copy of *The Road to Serfdom* still has a broken binding because of when I threw it across my dorm room at Grove City after reading an argument by Hayek on why immunization by the government was an acceptable policy. Walter Block's *Defending the Undefendable* was a particular favorite of mine during my college days, as was *For a New Liberty*. Rothbard's *Man, Economy, and State* was my economics bible even more so than Mises, but that was because at the time I thought of the book as the true 'Mises made easier' version for serious readers. I aspired to understand Mises; I thought I understood Rothbard. Hayek, to me, was a sell out. My appreciation of Hayek as a scholar and as a defender of the liberal order would only come about after reading *Law, Legislation and Liberty* during my first year in graduate school. I followed that up with his *Studies* and *New Studies* collections, and I was persuaded that Hayek was more important as a thinker than I had been giving him credit for being.

In 1984 I started graduate school at George Mason University and worked at the Center for the Study of Market Processes. Richard Fink arranged a fellowship for me and I was assigned to work with Don Lavoie on the Center's publication, *Market Process*. At Grove City College, I would often voice my opinions about policy positions or methodological issues in the social sciences, but except for rare occasions I did not spend any time discussing these topics with my fellow classmates. I would instead state my opinion and then get out of the conversation. The fact that I can vividly remember the few heated

discussions I had with my classmates and teachers is testimony of their infrequent nature—e.g., with R.C. Sproul, Jr. (son of the well-known protestant theologian) about Misesian apriorism, with classmates over the environment in a senior seminar on Values and Technology, and with Dr. Sennholz on the libertarian position on abortion. I was rather opinionated in these debates and wasn't in them to engage the other party, but to preach to them the gospel of truth as I saw it. During a particularly heated debate with my parents one time while driving, my father pulled the car over and looked at me and simply said, "Who the hell is this Professor Rothbard you keep talking about?" I replied that he was a professor at Columbia (I didn't know he just received his degree from there) and my father said something like, "It figures, only someone at Columbia could think such crazy thoughts." On another occasion, I told my future father-in-law that FDR was the worst president and that it was because of him and the people that voted for him that my generation had their liberties increasingly stripped away. As you can imagine, no matter how correct I might have been in my stance, these sorts of debate tactics were not very successful. I had neatly divided the world into those who were evil, those who were stupid and those who agreed with me.

At George Mason, this would all change. I was surrounded by people who had read more than me, knew more than me, and were more comfortable arguing their position rather than just stating it. I was completely enamored of Rich Fink, who, like myself, was from New Jersey. He possessed a tireless energy and a dynamic personality. I was at the same time awestruck by Don Lavoie, who I thought a scholar of the first-rank (it was his *Journal of Libertarian Studies* article on the socialist calculation debate that persuaded me to study with him at George Mason). My first mentors at GMU, however, were fellow students, in particular, Roy Cordato, Karen Palasek (Roy's wife), Wayne Gable, and Deborah Walker. With these students, I could discuss ideas and learn what the latest arguments were for a free society. Roy and Karen ran a reading group where we read *The Foundations of Modern Austrian Economics*, and they were the original managing editors of *Market Process*, and guided me through the ropes as I took over as managing editor. Through Wayne and Deb I also got on the Cato Institute softball team and through that I met the different libertarian activists downtown—Ed Crane and eventually David Boaz and Tom Palmer as well (though they didn't play softball with us). Through Roy, I met Sheldon Richman. I also was invited by Walter Grinder to attend the summer seminar in Austrian economics sponsored by the Institute for Humane Studies at Marquette University, where I met for the first time Israel Kirzner, Mario Rizzo, Gerald O'Driscoll, and Roger Garrison. It was at this seminar (where I spent much of my time with Grinder and Martin Anderson, then of IEA, drinking beer, playing pool and talking about economics and libertarianism), that I became convinced that I could do Austrian economics for a living. My association with the Institute for Humane Studies would grow closer over the next few years, as I was a summer fellow for two years (including one where Ralph Raico was the program director) and attended several seminars and then eventually became a faculty member in those seminars. Grinder and Leonard Liggio were very influential on me, both in terms of their suggestions of research projects one could explore and the way one should interact with interested students to build an academic community of libertarian scholars. I cannot say

enough about these two men and the work they did for young scholars such as myself in the 1970s and 1980s.

Working closely with Don Lavoie on *Market Process* also put me in contact with all the leading Austrian economists at the time, as I would be reading their books and writing to them to get book reviews or essays to be published in this publication. I was fascinated with the socialist calculation argument since I first read Mises back in my freshman year at Grove City College and Lavoie's 1985 books on the calculation debate, and the application of the Mises/Hayek argument to contemporary public policy was being completed and published my first two years of graduate school. Don became my mentor and close friend. His deep love of the ideas in Mises and Hayek was contagious. Don organized reading groups in economics and philosophy. Moreover, we talked constantly about radical libertarianism. Don's death in 2001 was a tragic loss to his family, his former students, and the community of scholars interested in liberty and Austrian economics.

It was through working for Don Lavoie, and our shared interest in the socialist calculation debate, that I formed my closest friendship in graduate school with David Prychitko. Dave and I did not meet immediately in graduate school, but by the mid-term of microeconomics we became study-buddies and after that we essentially became inseparable. A year later we brought Steve Horwitz under our wings and along with Don Lavoie formed the core of a group who met almost daily to discuss philosophy, politics, economics, and the history of ideas. It was an amazing period for me and one that I have sought to recreate for my own students (however imperfectly) ever since. Dave, Steve, and I took full advantage of our time at GMU in the late 1980s and we studied with James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock, Kenneth Boulding, Tom DiLorenzo, Viktor Vanberg, and Michael Alexeev, in addition to Don Lavoie, Jack High, George Selgin, Don Boudreaux, and Karen Vaughn at the Center for the Study of Market Processes. We also got to know personally Ludwig Lachmann, during his annual visits, and also developed professional relationships with Donald (now Deirdre) McCloskey, Arjo Klamer, Bruce Caldwell, and in my own case, Warren Samuels. These individuals were tremendously instrumental in our careers because they engaged us, not as graduate students, but as colleagues early on in the process of research and writing. As a result Dave, Steve, and I all left graduate school with multiple publications under our belts besides our dissertations, a network of professional contacts in the fields of history of thought, comparative systems, and Austrian economics, and tremendous self-confidence that we were going to make positive contributions to economic science and the broader libertarian project of changing the world.

It was also during our time at GMU that we met Murray Rothbard at several events sponsored by the Mises Institute at its office in D.C. Rothbard was perhaps the most engaging personality I have ever met in academia. Certainly he was the funniest, and also someone who seemed to combine a joy of life with a seriousness of intellectual purpose that is unrivaled in my experience (though Kenneth Boulding shared this characteristic with Rothbard to a considerable extent). By the time I met Rothbard, I was far too heavily under the influence of my professors at George Mason and what I was taught about the way a young Austrian and libertarian professor had to make their arguments within the contemporary academic landscape to be influenced by Rothbard's criticisms of that approach. But I was

not impervious to his wit and charm—and it is this wit and charm, combined with the brilliance of intellect, that I remember from my first reading and then meeting him that I constantly think about when I teach from the writings of the great Murray Rothbard. I was not fortunate enough to have met him when I was totally engrossed in his work as an undergraduate, but I was privileged enough to sit for his lectures on the history of economic thought, spend time with him in casual conversation over dinner one night in D.C., and at a party at Roy Cordato's house in Maryland, to actually debate him in the pages of *The American Libertarian*, see him lecture to a group of libertarians in Michigan, attend his 60th birthday party, and the memorial service for him in NYC after his far too early death. When I first started teaching (and even today), I would listen to tapes of Rothbard lectures and try to imitate his ability to combine theory, history, and jokes to convey the principles of economics to those who are innocent of its teachings.

I finished graduate school in 1988 and joined the faculty at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. At Oakland I had the good fortune to meet Edward Weick, who stumbled into my joint graduate/undergraduate course in economic history the first term I was teaching there. The books I assigned in that class were Robert Higgs, *Crisis and Leviathan* and Mises's *Theory and History*. Ed ate up the material. Ed is a successful businessman in the investment field and possesses a probing mind. During his MBA program at University of Michigan in the 1970s, Ed had to read Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty*, and this led him to study the ideas of the liberal economists, such as Mises and Friedman, and try to integrate their teachings into his practical understanding of the world. From Ed I have learned a great deal about the art of using Austrian insights to interpret the contemporary world of business and politics. Austrian economics is not just books and abstract ideas to Ed, but living ideas that are very relevant to the everyday world. We have stayed close over the years, and he has been a great friend and perhaps the primary reason I have not just succumbed to purely ivory-tower antics in my academic career.

Oakland was a good first job. The department was collegial and put a premium on publishing in the professional journals. I was able to do that and, in 1990, I had the great opportunity to join the faculty at New York University and work with Mario Rizzo and Israel Kirzner. I consider the eight years I was associated with New York University to be my real education in Austrian economics. Grove City introduced me to these ideas, and George Mason allowed me to pursue the study of them, but it was under the watchful eyes of Israel Kirzner that I really learned Austrian economics and classical liberalism. Being at NYU exceeded all my expectations. In 1992–1993, I had the opportunity to spend the year at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University as a National Fellow. It was an absolutely amazing year, as I got to know scholars such as Robert Conquest, Gary Becker, and Milton Friedman and also engage in many friendly conversations with Bill Evers and Robert Hessen. But, it was also during that year that I realized how much I missed not being at NYU with Rizzo and Kirzner. Libertarianism might define my political convictions, but Austrian economics is my passion. When I came back to NYU in 1993, I was determined to make the most of my time left at NYU with Rizzo and Kirzner in learning and promoting Austrian economics. I scaled back my interests in Sovietology and comparative political economy (not completely) and devoted most of my research and

teaching interests for the next few years to history of the Austrian school and the methodology of the social sciences. We started *Advances in Austrian Economics*, a book series with New York University Press under the title *The Political Economy of the Austrian School* and I took over the directorship of the Austrian Summer Seminar (the same program I had attended as a student at Marquette). We also started a senior fellows program at NYU that brought in Joe Salerno, William Butos, Sanford Ikeda, Young Back Choi, and Roger Koppl as fixtures at the Austrian Economics Colloquium on Monday afternoons. The lunches (at Mario's choice of restaurants within Greenwich Village) and the seminars during those years were among the most enjoyable regular intellectual experiences of my career.

In 1997 I joined the faculty at Manhattan College and retained a Senior Fellow status at New York University (and even an office in the department, out of which I edited *Advances in Austrian Economics*). In 1998, however, my wife and I made the difficult decision for us to leave the New Jersey/New York area and relocate our family to Virginia where I joined the faculty at George Mason University. In 1998 I was also named the editor of *The Review of Austrian Economics* by Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Through the generous support of various foundations and individual donors, I have been able to establish various activities at GMU that support Austrian economics and libertarian research. At GMU I have great colleagues to work with in this regard, from Walter Williams, who was the chair when I was hired, to Don Boudreaux, the current chairman; Tyler Cowen and Bryan Caplan are two of the most knowledgeable and interesting economists I know; Richard Wagner, Charles Rowley, Jim Bennett, Karen Vaughn, David Levy, along with James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock, and Vernon Smith all make GMU the best place for someone of my interests to teach and conduct research in Austrian economics and libertarianism. In recent years we have also hired Alex Tabarrok, Larry Iannaccone, and Russell Roberts to add to the GMU staple of economists who make the place, not only by far the most free market department in the world, but also the one with the most variety of scholarly interests and styles of research. Perhaps the best part of GMU is the students we attract to our program. I have had the good fortune to work with an outstanding group of students since coming to GMU—Edward Stringham, Ben Powell, John Robert Subrick, Virgil Storr, Scott Beaulier, Chris Coyne, and Peter Leeson to name but a few of those who have devoted themselves to Austrian economics and are pursuing careers in research and teaching. Others such as Veronique de Rugy (at CATO) have found their home in the policy world and are making a name for themselves in that arena. I also work with the Mercatus Center to develop a research and teaching program in the comparative political economy of world development and globalization. It is an exciting time for all of us at GMU, and we look to the future with excitement and confidence that our cause will win out.

I became a libertarian because of one professor who introduced me to a set of ideas and books that I had no idea even existed before I took his classes. For that I will always be grateful to Dr. Sennholz. I also greatly appreciate those who took the time to nurture someone like myself, from Walter Grinder and Bettina Bien Greaves, who both encouraged me to attend graduate school in economics, to Don Lavoie, who devoted more time than I deserved to teaching me while I was in graduate school; to Israel Kirzner, who spent

endless hours teaching me by example on how to be a professional teacher and researcher. It was because of these individuals that I developed into a professional economist and college professor.

In return, I now try to give back to my students as much as I possibly can. I tell them all that they should never lose their deep commitment to libertarianism, but instead use it as a tool for research productivity. The profession of economics demands that they present an argument at a certain level of sophistication, and I try to convey to them that the harder they are on their own arguments the stronger those arguments will become. They should try to be sophisticated if they want to succeed in this business. But I also tell them constantly that they must never forget why they decided to become an economist in the first place—they must retain that youthful enthusiasm for the ideas of liberty. It is sophistication and enthusiasm that will win this race. It is my sincere belief that we have a great group of young “runners” now entering the race and that future victory is not just likely, but inevitable. ■

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## 12

SAM BOSTAPH

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### HOW I BECAME AN AUSTRIAN SCHOOL LIBERTARIAN

I GREW UP IN FORT WORTH, Texas, in a working-class household dominated by my father. He regarded all Democratic politicians and labor leaders as thieves and voted Republican; however, his political views had little effect on me at the time because they were theoretically uninformed and I saw no bearing on my life of the cupidity of others. His caustic rants did provide a residue of skepticism regarding the actions and motives of politicians that has served to temper my disappointment when appearance usually gives way to the corrupt reality of their lives and deeds.

In general, my father paid little attention to his children or their education, although he allowed my sister and me to read anything we wished. Consequently, I read everything in the house and used his library card to access the general collection of the public library—much to the dismay of library employees who feared for my moral development. To their

credit, they hired me as a library “page” when I was old enough to work there, and I spent the last few years of high school working in the central library. For me, it was like being a chocoholic working in Willy Wonka’s factory.

My reading throughout the teen years was eclectic and self-indulgent. I had no particular direction in life and no real ambitions. I was intelligent and well read (in some things) and was thus tolerated by the more serious kids, but I didn’t share their aspirations for university. When I was a senior, I wondered why my girlfriend was looking forward to Smith College and one of my best friends could hardly wait to begin his first year in “the college” of the University of Chicago. Near the end of the spring semester, a drinking buddy convinced me that the Marine Corps would make men of us and we enlisted together. It was a decision that introduced me to the seriousness of life and, especially, of one uninformed by the life of the mind.

The Marine Corps taught me discipline; it also taught me what it was like to descend to the level of the lowest common denominator and be ruled by the ignorant and stupid. I realized that without an education, it would be the same in civilian life—just less regimented. After my release from active duty and transfer to the Marine Corps Reserve, I resolved to go to university and to find a way to get out of the Corps and out of the ignorant underclass.

*Atlas Shrugged* came out my senior year in high school and several of my friends read it and raved about it. At the time, I was in my Thomas Wolfe period and couldn’t be bothered with a popular-level novel. It wasn’t until the summer before my first year in college that I finally read it. Well, every libertarian romantic (whether you knew you were at the time or not) knows what it was like to read that book for the first time. Crack cocaine couldn’t be better. Suddenly, the whole horizon of my thought expanded beyond any previous bounds. The everyday world became simpler, understandable, and people could be sorted out into the good guys and the rest. My own existence became important, portentous, directed by principle. For several years afterward, I lived in that intellectual context and suffered the comparison with my actual existence.

I worked my way through Texas Christian University in Fort Worth while fully employed at various jobs. I refused to go to a public university and be a receiver of stolen goods, nor did I apply for financial aid because one of the criteria was “financial need.” I applied the litmus test of agreement with Rand and her cabal to weed out undesirable friends and to sabotage my various romances. I wrote Randianisms into every term paper; took taped courses from Nathaniel Branden Institute; became a contract salesman of NBI publications to a chain of local bookstores, etc. I also enrolled in ROTC to substitute a commission in the U.S. Army for my enlisted status in the Marine Corps. At graduation, the Marines discharged me and the Army commissioned me.

My best friend at the time was a physics major, and we discussed Randianism endlessly. I say “discussed” because, as much as we tried, we could find nothing with which to disagree. When NBI courses were offered, we drove to Dallas every week to listen to NBI tapes in a hotel conference room along with a group of twenty or so other “students of objectivism.” The others seemed a bit strange to us for two reasons: first, because the notion of disagreement was not even on their horizon; and, second, because of their pessimism

and “Three Hundred Spartans” mentality. I recall one of the course organizers once saying that in some far distant future someone might unearth a copy of *Atlas Shrugged* and say, “Gosh, there were rational people way back then.” My friend replied, “I hope it’s a copy of *Das Kapital* and they say, ‘Jeez, who could have ever believed this crap!’”

This Randoid period mostly came to an end after I met Nathaniel Branden. As a member of the university Student Forums committee, I arranged for him to give a lecture on campus. My reward was to share a ride to the lecture and have dinner afterwards with the great man himself. Rand’s heroes were tall and athletic, with faces composed of angular planes; Branden was overweight, dumpy, beady eyed. I cut him no slack, asking during dinner how he could allow himself to be fat. He replied that it was “a personal decision.” My naïve, twenty-four-year-old self wasn’t accepting this dodge; Rand had painted a verbal picture of ideal people and I hadn’t found any—even at the top of her social pyramid. I wondered if the whole Randian “movement” was a hypocritical fraud and decided to steer clear of any more involvement with the organized aspects of it.

Needless to say, it was some years before I realized that there is often a disjunction between the world of the mind and that of the conduct, even of some of the most principled people—and that includes myself. At the time, I decided that Branden was a plaster saint, and I became more reflective and more explorative of wider political, philosophical, and economic literature, although I continued to subscribe to Randian publications and to buy and read books recommended in them.

As an undergraduate, I had become an economics major and purchased books by Mises from NBI and the Conservative Book Club. A friend of my family had tried to get me involved in conservative circles, but I hadn’t found it very satisfying. Conservatism seemed too considerate of the *status quo* at the expense of broader political philosophical and free market principles. It was near beer; Randianism was 200 proof. When I met them during this period, Fred Schwartz seemed too much like an evangelist, Russell Kirk was a glowering presence, wreathed in cigar smoke as he pontificated, and “Taiwan Tony” Kubeck was frightening (to a 19-year-old) in the intensity of his vilification of President John F. Kennedy.

I read Mises’s *Human Action* and Böhm-Bawerk’s *Capital and Interest*. Neither made much sense to me in comparison with the contents of the neoclassical and institutionalist textbooks used in my undergraduate program. Nevertheless, my senior thesis attacked the neoclassical, perfect competition model as lacking in competition. It was termed “sophomoric” by the department chairman, and he refused to accept it. Years later, as I read an article by Israel Kirzner, I was amused to find some of the same arguments I had crudely presented in that early thesis.

While a college senior I applied to several graduate programs in economics. I really had no idea where to go, since I wanted to study free-market theory and the Randians had convinced me that it wasn’t taught anywhere except in the NBI course by Alan Greenspan. I had heard something positive about the “Virginia School,” but a respected business faculty member whom I asked about it said the people there were “a bunch of wackos.” I had applied to one program where my best undergraduate economics teacher at TCU had emigrated. It was Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and I was offered a full ride, in contrast to my next best alternative, which offered to consider aid

after my first year. So, I went to SIU-C. The Army agreed to defer my active duty service until after the Ph.D. was completed.

I was miserable. Coursework was the same-old neoclassical model-building done in higher mathematics. At the end of the first semester, I wrote a letter to Alan Greenspan asking his advice on switching to another program. To my surprise, he replied, noting that my difficulties were common among academic objectivists, most of whom completed their Ph.D.s and then continued their education afterward. I stuck it out for two more years, then told the Army I was ready for active duty, and dropped out of grad school.

Most of my three years of active duty service as an intelligence officer was spent in Germany, and it was intellectual dead space. The last year there I decided that finishing the Ph.D., as Greenspan had suggested, was the only option for me. Meanwhile, I had met and married an American opera singer studying in Germany, and when I was released from active duty we returned to Carbondale where I completed the Ph.D. and she completed the master's in vocal performance.

At the same time, I was reading Mises and Hayek with a vengeance, determined to learn some real economics. In my reading, I became aware of the *Methodenstreit* and decided to write my dissertation on it. My director was a Veblenian institutionalist, but an intellectually honest man, who drove me to complete it in a year. After it was accepted, I sent a copy to Israel Kirzner, whose book *The Economic Point of View*, I had read. Israel replied with a letter inviting me to stop by and visit with him the next time I was in New York. Since my first teaching job was on the faculty of Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y., my visit with Israel occurred within a few months. One result of that visit was an invitation to submit a paper for consideration for a Liberty Fund conference on methodology to be held the next year in Newark, New Jersey.

I spent the summer writing the paper, submitted it, and it was accepted. That conference opened up a whole new aspect of existence for me. By the end of it, I knew that I was a libertarian and was no longer intellectually alone in this world. I also knew that I had broken out of Randoidism and could think and argue on my own with a rather richly varying spectrum of personalities and beliefs. I recall one session where a participant referred to Rand's epistemological writings as "painstakingly careful." David Ramsay Steele retorted, "If Ayn Rand's epistemological writings can be described as 'painstakingly careful', then I suppose her political writing could be described as 'softly persuasive', and her novels—such as *Atlas Shrugged*—as 'subtly evocative'." I laughed with many others as I realized how clearly David had hit the mark. I still believe that Rand's—and Aristotelian—epistemological views are correct in the main, but hers are hardly "painstakingly careful." Nor are they scholarly, in that she fails to reference the literature on which she draws, so one can hardly turn to it for a fuller understanding and clues for extension. The same is true of her writing on other subjects. Good, but limited, and limiting if treated as catechism.

The Newark conference was followed by other invitations over the next few years that allowed me to meet and converse with most of the main figures in academic Austrian economics and libertarianism in general. For this, I will be forever grateful to Liberty Fund, and to Israel Kirzner in particular. On one occasion, I made Friedrich Hayek mad enough

to glare at me and, despite our generally congenial acquaintanceship, Murray Rothbard once wrote me a scathing letter in response to an early paper on Mises. From Hamilton I moved to Western Maryland College, then to Pace University and, finally, to the University of Dallas in 1981, where I remain. My own research has not followed a consistent line over the past twenty years, although I've recently returned to Austrian topics. Seven years ago, a by-pass operation reminded me of the fragility of life and reawakened my desire to make positive contributions to the advancement of Austrian School thought. I intend to devote the next twenty years to doing so. ■

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## 13

HARDY BOUILLON

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### BECOMING A LIBERTARIAN

UNTIL 1983, I WAS ALMOST untouched by political philosophy. Growing up in a small town in the geographical triangle of France, Germany, and Luxembourg, I hated borders, because the customs officers always gave us children a hard time when we had forgotten our passports or had smuggled two packages of coffee from Luxembourg back home to Germany. My family had relatives in France and Luxembourg. As a consequence, I did not develop strong nationalist feelings, but grew up with that down-to-earth approach of tolerance and diversity that was typical of the Saarland. As my grandmother used to say: "Everybody wants to live." This was her personal way of expressing the axiom of self-ownership, I guess.

During the summer term of 1983, I stepped for the first time into one of Professor Gerard Radnitzky's classes. Among students, he had a reputation of talking in almost incomprehensible methodological jargon and being extremely conservative. In other words: the average student avoided his classes. (By the way, students at Trier University felt obliged to cultivate at least a soft Marxist attitude, because this most disastrous of all political philosophers was born in Trier.) However, I became interested in the subject of Radnitzky's class: social justice. At that time, I could not believe that anyone, however conservative, would question that social justice exists and has to exist. But this tremendously charming professor with his slight Southern Moravian/Viennese accent, who constantly switched

between German and English, gently smiled while explaining Hayek's thesis that social justice is confusing categories and thus a mistake.

My soul was in trouble, but after all, *that* was the kind of intellectual challenge I missed for so many years at Trier University, where most philosophy professors taught history of philosophy rather than philosophy itself. Gerard Radnitzky was different. His analytical background and his logical rigor were refreshing. This class made me do a *volte-face*.

I liked the Popperian/Hayekian approach to philosophy that I found in Radnitzky. Through him, I had the chance to learn from Hayek three important insights. First, the idea of pattern recognition and pattern prediction, along with the insight that the mind is a recognition apparatus that is affected by human evolution and by our own development. It is thus influenced by cultural input. Secondly, there exist two moral systems, that of the horde and that of the abstract society, and the first cannot replace the second without disastrous consequences. Thirdly, the twin ideas of cultural evolution and spontaneous order, i.e. that many ordered structures in society developed spontaneously through human interactions in the process of cultural evolution.

Apart from my great admiration for Hayek, I was disappointed by his insufficient definition of individual freedom. Popper was even worse in this respect, and I developed my own definition. The upshot of my "explication," which claims to be free of inner contradictions, is to look at freedom and coercion as both including offers of two kinds, i.e. that both ask for two different decisions, one on the object-level and one on the meta-level.

In sum: man is a chooser, and cannot but choose. We choose all the time. A constant flux of information impinges upon the individual. He makes a selection according to his preferences; attends to some of it (relevance) and ignores the rest. Some of the selection is explicitly made, some only implicitly or even subconsciously. When we notice that we are faced with a choice situation, we have, in principle, two options: either to attend to the choice offered to us or imposed upon us and hence to change our original plans, or to ignore the choice imposed upon us or offered to us. The individual makes, explicitly or implicitly (sometimes even subconsciously), a cost-benefit assay. Perhaps a simple example may illustrate the point. Walking in the city and proceeding according to my plan, I have to cross a street, and I see a car approaching at a certain distance. Then I have to decide whether to walk or to stop and wait for the car to pass. Implicitly I calculate the risk and make predictions. When passing a market of vegetables, fruits, etc., I may hear a merchant promoting his merchandise by shouting: "apples, oranges, bananas." I hear his shouting, and the first decision I have to make is whether to attend to the offer made and have look at the sorts of fruit he offers, or to ignore the shouting and stick to my original plan of passing the market without paying attention to it. This first decision precedes logically a possible second decision between sorts of fruit, and hence it does so also historically. Of course, the individual may not notice a time difference between the two; the difference may be subliminal. Alluding to the customary terminology in pragmatics and semantics, I labeled the first decision a decision at the meta-level, for short a "meta-decision," and the second decision (choosing between apples, oranges, etc.) a decision at the object level, an "object-decision." An earmark of the "meta choice" is that it

is always a choice between exactly two alternatives, whereas the “object-choice” may be between two plus items.

How does coercion come in? Consider two types of cases. Case A: a robber armed with a pistol confronts me with, “Your money or your life!” If I perceive the threat as a credible threat, if I feel threatened, then I conclude that ignoring the meta-choice, I may run the risk of being shot at (the risk of incurring costs in my private sphere, in this case physical harm). The situation is a clear case of COERCION. The distinction of meta-levels enables us to avoid circularity: if we defined “freedom” as the absence of coercion and stipulated (as we often do in everyday speech) that if the actor does voluntarily what the other party “asks” him, beseeches him, urges him, etc., to do, then the definition would be circular. That the credibility of the threat (as perceived by the actor) is essential we recognize if we consider a type-case B. Case B: the individual confronting the actor with “life or money” is obviously incapable of posing a serious physical threat (e.g., a child with a toy pistol). B is clearly not a case of coercion. The individual approaching the actor offers him a free choice: whether or not he donates some money to the other party.

To summarize, the difference between a case of coercion and a case of free choice (as exemplified by Cases A and B above) is in the artificial costs to be expected in case of a negative meta-decision (when ignoring the choice imposed upon the actor).

All this sounds very technical. In fact, it is. Usually, I make myself better understood by quoting Marlon Brando, who, as the Godfather, mentioned that he was going to make someone an “offer he can’t refuse.” In other words, refusing the offer would be too costly for that person. This is exactly the type of costs I have in mind when talking of the costs of a negative decision at the meta-level in the case of coercion.

Again, via Radnitzky, I became familiar with the anarcho-capitalist position of Murray Rothbard and Hans-Hermann Hoppe. It was through Rothbard that I began to understand that the distinction between spontaneous and constructive orders, as stressed by Hayek, was less important than the distinction between free and coercive orders. And what I liked most in Hoppe was the explicit attempt to develop a fully coherent, libertarian position.

Of course, the man who influenced Hayek, Rothbard, and Hoppe most had a big impact on me too: Ludwig von Mises. I was and am still fascinated by his crystal-clear style. Think for instance of his magnificent way to explain why interventionism does not work. He needed only a couple of pages in *Liberalism*, and nobody after him ever expressed it better or clearer. Also, the two insights that (a) liberalism was always in favour of everybody and never favoured a distinct group, and (b) liberalism is opposed to both conservatism and socialism, will always remain associated with his name, for me.

In Germany, this view is still “unorthodox,” to say the least. Even historians, who should know better, usually view conservatism and socialism as the two big antagonists and think that liberalism belongs to either of them. Consequently, they interpret economy as a threat to liberty and democracy as its defender, rather than vice versa. Hence, it comes as no surprise that the best history on German liberalism was not written by a native, but by Ralph Raico, whose book *Die Partei der Freiheit* is unique. When he worked on his book, his colleagues usually teased him by asking, “Why are going to write the shortest

history book ever?” Well, the red and brown socialisms erased the liberal tradition in Germany very effectively.

Influenced by Radnitzky, I never saw a convincing argument in favour of natural rights, and believing in Hume’s is/ought distinction, I cannot imagine what such an argument—*per impossibile*—should look like. However, through Anthony de Jasay’s thesis that contracts breed rights rather than the other way round, I realised that libertarianism can operate without the assumption of natural rights. What I also realised is that such a libertarian approach is yet not fully developed and needs to be carefully stated. Nevertheless, the cornerstones are there: individual contracting as expression of individual liberties; a model of a free society resting on a net of individual contracts that lead to a system of multilateral insurances of private property and individual freedom; finally, a coherent definition of individual freedom and private property. ■

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# 14

BRYAN CAPLAN

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## AN INTELLECTUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

IT ALL BEGAN WITH AYN RAND, as it proverbially does. I was in eleventh-grade journalism class with Matt Mayers, my friend since the age of six. The course was the most notoriously undemanding in Granada Hills High School, leaving ample time for free reading. While I devoured Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—and got through *The Brothers Karamazov* and Faust with less youthful exuberance—Matt read *Atlas Shrugged*. One day he turned around in his chair and told me, “Read this part. You’ll like it.” It was Francisco d’Anconia’s speech on money, and I rushed through it in fifteen exciting minutes. But for unclear reasons, I didn’t begin reading *Atlas* until the last week of summer before my senior year. If memory serves me, I raced through its thousand-plus pages in three largely sleepless days.

I would not call myself an instant convert. But I did start what I call “trying on her ideas for size.” When opportunity presented itself—or when I cornered my parents or friends or teachers or random fellow students—I played devil’s advocate for Rand’s

Objectivism. After a couple of months—a long time in the intellectual life of a teenager—I was not playing devil’s advocate any longer. I was convinced that her philosophy was by and large correct.

From there, I branched out to other libertarian works. Rand, of course, rarely recommended anything written by someone other than herself, but some liberty-loving soul had donated a copy of John Hospers’s *Libertarianism: A Political Philosophy for Tomorrow* (1971) to my local public library. While I doubt I would find Hospers’s book impressive today, at the time it was a thrilling read. I had never heard the “standard libertarian arguments” before. Price floors cause surpluses? It was never mentioned in my semester-long twelfth-grade economics course. The minimum wage therefore causes involuntary unemployment? A shocking thought. It was obvious once Hospers pointed it out, but these ideas were never even ridiculed by my liberal teachers. They were unheard of.

Every history teacher I could remember had told me that pharmaceutical regulation was a great blessing, sparing us a generation of Thalidomide babies and God knows what else. Reading the standard libertarian rebuttal—*delaying* beneficial drugs kills far more people than *approving* ineffective or even harmful ones—made my head spin. If I asked my teachers, “Is there *any* argument an intelligent person might make against the FDA?” I doubt one of them could have articulated this retrospectively obvious objection.

As I digested the stock of libertarian insight, I noticed a phenomenon central to my mature research: Most people violently rejected even my most truistic arguments. Yes, I was a shrill teenager, but it seems like anyone should have recognized the potential downside of drug regulation once I pointed it out. Instead, they yelled louder about Thalidomide babies. True, it was not a complete surprise—I had already experienced the futility of trying to convert my family and friends to atheism during the prior year. But I was frustrated to find that human beings were almost as dogmatic about politics and economics as they were about religion and philosophy.

In those dark days before the World Wide Web, it was not easy for a seventeen-year-old to get information about intriguing ideas, much less converse with real-life proponents. But I mailed away for information from the Ayn Rand Institute and the Libertarian Party, and they ultimately plugged me into an array of social/ideological networks. Through ARI I learned of the existence of “The Forum for the New Intellectual,” a monthly Objectivist discussion group that met at a bank in downtown Los Angeles. I began attending regularly. I wound up having little to do with the Libertarian Party—the one “supper club” I attended seemed far too practical!—but one of the members turned me on to Austrian economics in general and Murray Rothbard in particular.

Luckily for me, I took a couple of classes at Cal State Northridge during my last semester of high school. That meant that I had a university library card, which in turn meant that I could check out a mountain of fascinating books in philosophy, economics, politics, history, and psychology. Soon I had read *Man, Economy, and State* as well as *Human Action*. But it was Rothbard’s defense of anarcho-capitalism in *For a New Liberty* that shocked me. It had to be wrong.

I started asking everyone at the Forum for the New Intellectual to tell me why Rothbard was mistaken. (I had already been underwhelmed by Nozick’s response in *Anarchy, State,*

*and Utopia.*) Contrary to the Randians' intolerant image, many were happy to engage me. One, Paul Beard, informed me that he refuted Roy Childs's defense of anarcho-capitalism back in the 70s. Beard immediately ran off copies of both Child's "Open Letter to Ayn Rand" (Childs 1994) and its putative refutation. I was not impressed by the latter, but loved Childs's lucid and to-the-point essay. I even got the skeptical Matt Mayers to read it, and he too was favorably impressed. Two high school seniors sharing a pizza, judging the practicality and morality of anarcho-capitalism—it doesn't get any better.

During the summer of 1989 I finished high school and attended two conferences. The first was the Mises Institute's summer seminar at Stanford University. It was there that I met Murray Rothbard for the first time, still in his prime. I remember his opening lecture, containing the memorable adage that, "The more consistently Austrian an economist is, the better a writer he will be." (He generously appended that you should adjust for the writer's native language!) I did all I could to maximize my time in Rothbard's presence. I still recall the excitement of seeing a draft of Rothbard's latest essay, overlaid with his handwritten edits, and challenging him on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

A year later, a friend asked how I had endured the "Stalinist" intolerance of the Mises Institute's conference. While there were a couple of faculty who brooked no contradiction, it was hardly a pervasive feature of my week at Stanford. I still recall Walter Block telling the eighteen-year-old me to drop "Prof. Block" in favor of "Walter." But "true believer" hysteria did permeate the second conference I attended that summer—the Jefferson School. Run by Objectivist economist George Reisman with the sanction of the Ayn Rand Institute, my intellectual digestion at the Jefferson School was soured by the fallout from ARI's recent purge of David Kelley. (Kelley's original offense was speaking to non-Objectivist libertarian audiences; he sealed his fate with a punchy essay defending "the virtue of tolerance" from an Objectivist perspective. The conference closed with an emotional lecture by Leonard Peikoff on the evil of Kelley and everyone who thought he had a point.

Soon afterward I began my undergraduate studies at the University of California at Berkeley. At the time, I thought of myself as an Objectivist in philosophy and an Austrian in economics. But in both cases, I already had my list of reservations. As my education—a major in economics and a minor in philosophy—proceeded, my lists of objections grew. By the time I left Berkeley, I had dropped both labels. My undergraduate deconversion from Objectivism and Austrianism, though, was nothing like my high school deconversion from Christianity. I rejected Christianity because I determined that it was, to be blunt, idiotic. I rejected Objectivism and Austrianism, in contrast, as mixtures of deep truths and unfortunate mistakes.

Let me begin with the deep truths.

The Objectivists were right to insist that reality is objective, human reason able to grasp it, and skepticism without merit. They correctly held that humans have free will, morality is objective, and the pursuit of self-interest typically morally right. Rand's politics was also largely on target: laissez-faire capitalism is indeed the only just social system, socialism is institutionalized slavery, and the welfare state's attempt to reconcile these poles is a travesty.

What about the deep truths of the Austrians? Perhaps the most valuable, to my mind, was their view—perhaps only implicit—that economists should focus on big questions,

not the picayune minutiae that fill most academic journals. I always roll my eyes when someone alludes to Keynes's hope that economists make themselves "as useful as dentists." The Austrians were right to emphasize elementary economic theory and introspection, and downplay mathematics and econometrics. In the field of industrial organization, they wisely rejected the perfectly competitive benchmark, arguing that the crucial issue is not how many firms exist in an industry, but whether government legally hinders competition. In labor and macro, they always remembered the inextricable link between unemployment and excessive real wages. A recurring Austrian lesson is that markets often work well even though economists have trouble understanding how they could work at all. (eBay is a case in point. Fifteen years ago, I bet that 80 percent of economists would have declared it impossible by reason of asymmetric information!)

Now let me turn to the unfortunate mistakes. During my undergraduate years, I spent far more time reading and thinking than writing. But two essays that appeared while I was in graduate school—"Why I Am Not an Objectivist" (by Michael Huemer), and "Why I Am Not an Austrian Economist" (by myself)—ultimately articulated the main objections I formed as an undergraduate.

Michael Huemer was a fellow Berkeley student, and the most powerful influence on my mature philosophical outlook; he is now a philosophy professor at the University of Colorado. You might say that Huemer provided a modern restatement of the Scottish philosophy of common sense, best represented by Thomas Reid, but this seriously understates the originality of Huemer's contribution. In any case, like Reid, Huemer ("Why I Am Not an Objectivist," "Moral Objectivism") maintains that philosophers' great error is to set up inherently unfulfillable standards for knowledge, and then turn to skepticism once they realize that their beliefs fall short of these standards. As Reid puts it:

[W]hen we attempt to prove, by direct argument, what is really self-evident, the reasoning will always be inconclusive; for it will either take for granted the thing to be proved, or something not more evident; and so, instead of giving strength to the conclusion, will rather tempt those to doubt of it who never did so before. (Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, 1872)

I do not think that Rand would have objected to Reid's basic point. She maintained that there were three self-validating axioms—"Existence exists," "Consciousness is conscious," "A is A." But for Reid and Huemer, the set of knowledge-not-in-need-of-proof is more expansive. In particular, it includes some moral truths. It is obvious, for example, that murder is wrong. If someone denied that it was obvious, what argument could convince him?

Rand of course thought she had an argument for the wrongness of murder (see "The Objectivist Ethics" in her *The Virtue of Selfishness*). The more I reflected, though, the more I realized that her "man qua man" standard was question-begging. If Rand did not approve of an action that seemed plainly conducive to one's self-interest, she declared it contrary to the life of "man qua man." The Reid-Huemer route was to openly recognize the wrongness

of murder as an independent moral fact. In the admittedly rare circumstances where murder serves one's self-interest, it remains wrong.

Huemer resolved my philosophical doubts so well that I became less and less interested in pursuing a career in philosophy. I lost all urge to convince other academics that they were not brains in vats. My interest in economics, on the other hand, remained strong. Yet the more I studied, the more disenchanted I became with Austrian economics. Years later, after completing my dissertation, I explained why in my webbed essay, "Why I Am Not an Austrian Economist."

Perhaps the main problem with Austrian economics is that it is not introspective *enough*. Mises and Rothbard insisted that economists could only recognize preferences "revealed in action." Rothbard used this principle to attack several pillars of modern neoclassical economics. These ranged from the most abstract to the most applied. He rejected indifference curves because action always reveals preference, never indifference; he insisted that voluntary trade was always Pareto-improving, because participants demonstrate by their actions that they are better off, while grumbling bystanders do not; and he denied that government action could ever be Pareto-improving, because the need to use coercion proves that at least one person is demonstrably worse off.

What became increasingly evident to me was that the Austrian equation of preference and action is crude behaviorism. I know by introspection that I have preferences that I fail to act upon. And while I do not have telepathy, it is overwhelmingly probable that the same holds for my fellow human beings. Once you grant this principle, the most distinctive Austrian doctrines crumble.

I found the Austrians' resistance to probability theory almost equally objectionable. Mises and Rothbard saw no role for quantifiable probabilities outside of games of chance and actuarial tables. They insisted that it was impossible to assign numerical probabilities to unique events. I unthinkingly accepted their view until the summer of 1992, when Michael Huemer pointed out its absurdity. Probabilities are nothing more than degrees of belief, which we know are real from introspection. (I paid no attention to Kirzner's "Entrepreneurial Discovery and the Competitive Market Process: An Austrian Approach," *Journal of Economic Literature* (1997) objections to probability theory until years later. In one respect, Kirzner is more reasonable than Mises and Rothbard. He recognizes that probabilities can be legitimately assigned outside of games of chance and actuarial tables. But his invocation of "sheer ignorance" strikes me as pure obscurantism. The Mises-Rothbard position is intelligible but wrong; the Kirzner position is plain incoherent.)

Sorting out my views on Objectivist philosophy and Austrian economics took up the majority of my undergraduate reflection. But my interests remained eclectic, and I read widely, especially in history, epistemology, and political philosophy. I eagerly studied the history of Communism while I watched its death throes on the news. Learning about horrific events such as Stalin's terror-famine in the Ukraine enriched my political outlook. This tragedy helped me appreciate the logical conclusion of collectivist ideas: Rand's equation of socialism with slavery was no hyperbole. At the same time, though, knowing the history of Communism helped me realize how much worse our political situation could become. To this day, I am baffled by libertarians who read the newspaper or watch the

news every day, gritting their teeth at the latest petty injustice. Why do they torment themselves so? I save my moral outrage for Hitler, Stalin, and Mao. And for immigration restrictions.

Yes, I lost a lot of respect for Rothbard around 1990 when he reversed his lifelong support for free immigration. If anything ever deserved Rothbard's classic "monstrous!" denunciation, it is our "kinder, gentler" Berlin Wall built to keep people from living and working in the U.S. because they happened to be born elsewhere. Rothbard had always refused to justify one injustice with another, but overnight the welfare system became his rationale for cutting immigration below its already heavily restricted level. When Libertarian Party presidential candidate Ed Clark made the same argument in 1980, Rothbard was outraged, citing it as "probably the greatest (or perhaps the second greatest) single scandal of the Clark campaign":

Note, also, how Clark has been brought to this shameful point of having locked himself into a measured, prepared order of destatization. He has already asserted that we can't slash the welfare state until we have achieved "full employment"; he now adds that we can't have free and open immigration until we eliminate the welfare state. And so it goes; the "gradualists" lock us permanently into the status quo of statism. (Murray Rothbard, "The Clark Campaign: Never Again," *The Libertarian Forum*, 1980)

Rothbard's change of heart was particularly strange because he had previously noted the empirical weakness of Clark's position: "Undocumented aliens, including Mexicans, have not gone on welfare for the simple reason that they would have exposed themselves to arrest and deportation. These 'illegal' aliens, as in the case of most immigrants in the past, have proved themselves to be among the most productive, hard-working members of society. Clark kicks them in the teeth, and unjustly". (ibid)

After being let down by Mr. Libertarian, I was pleasantly surprised by one of his intellectual antipodes, the MIT-trained economist Bill Dickens. As my Econ 1 instructor at UC Berkeley, Bill was already well-known as half of the brains behind the Akerlof-Dickens model of cognitive dissonance; he later won prominence for his research on nominal wage rigidity with Akerlof and Perry, and his work with James Flynn (of the "Flynn effect") on IQ and heritability. Dickens was far from libertarian, but rich in professorial virtues: thoughtful, opinionated, open-minded, curious, and generous with his time. He happily supervised my independent study on the critics of Keynesianism, often spending over an hour with me every week to point me in new directions and challenge me to do better.

In my senior year, I was still undecided about my future. I loved economics, but often hated the economics profession for being picayune, scientific, and statist. Perhaps, I thought, I should go to law school and pursue ideas in my spare time. I kept my options open, taking both the LSAT (for law school) and the GRE (for graduate school).

I finally chose the path of hope and applied to Ph.D. programs in economics. Introspection feels unreliable to me here, but I recall re-experiencing the love of economics as I first read *Posner's Economic Analysis of Law* in 1992. I wound up accepting Princeton

University's offer, largely for the narrowly economic reason that it was the only top-five program to offer me tuition and money.

The other noteworthy intellectual event of my Berkeley education was my senior thesis. Under the loose guidance of Robert Cooter in the law school, I wrote a hundred-page monograph on "The Economics of Non-State Legal Systems." In it, I analyzed privatization in dispute resolution, rule formation, and enforcement. It was, in essence, a synthesis of Posner's law-and-economics with Rothbard's defense of anarcho-capitalism.

Unlike Rothbard, though, I tried to unbundle the various aspects of legal privatization, in the dual hope of better understanding how a free market would work in this industry, and being more persuasive to skeptics.

Serendipity struck the summer before graduate school when an internship at the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung in Germany fell through. Tom Palmer at the Institute for Humane Studies swiftly paved the way for a summer internship in beautiful Fairfax, Virginia. The summer fellows program, directed by philosopher Roderick Long, was a once-in-a-lifetime intellectual experience. The staff at IHS, especially Walter Grinder and Tom Palmer, Roderick Long, and the other fellows made every day a joy.

Lurking beneath that joy, however, was a mighty boost for my long-run career. IHS invited weekly speakers. One of them was Prof. Tyler Cowen of George Mason, who discussed draft chapters of what eventually became his *In Praise of Commercial Culture*. At the after-talk lunch, I steered the discussion to his recent critique of anarcho-capitalism published in *Economics and Philosophy* (Tyler Cowen, "Law as a Public Good: The Economics of Anarchy," *Economics and Philosophy*, 1992). I soon wrote a response and showed it to him, along with my undergraduate thesis. Tyler, a born contrarian, liked arguing with me. He told me to keep George Mason in mind once I finished my Ph.D.

In choosing Princeton's Ph.D. program, I knowingly took the path of short-term pain for long-run gain. Like all top departments, Princeton econ was long on math and short on economic intuition. I tried to make the best of it: do an adequate job in my classes and satisfy my curiosity with free reading. I also plugged into an array of early Internet mailing lists on libertarianism, Objectivism, and anarchism, and played countless hours of Sid Meier's *Civilization*. I kept up numerous email discussions with my friends, including many with Tyler Cowen and literally hundreds with Bill Dickens. All-in-all, the first year was bad, but not as bad as expected. After I married my college girlfriend, Corina Mateescu in the summer of 1994, I felt that everything was looking up for me.

The remaining years at Princeton passed quickly. Applied game theory was valuable, and Ben Bernanke's monetary class was superb. Donald Wittman's *Myth of Democratic Failure* greatly impressed me, making me reflect on the inadequacies of public choice theory. But my hobbies were my passion. I set up my first webpage to warehouse my growing body of writings. I wrote an Anarchist Theory FAQ to dispassionately compare and contrast "left-wing" and "right-wing" anarchism, much to the outrage of anarcho-socialists on the Usenet group alt.society.anarchy. I later became a mini-expert on the Spanish Civil War and wrote the polemical essay, "The Anarcho-Statists of Spain." Thanks to publicity on various leftist websites, it became the Usenet equivalent of a best-seller, getting thousands of hits. I also taught myself Perl programming to set up my first

webbed survey, “The Libertarian Purity Test.” Another feature I added later—ultimately becoming my website’s biggest draw—was the online Museum of Communism, dedicated to exposing the horrors of Marxist-Leninist regimes. (I lost more respect for Rothbard when I learned about his alliances with full-blown communists in the 60s, including the Maoist Progressive Labor Party during the height of Mao’s infamous Cultural Revolution [see Justin Raimondo, *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard*, 2000]. What was Rothbard thinking?)

In my spare time, I did what I was supposed to be doing, writing a “plain vanilla” dissertation on the economics of state and local government. It was an unpleasant experience, but I picked up the basics of academic writing and finished the Ph.D. in four years, so I have no cause for complaint. When I went on the job market, my earlier contact with Tyler Cowen served me well. I had nine interviews, one fly-out at George Mason, and one offer from George Mason. As in marriage, I reflected, it only takes one.

During my first year as an assistant professor, a passage in Rothbard’s biography of Mises strengthened my resolve to use my opportunity at Mason well: “What could he have done, and what would the world have gained, if he had enjoyed the leisure that most academics fritter away?” (Murray Rothbard, *Ludwig von Mises: Scholar, Creator, Hero*, 1988) I knew that I had to navigate between two dangers: (1) failing to publish and thus perishing, or (2) wasting my life writing boring, plain vanilla papers. In retrospect, I struck a good balance. I turned all of my dissertation chapters into articles and put them in the mail. I then initiated new lines of research, tied together by the common theme of voter irrationality. Since I was at Mason, I felt free to be creative before getting tenure.

Donald Wittman’s work, showing how rational voters (in the rational expectations sense of the word) could easily make democracy work well, had already inadvertently convinced me that voters are not rational. I began to wonder: If a voter has no chance of changing electoral outcomes, why *would* he strive to be rational? Geoffrey Brennan and Loren Lomasky’s wonderful book on expressive voting, *Democracy and Decision*, helped me visualize the expansive implications of voter indecisiveness. Inspired by these two works, I began years of fruitful reading and writing. I discovered empirical public opinion research, and learned that political scientists had long since debunked economists’ silly cliché that voters maximize their financial self-interest. I struck gold when I realized that an already-existing data set, the Survey of Americans and Economists on the Economy, had not been used to test for the rationality of voter beliefs—but *could be*. Working with this data gave me my first taste of the joy of empirical research. Too much of the empirical work I saw at Princeton was little more than using econometrics to shoehorn the facts into preconceived molds. As I analyzed the data on economic beliefs, I felt like I was unearthing novel facts about the world. These findings became the core of my book, *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies*, published in 2007 by Princeton University Press.

The underlying goal of my research on voter irrationality, in brief, is to resurrect the 1970s University of Chicago “markets good, government bad” consensus. This intuitively plausible view has fallen out of favor in academic economics, largely because its defenders blamed too much on special interests. The real problem with democracy is not that special

interests frustrate the will of the people. It is, rather, that people are smart as consumers but stupid as voters.

Though my position seems novel to other academics, anyone who knows my intellectual history should not be surprised. Rand, Mises, Rothbard—all three held that statist ideas were false, widespread, and politically influential. This gives them a clean explanation for what is wrong with the world and how to fix it. The problem with government policy is not that the majority is right and ignored, but that it is wrong and heeded. Mises puts it well:

The world inclines to Socialism because the great majority of people want it. They want it because they believe that Socialism will guarantee a higher standard of living. The loss of this conviction would signify the end of Socialism. (Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis*, 1980, p. 462)

Rand is still more eloquent:

Look around you: what you have done to society, you had done it first within your soul; one is the image of the other. The dismal wreckage, which is now your world, is the physical form of the treason you committed to your values, to your friends, to your defenders, to your future, to your country, to yourself. (Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, 1957, p. 984)

While *Atlas Shrugged* is a work of fiction, John Galt's analysis of the cause of social and economic collapse is clearly her own. Indeed, after living through Lenin's takeover, Rand might have longed to say these very words to her fellow Russians.

Both my dissertation and my post-dissertation papers were well received in the scholarly literature. In fact, the papers written to satisfy my own curiosity were more successful than those written to satisfy the expected referee. The more lines I added to my vita, the more confident I felt to branch out to whatever questions interested me. I noticed a connection between my work on voter irrationality and the puzzle of "why poor countries stay poor." So I voraciously read the growth and development literature, and wrote "The Idea Trap." I later became curious about personality psychology. So I learned all I could on the subject, and wrote "Stigler-Becker vs. Myers-Briggs." The intellectual latitude I now enjoy exceeds all my hopes. Indeed, I often delve into subjects purely out of curiosity, as I have since my teens. For example, I consume mass quantities of research on human intelligence and behavioral genetics. It would be good if they gave me new topics for professional papers. But even if they never do, these are areas worth understanding.

The quality of my colleagues immediately rose when I moved from Princeton to George Mason, and has improved every year since. A few of my fellow students at Princeton, especially Jim Schneider, were excellent friends and debating partners. But most of the students at Princeton were what I dismissively call "careerists," and in spite of their high IQs, the Princeton faculty—with the notable exception of Ben Bernanke—were sadly narrow. At

Mason, I found colleagues—faculty and students alike—who love talking about economics as much as I do. Tyler Cowen, Pete Boettke, Robin Hanson, Don Boudreaux, Alex Tabarrok—they are among my favorite intellectuals on the planet. We argue non-stop, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Once we agree, it is time to change the subject.

The one downside of the success of *The Myth of the Rational Voter* (even Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* called it “the best political book this year!”) is that I have been so busy with publicity and debate that it has been difficult to move forward with new projects. But before long, my schedule will get back to normal, and I am already in the early stages of two new books. The first, *The Case Against Education*, will defend the empirical importance of the signaling model of education. Most social democrats argue that the market “under-provides” education; most libertarians argue that government is a bad educator. This book will argue that markets over-provide education, and government subsidies make the problem even worse. My other book-in-progress, *The Selfish Reason to Have More Kids*, combines economics and psychology to make a prudential case for larger families. I plan to write it as a popular book, but there will be plenty of content to excite libertarian readers, too.

When I reflect on the role that libertarian ideas have played in my life, I cannot help but notice an economic paradox: There seems to be no trade-off between doing good and doing well. At least for me, trying to make the world a freer place has turned out to be the best job in the world. I continue to look forward to a lifetime of thinking about the Big Questions and going wherever my curiosity takes me. ■

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ALEJANDRO CHAFUEN

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## HOW I BECAME A LIBERAL

WHEN I LOOK BACK INTO my history to find the reasons I fell in love with liberty, I have to start with my blood heritage and upbringing. My teenage sons have had ample time to mess up their lives, but they already are finding their roads, to liberty, and for good and bad, I see how their parent's heritage is affecting them. Looking back, I see that my ancestors also influenced my views.

My grandparents challenged their world. Antonio Rismondo, from my mother's side, graduated from the University of Vienna, and his proud Genovese and cultured upbringing helped him view with contempt the barbaric motives and customs of the socialist hordes. My Nona, or grandmother, Maria Pezzi, who followed him to my native Argentina, was brought up in Sivenic, a Croatian town on the coast of the culturally rich Veneto region of the Austrian-Hungarian empire. She was a woman of faith until the end. Antonio looked up to culture but down on all earthly powers. He died before I was born. My Nona helped my mother raise my three sisters and me. I have no doubts that her rosaries, usually prayed at 5:00 am, played a role in my conversion from Randianism.

Ergasto Chafuen's individualism was more anarchist, and he was as stubborn as Antonio. My surname is his legacy, and although I worked for liberty in almost 40 countries, I never found a person with the same surname in the local yellow pages. He invested part of his inheritance on graduate studies at McGill University in Canada, and became an outstanding orthodontist. I was young when he died, but I recall many funny stories that described a strong individualistic spirit. I think I still have to atone for his extreme anticlericalism. He used to send the maids to sweep the walkways after nuns passed by. As dentist to the elite, when a snob would introduce himself as "Hello, I am Mr. Armando Urquiza de Vedia y La Fuente" (which in the U.S. culture would sound like "I am John D. Rockefeller the IV"), my granddad would fake a noble posture and with a poker face would answer "Hello, I am Mr. Chafuen de la Zanja" (which translates as "I am Chafuen from the Ditch, the III"). I remember less about his wife Stella Dougall. She also had faith, but this is not the place to focus on the many tragic circumstances which affected her, her loved ones, and that left an imprint on my life.

It is not surprising that, with such an upbringing, I would have a father and mother who, although apolitical, shared the same disgust with the populist culture that has dominated Argentina since the mid-1940s. General Juan Domingo Perón, and all that Peronism represents, had enough bad traits to create disgust in the views of Jackie, my father, influenced by an Anglo-Saxon notion of liberty, and my mother Lydia, influenced by an "Austrian-Hungarian" virtue-based approach.

My liberalism sprung from my anti-Peronist family. It was only a matter of having someone, or myself, come up with something positive to replace the "anti" in my political philosophy. Being always against something, in this case Peronism, is not enough to provide direction.

The first positive, strong, liberal, ideological impact in my life came from Alberto Pavón, the father of Albertito (or Alberto Jr.), who at the time was my tennis enemy and closest friend. We alternated as tennis champions of the Buenos Aires Rowing Club. Our court battles did not hinder our shared views about economics and politics. Alberto Jr. gave me a couple of booklets written by his dad, based on the writings of Juan Bautista Alberdi, the nineteenth century Argentine mixture of Madison-Jefferson, and Ludwig von Mises. Pavon's writings opened the door to this wonderful mansion of a liberty lived under the guidance of truth, which has been my house ever since.

I was only 17 and I started looking for other champions of Alberdi and Mises. My search led me to the *Centro de Estudios Sobre la Libertad* (Center for the Study of Liberty)

which was founded in the mid 1950s and soon after presided over by Alberto Benegas Lynch, Sr. Benegas Lynch had led the center in the direction of the Foundation of Economic Education (FEE) in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York. Benegas invited Mises, whom I never met, and then F. A. Hayek, Benjamin Rogge, Leonard E. Read, and Hans F. Sennholz, to Argentina. Each of the above, in a different ways, had a profound influence on my life. I cherish the gentle and humble demeanor of both Hayek and Rogge, but it was Leonard Read and Sennholz who were to have the biggest influence on my road to liberty.

When I met them, as a late teenager, I had read all the books, or at least 90 percent, of the books published and disseminated by FEE. A small group of Argentines had been carrying the FEE torch in Argentina. To all of them, dead and alive, I owe part of my liberal vocation. I know that I will forget some, but let me list Norberto Carca, Rodolfo Vinelli, Enrique Loncan, Enrique Polledo, Admiral Carlos Sánchez Sanudo, and Meir Zylberberg. They were all much older than me, and the only young liberal accompanying me in the trenches was Eduardo Marty. Eduardo, unlike myself, never left Randianism, and he has been a giant champion of liberty. Although we both cherished our mutual support, we were, and are so confident of ourselves, that even if we would not have met I assume we would have still been freedom fighters.

In 1976 Benegas Lynch asked me if I would be willing to translate for Dr. Sennholz at several private speaking events. I was happy to volunteer my services. During one of those conversations, Dr. Sennholz asked me about my goal in life. I answered that I wanted to be a tennis pro in order to earn enough money to keep disseminating the values of the free society. Hans asked me, “Why don’t you teach?” I laughed. Totalitarians of all different styles had a firm grip on the academic arena. The low pay of university professors was not enough to sustain anyone trying to make a living out of education.

With support from the military and friendly segments of the civil society, Argentines were able to prevent a Communist takeover of the country. The military, not without fault or sin, provided some space to liberals who, from a different angle, shared their same determination to stop left-wing terror. Professors at my Catholic University became “gentler,” and despite my battles with Keynesians, I was able to graduate as planned. I even became a teaching assistant and young professor.

During that time I had become the first president of the Youth Libertarian Circles. I recall that the number of young liberals in the country could be counted with both hands, with fingers to spare. I was able to recommend that all of them be given the same scholarship that I received, thanks to Hans Sennholz via Benegas Lynch, to study at Grove City College in Pennsylvania. That story deserves an entire book, and I will not tell it here. I, as well as other young Argentines, returned from Grove City to teach at the best Argentine universities.

My first “defeats” as a human being, mostly in love rather than tennis, had weakened my faith in Randian dogma. Luckily, I reacted well to defeats, not blaming others, but trying to learn to be a little better each day. My very slow learning process also showed me a huge unexplored reservoir of human capital that not only Rand, but also my great teachers had neglected.

The *Centro de Estudios Sobre la Libertad* published a booklet written by Ayn Rand in defense of individualism. Since that moment, I tried to read everything she wrote. Her novels had a magnetic effect on me. Once I started reading one, I could not drop it. Thanks to her writing, I began reading more philosophy, and became more open to the Aristotelic-Thomistic tradition that dominated my Catholic University. Slowly but steadily I kept finding precursors of Rand who had written similar things to her, but whose views did not contradict my return to my Catholic roots. I kept reading her works even after my return to Christianity. I believe that it was in 1978 when I asked Bettina Bien Greaves and Bob Anderson, then at FEE, if they could give me her address so I could go and see her. They looked at me strangely and told me, “We do not recommend doing this.” I asked why. “Because you wear a moustache, and she thinks that men who have hair on their face are trying to hide something.” I heard a similar story about Margaret Thatcher, but she was always charming and generous with me, even though, apart from my moustache, I am a native Argentinean. Not only that, Ayn Rand changed her surname to the brand of her typewriter “*Rand*.” Since then, however, I began to drift away from some of her views and focus more on some of the ideas I find lacking in “her” philosophy. I remain a strong admirer of her work and influence and, although I enjoy debating some of her more dogmatic followers, when someone attacks her writings I have even more fun defending her. Randians believe in objective truth and, as such, will always be close to my own philosophical “realism.”

In 1980, Dr. Benegas Lynch Jr., who had been influenced, not only by his father, but also by the Guatemalan intellectual entrepreneurs, invited me to the Mont Pelerin Society meeting at the Hoover Institution, at Stanford University. After that meeting, Leonard Read, and Manuel Ayau (then president of the society) nominated me for membership. At 26 years of age, I believe I became the youngest member in the history of the society.

I think I should stop here. At that time I knew it all, or almost all, at least that is what I believed. I “know” much less now, when I am approaching 50, than when I was half my present age. Another time I will have time to write about how so many friends, masters and “godfathers” such as Milton Friedman, Sir Antony Fisher, Pete Peters, Miguel de Oromí, Murray Rothbard, Gordon St. Angelo, Michael Novak, Leonard Liggio, Sir John Templeton, and others, weakened my pride and helped hone, through their words and example, my liberal views.

If understanding liberty helped my sense of purpose, the joy in my life came from a different discovery. More than a discovery, a gift. I learned to see that a virtue without joy is a debased virtue. Leonard Read was fond of quotations and some of them led me to Emerson and Thoreau. Their transcendental beliefs showed me that there was something more than matter. After gaining an understanding of spiritual essence, my search led me to a new kind of understanding. I first fell in love with liberty; I then fell in love with God. Soon thereafter, I learned that they were the same thing, the true Liberty.

Following liberty has been a challenging and rewarding journey. I hope it never ends. ■

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

MY BACKGROUND IS IN formal philosophy. My Ph.D. is from UCLA which, in those days—1960s–1970s—was the top logic department in the world. In fact, I was Rudolf Carnap’s assistant during the last years of his life (the logical positivist of all time).

I’ve been a libertarian since I was a kid, having picked up the old *Freeman* magazine (now *Ideas on Liberty*) when I was 14, and having as one of my parents’ best friends R.C. Hoiles, who created the Freedom Newspapers and bankrolled various libertarian efforts.

I met Murray Rothbard years ago at an Institute of Humane Studies conference at Pomona College, then later saw him at an American Philosophical Association meeting. It was in the 1970s, lots of pro-Marxist sentiment among philosophers, and I was worried about the reaction he was going to get at an APA meeting.

He spoke on an area of ethics and economics, and nobody laid a hand on him, although they tried. He was funny, charming, not at all caustic, and completely in command of all the areas he referred to. He may be the brightest man I ever met—and funny too! I was Hayek’s assistant when he taught a semester at UCLA, and while he was brilliant, and definitely had a sense of humor, he lacked Murray’s warm personality. ■

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## MY PATH TOWARD LIBERTARIANISM

I HEARD, ALMOST BY ACCIDENT, of Murray Rothbard’s *Ethics of Liberty*, back in 1993. I borrowed it from a political philosophy professor, who—perhaps influenced by a few discussions we had concerning the Austrians I had barely heard of—happened to bring a

French translation of this book from abroad. Suddenly I found myself to be a self-aware, full-blown libertarian. That is why I subsequently became interested in people and institutions whom I perceived as sharing my appreciation for Rothbard's *Ethics* and related topics, such as Walter Block, Hans Hoppe, Guido Hülsmann, and others at the Mises Institute.

However, the really important question for me, in retrospect, is why not every reader of the *Ethics of Liberty* immediately becomes a libertarian, or, at least, immediately becomes interested in *For A New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*, and now, in Hoppe's book, *Democracy—The God that Failed*. How can anyone resist becoming a hard-core libertarian after having read these books?

My short answer is that libertarianism is, always was, and forever will be, ultimately predicated on a sort of backward mindedness, i.e., on a minimally selfless disposition, though rarely acknowledged. As William Hazlitt put it long ago: "The love of liberty is the love of others; the love of power is the love of ourselves." More recently, I believe a related point has been made by Jeff Hummel, who wrote of the need for "ideological altruism." But how does such a thing come about?

True, the more praxeologically enlightened one gets, the more the need for such a selfless disposition can be minimized; yet, I suppose some selflessness is already implied in caring an iota for praxeology and what it seems to suggest, almost from the outset. Praxeology can be reassuring, insofar as it suggests that non-aggression works, from a self-interested viewpoint, better than one *might otherwise think*. However, it fails to show that it works better than aggression *no matter what*. A professional libertarian is still likely to be materially worse off than an intellectual body-guard of the state in a government-permeated environment—as a governmental employee candidly pointed out, when invited to attend a debate on money, in our private Mises Seminar.

Ultimately, I find libertarianism ineluctably based on some sort of minimal Christian metaphysics, or a (still recognizable) byproduct of it, that can account for sacrificing some hedonistic self-gratification for the sake of personal virtue, or for finding the quest for discernment and rational, social harmony more appealing than nihilism and the absurd. As Horia Patapievici, a great writer-friend, put it, libertarianism banks on a pre-classical-liberal kind of liberality—that of a rapidly vanishing, fundamentally Christian man. A sort of man classical liberalism has failed to reproduce. In short, libertarianism banks on backwardness. In my case it was my upbringing, family values, environment, etc., that gave me a definitely pre-formatted impetus toward the harmony of non-aggression, in spite of my proverbial personal laziness.

But I would expect no favorable response to Rothbard in an Antichristic cultural void such as the U.S. seems to be rapidly turning the world into, nor within the confines of a merely naturalist, natural-law worldview, especially on a social scale and in the long run. For optimism concerning the latter seems to assume some minimal nicety in people, and I fear no niceness whatsoever can ultimately be assumed to survive by merely natural means. Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamzov saw this, and Eugene (later Fr. Seraphim) Rose beautifully elaborated a similar point in his classic essay on "Nihilism." According to St. Maximus the Confessor, man has two wings: liberty and grace. Similarly, I believe, nature alone may not be enough to keep man turned toward the true and objective good, which

includes libertarianism. In particular, reason, too, may need to be sustained, strengthened, and complemented by divine grace (with meaning and prudence among its corollaries).

This is what I see as essential in retrospect, when I think of how I became a libertarian. Among the many related, factual questions that may come to mind, I will only touch upon some. I first heard of Murray Rothbard's philosophy while doing some unguided research in a French library associated with the French Embassy in Bucharest, as a student in a (rather uninspiring) Franco-Romanian department of political science. I believe Rothbard was briefly mentioned in Jean-Luc Chabot's *Histoire de la Pensée Politique*, or some similar handbook I consulted.

My first copy of *Human Action* came—almost accidentally, again—from an otherwise largely unnoticed book-fair that Andrea Rich (who later became a very special friend), and her legendary Laissez Faire Books, had organized in the early nineties, here in Bucharest. My first personal Austrian debt is to Mrs. Bettina Bien Greaves, who greatly helped me, from 1994 onward, in connection with my interest in Mises, and who also drew my attention to the (old) *Review of Austrian Economics*, that Murray Rothbard and Walter Block edited. I was thus led to the Mises Institute, the unshaken Gibraltar Rock of living Austro-Libertarianism. However, by then I had already read Rothbard's *Ethics of Liberty* and become a libertarian.

The Ludwig von Mises Institute—Romania is our own little domestic, on-going adventure, that grew out of Austrian private seminars and a couple of translations posted on [misesromania.org](http://misesromania.org). Marius Spiridon, our vice-president, was already a thorough-going Misesian, and a theologically sophisticated Orthodox Christian by the time we met. He was also won over to libertarianism by the *Ethics of Liberty* that I had the pleasure of bringing to his attention. He typifies what I'd call a sound man's reaction to Rothbard, and we have seen this also in others, younger and quite promising fellows, such as Vladimir Topan, who has recently started his own private seminar.

My father, a brilliant and incredibly hard-working construction engineer and mathematician, taught me to hate communism, and has always displayed a kind of staunch stoicism, that I could never duplicate, but have learned to appreciate in others. When I suggested that he read *The Libertarian Manifesto*, as a busy man in his late fifties, he, too, was immediately won over. My mother has a gracious and contagious *joie de vivre* and comes from a family of warm-hearted, undemonstratively pious people. She enlivens everything she touches, I might say, and actively helped my Rothbardian endeavors in innumerable ways, such as patiently typing many of my translations.

My paternal grandfather was a storekeeper, a smart gambler, and died deeply religious. My maternal grandfather was a construction engineer (as are both my parents), shrewd investor, great sportsman, fascinating storyteller, helped many people along, and was incredibly loved by many more. Both my grandfathers were successful entrepreneurs in the old days, having started from scratch, though the maternal one also enjoyed some small gentry descent (a church carries their family name, Zana or Zanescu, in his home village, Vladimir).

School was like prison to me, from the first day. I always objected to and ridiculed the dilatory practices encouraged in my young colleagues, from early elementary school on, under communism. My poor old school-master always called me an "anarchist," but I never really understood why, until I came to read Rothbard. He was soft on me, after all,

considering the times. Fortunately, I was good at mathematics, and this made them look the other way in other matters. Those were days of relatively backward, soviet-type socialism, when a fascination for mathematical truth, if no other, still lingered on.

Fortunately, I do not have to rely on my libertarianism to make ends meet, at least so far. Many, if not all, my libertarian-minded Romanian friends have to work for government, or governmentally controlled institutions, to make a living as professional economists or political scientists. Hopefully they make a positive difference there and do OK. But it is an extremely unfavorable environment for sound ideas to develop and spread. However, Tudor Smirna, a founder of the Mises Institute—Romania, has given away his governmental “academic” position, and successfully runs his own business—a teahouse, right in front of the Romanian Presidential Palace. ■

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Dan Cristian Comanescu is president of the *Ludwig von Mises Institute*—Romania.

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ROY CORDATO

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## LIBERTARIAN JOURNEY

I DISCOVERED LIBERTY AS POLITICAL philosophy (as opposed to libertarianism as a movement) during the first Jim Buckley for Senate campaign in 1968. Buckley was the candidate of New York’s Conservative Party. At the time I was actually the Chairman of the Teen Age Democrats in Columbia County, New York. Buckley was interesting because a central part of his campaign was to end the draft, and at the time the only candidates endorsing such an idea were left-wingers. I found this fascinating and began to look more closely at his views and candidacy. This led me to leave the Democrats, which was tough since my father was a long time Roosevelt-Humphrey Democrat and Chairman of the Hudson, New York Democratic Party. One of my high school teachers, a Conservative Party activist, told me about the Young Americans for Freedom, and I joined. I went on to form a YAF chapter in my high school and became very active in the organization. I remember becoming disillusioned with YAF when I realized that they were not as consistently for freedom as their statement of principle (The Sharon Statement) would indicate. While they were officially against the draft, it was never something they emphasized, and on social issues like drug legalization they were at best silent. Oddly enough, one of the things that stands out in my

mind as being particularly disappointing was their change in position on Social Security. Somewhere around 1969 or 1970, they publicly withdrew their position paper favoring its repeal. I never understood this, since I thought the case made in their original position paper was quite compelling and philosophically sound.

I was first made aware of libertarianism as a word and a philosophy/movement in 1971 as a senior in high school. A friend of our family, who was an extreme leftist and activist in New York's Liberal Party, gave me a copy of the now famous article in the *New York Times Magazine* (January 10, 1971) titled "The New Right Credo—Libertarianism." This article mentioned David Friedman as a leader of this new movement and identified the Society for Individual Liberty as "the chief libertarian organization nationally." I recognized Friedman's name, not because of his father (I had no idea what economics was at the time), but because he was a regular contributor to the YAF magazine called *The New Guard*. I proceeded to write a letter to Friedman in care of *The New Guard* asking him about the movement. He responded and told me about Don Ernsberger and David Walter at SIL and the strained relationship between YAF and the libertarians. (As an aside, he warned me that my letter had been opened by YAF before he received it. From that point on I received no more mailings from YAF and my subscription to *The New Guard* suddenly ended. I expect now that that was not a coincidence.) After hearing from Friedman I contacted SIL and joined.

My next step forward came the following year when I became a college student at The Hartt School of Music, which was part of the University of Hartford. At the time, Dom Armentano was a young professor at University of Hartford and was writing a regular column for the school's student newspaper. I immediately recognized his point of view as libertarian and went knocking on his office door. Dom was the first real libertarian I ever met and I was amazed by how radical his views were. He was an unabashed anarcho-capitalist. It was Dom who introduced me to the radical libertarian thinkers like Rothbard, the Tannehills, and Rand. During my four years as a music student, I developed a close relationship with Dom (and his family) and gradually became interested in economics. Two years after I graduated from music school, and after reading a good deal of Austrian economics on my own (most of it way over my head), I entered the masters program in economics at University of Hartford. I must admit that part of my motivation was that I could take Dom's courses for credit. During this period Dom introduced me to libertarian academia. I accompanied him to Libertarian Scholars' conferences sponsored by the Center for Libertarian Studies, then in New York, and to Austrian economics conferences at NYU. Dom also introduced me to the Cato Institute and got me to attend their weeklong conference at Dartmouth (1979). It was there where I met Rothbard, Roy Childs, Leonard Liggio, Walter Grinder, Roger Garrison, Israel Kirzner, Ralph Raico, and a host of others. It is the cumulative effect of these events and my association with Dom that convinced me to pursue a Ph.D. in economics. I realize now that the point of this new career path was not to study economics per se but to position myself to better advance the ideas of liberty. ■

## MY ROAD TO LIBERTARIANISM

I WAS EITHER BORN A libertarian or became one because of my mother's emphasis on honesty and respect for others' property. The first political thought I remember was hearing that "your right to swing your arm ends at the tip of my nose." This was in the 6th grade, and it sounded right to me! The other comment I heard was from our 6th grade teacher who quoted Nathan Hale's famous, "My country right or wrong, but my country." That struck me as misguided; loyalty to one's country does not trump right and wrong! It all seemed so clear to me.

From there into my teenage years, I don't recall any particular political thoughts. By my late teens, I would identify my political position as that of a confused conservative, alternating between getting the government out of such activities as delivering the mail while maintaining that if the naysayers would just allow president Nixon enough power he could fix existing problems.

Then my older brother started talking about Ayn Rand. I would argue against him and her, saying "large businesses will just jack up prices at will," etc. Then in 1973 I got interested enough to read *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*. The book took the logic of free markets further than I could ever have imagined. It was very convincing to me. After a few months of both my brother and I thinking Rand was the only advocate of such things, he discovered Murray Rothbard. I liked the fact that there was a name for our political views: libertarianism. Sounded better, more marketable than something like devotee of Ayn Rand or such.

With my interest whetted, I read other Rand nonfiction, Rothbard's *For a New Liberty*, David Friedman's *The Machinery of Freedom*, and John Hospers's *Libertarianism*. I made the leap from limited government advocate to a pure market advocate. But I've since lost much enthusiasm for the distinction in the intervening years.

I may have been the youngest delegate at 21 and representing Georgia at the Libertarian Party national convention in New York City in 1975. I had the pleasure of meeting and having my photo taken with Murray Rothbard, Roger MacBride, and Robert Nozick. I left a job as a bookstore manager in the spring of 1976 and became a traveling petitioner for MacBride, visiting, I think, at least eight states that year. This was under the supervision of Ed Crane and Bob Meier.

I had majored in marketing in undergraduate school at the University of Georgia, never intending to go to graduate school (I used to say, "I've done my time!"). In college I knew I enjoyed economics classes and took them as electives when possible. I did a few book reviews

for UGA's *Red and Black* newspaper, including those of Harry Browne, Jerome Tuccille, and Noam Chomsky. Then in 1979 a friend just happened to say to me, "You ought to be teaching economics." I liked the idea and so went to graduate school at Georgia State University. During that time I attended the first ever Cato Summer Institute in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 1978 and have subsequently spent a week at FEE and attended several Mises Institute gatherings. Since 1980, I've been full-time at a two-year college and have published a number of opinion pieces on economics issues and a book, *The Concise Guide to Economics*, always from the perspective of Austrian-libertarianism. ■

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TYLER COWEN

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## A SHORT INTELLECTUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG, about ten, I fell in love with the game of chess, largely through watching the Fischer-Spassky match on television. My interest in intellectual pursuits dates from that time. Plus, I had learned to read early, at about the age of three, from my grandmother. I always loved reading, and could always read very quickly. I was always what we today call a nerd, born and raised in New Jersey.

When I was about thirteen, I decided I wanted to read all of the good books in the public library. I started with the Dialogues of Plato, an important early influence on me, though I never agreed with much of what Socrates said. Philosophy was a central interest of mine.

My father was a significant early influence. He had been a Goldwater Republican, but became an increasingly radical libertarian. He brought home some issues of *The Freeman*, and *The Incredible Bread Machine*. I learned some simple things from the former, and loved the latter. More generally, his frank anti-government talk was a big influence on me. He had an amazing ability to coin a memorable phrase or offer an unforgettable perspective.

At the public library I found Ayn Rand; my grandmother also recommended her to me. *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* had a big influence on me, as did *Atlas Shrugged*. Hayek and Rothbard followed shortly thereafter. I was reading much philosophy at the same time, mostly the classics, and a bit later started on history.

When I was 13, my father brought me up to FEE. I met Leonard Read, an unforgettable experience, still the most charismatic speaker I have seen. I learned some Austrian economics there.

At the age of 14 I met Walter Grinder, whom a friend of my father's (George Koether) had introduced to my father and me. Walter was a huge influence on me. From him I learned how it was possible to dedicate one's life to ideas. I will always be greatly in Walter's debt—I don't know how things would have gone if I had not met him. To me, he was simply someone who knew everything. The people who "knew everything" always impressed me more than did the famous or the Nobel Prize winners.

I had two very good high school friends, Dan Klein and Randall Kroszner, both of whom became interested in market ideas as well. They remain market-oriented economists to this day, and the three of us are in constant touch. Their camaraderie and intellectual challenges and discussions have always been a central influence in my life, most of all in these early days, but ongoing as well.

Richard Fink was a key influence. I met him when I was 15, through Walter Grinder. He had been a student of Walter's. Rich taught at Rutgers Newark for a while, and started an Austrian economics program there, along with Joseph Salerno, Walter Block (I recall gobbling up his *Defending the Undefendable* at a young age), Richard Ebeling, and Donald Lavoie. I learned a great deal from all of these people, plus I attended NYU Austrian seminars regularly. I also had early contact with the Institute for Humane Studies. I remain grateful that so many of the people at these institutions were willing to spend their time with a young kid.

I followed Rich to George Mason University, in 1980 (with Dan Klein as well), and Rich built up the Center for the Study of Market Processes. I learned more from Rich than is possible to say, not just about economics, but also about institution building, strategy, personalities, and many other matters. With Rich and Walter I have never had better teachers, though I never had a formal class from either one of them.

By this point, I had long ago decided that I wanted to dedicate my life to ideas, and to writing. I tried to read as much as I humanly could, in as many different areas as possible. This remains a driving passion of my life. I still regard Walter and Rich as my role models. Dan Klein and Randy Kroszner are still my best friends. So, my current life remains very much rooted in this era.

Just about all my books and articles have their intellectual roots in the earlier times, one way or the other. Also, I am Director of the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, which is the re-named Center for the Study of Market Processes, although it is now much larger, so I am following in Rich's footsteps very directly.

That is the core outline of my intellectual life. I haven't mentioned the later events, including my time at Harvard, but it is the early events that are important for understanding what I have been trying to do. ■

## HOW I BECAME A LIBERAL

REMINISCING ON HOW I BECAME a liberal, I am immediately taken back to the days when I was a student at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Being a mother of three whose children had gone away to college and a husband away most of the time on business trips, I chose to keep my days busy by taking continuing education courses in economics. Economics at George Mason were based on free market principles, whereas my undergraduate studies in Economics at the University of Guayaquil of Ecuador in the 70s were Marxist. Most of my professors in Ecuador had been Marxists, exiled from Chile after President Allende was ousted from government. Leftist groups, followers of the Soviet Union and China, were struggling to gain control of the university. One of my main textbooks was "The USSR Manual." We were taught that capitalism was evil and selfish and should be destroyed, but most of the students were working in business firms serving customers to make profits. This was a dichotomy difficult for us to understand.

Shortly after, as a junior student, I attained a Georgia Rotary Student Fund Scholarship to study at a small college in Rome, Georgia. There I earned my bachelor's degree in Sociology. I returned to Ecuador in 1959 and met my husband, Enrique, who was an agronomist. Enrique obtained a scholarship from Alliance for Progress program in Ecuador to do graduate work at the University of Florida. While in Florida I had the opportunity to do graduate work in Sociology because I felt Economics, as was taught to me, did not serve in explaining how the market works and the nature of the relationship between the individual and the state. After my husband's graduation in 1965, we returned to Ecuador. There I lived as a typical housewife, raising three children in a Governmental Agricultural Experimental Research Station. My husband was promoted to General Director of the Government's National Agricultural Research Institute. We moved to Quito, where I worked for a while as assistant to the deputy Minister of Finance. In 1979, my husband was forced to resign from his position upon a change of government. It is commonplace in Ecuador, at the occurrence of a change of government, to oust all past employees and replace them with government party members without regard to qualifications for the job.

Fortunately, my husband's good standing made him worthy of a Rockefeller Scholarship to teach at Cornell University. We left Ecuador and spent a great year at Ithaca. Shortly after, we moved to Fairfax, Virginia, as my husband began a new job working for the Interamerican Development Bank. By chance, the home we chose to rent after searching for homes in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., happened to be within walking

distance of George Mason University. I never would have dreamed of the unintended consequences of this move. Since I lived so close to GMU, I decided to take advantage of this to take economics courses there. I did not intend at that time to follow a formal graduate program, so I enrolled under the continuing education program. My first eye opening experience was a course in Microeconomics taught by Don Lavoie. For the very first time, economics began to make sense. I learned that individuals coordinate their actions in the market following their personal preferences and how freedom promotes the creation of wealth and development. I learned how big government has the power to intervene in the economy and restrict freedom. Don Lavoie introduced me to the most important literature on freedom: *Human Action* by Mises, the *Constitution of Liberty* by Hayek, the work of Kirzner, Lachmann, Rothbard, and many young intellectuals of the Austrian School who participated in the weekly seminars at GMU such as Richard Ebeling, Mario Rizzo, Jerry O'Driscoll, and Sudha Shenoy. I learned a lot from the weekly seminars and from professors such as Karen Vaughn, Walter Williams, Thomas DiLorenzo, Jack High and so many others. Don Lavoie was such a great and stimulating teacher! During the summers, we gather around him in group discussions to read books on hermeneutics, critical thinking, and philosophy. Some of the students that attended these informal group discussions were David Prychitko, Pete Boettke, Steven Horwitz, Susanne Payne, Jerome Ellig, and several others.

When Professor James Buchanan came to George Mason University, I left my continuing education status and applied to enroll as a graduate student, mainly because it was required for taking courses with him. I took his Constitutional Economics and Economics Philosophy course. I found the Public Choice theory complemented very well the Austrian theory because it allows one to analyze the political scenario using the economic tools developed by the Austrians. I remember a very interesting conversation I had with Professor Buchanan after class, accompanying him to the parking lot because he was unfamiliar with the George Mason Campus and I had become a "veteran" after so many continuing education courses there. I fondly remember a group of students asking the Nobel Laureate Professor Buchanan regarding topics on Austrians Economics and him humbly replying, "Ask Dora, she is the expert in Austrian economics."

In 1985, my husband and I chose to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary at Dartmouth College, where the Cato Institute held three-day seminars about liberty and democracy. We enjoyed the lectures of Professors Israel Kirzner, Leonard Liggio and Ralph Raico among others. I learned the principles that form a free society, how the economy works, and the role of institutions in a democracy. While I was a graduate student, I wrote some papers comparing the economic situation of Ecuador with the developed countries and I clearly discovered how government intervention in the economy was the main cause of Ecuador's economic underdevelopment, along with other circumstances that only accentuated the problem, such as the discovery of oil in the Ecuadorian jungle and its nationalization in 1975. Large amounts of capital flowed into the government, which used these funds to increase bureaucracy and expand the government infrastructure. Corruption increased. Business people engaged in rent seeking activities instead of improving their businesses.

Armed with what I had learned in GMU, I felt compelled to take action to help disseminate my convictions regarding what was at the root of Ecuador's economic problems. I asked myself, what can I do to change ideas? When I discussed my concerns with some classmates, they teased me that I would become a free-market preacher in a public park. Fortunately, I discovered there are better ways to promote liberal ideas.

One day, as I walked to class at GMU, I ran into professor Walter Williams. He said to me, "Dora, do you want to attend a Mont Pelerin Society meeting in Indianapolis? It happens I have a grant to invite some students to this meeting." I accepted it and traveled with my classmate Charles Mensah of Ghana; years later, both of us established think tanks in our native countries. At the meeting, I was surprised to see so many people from around the world sharing libertarian ideas. I met for the first time a group of libertarians, leaders of the liberal movement in Latin America such as Manuel Ayau, Ricardo Zuloaga and Alberto Benegas. Attending the Mont Pelerin meeting inspired me to get involved in the promotion of liberal ideas in my country.

While I was at GMU, I had the opportunity to attend seminars at the Cato Institute in Washington D.C. One day, chatting with David Boaz, I told him I was impressed with the work of Cato and commented that I would like to establish a liberal think tank upon returning to Ecuador but I did not know where to start. David told me to contact Alex Chafuen of Atlas Economic Research Foundation. Atlas helps people to establish liberal think tanks all over the world.

At that time Atlas operated on the GMU campus. I spoke with Alex; as usual he was busy and surrounded by books and papers. I introduced myself and asked him for his assistance to start a think tank in Ecuador. He told me he was very busy after returning from a meeting in Mexico and was preparing material for a meeting in Guatemala, which was to be held jointly with the Mont Pelerin Society. He said he would give me an appointment to talk with him next week. But I insisted so much that finally he said, "Come to Atlas for training. First, you are going to assist me in organizing the Guatemala meeting." During the time I spent in Atlas, I had the opportunity to learn about the work of many free-market institutes all over the world and meet the most important freedom fighters. I learned about success and frustrations from these wonderful people in their daily work to spread liberal ideas. I became well acquainted with the Atlas network of institutes around the world that Sir Antony Fisher, the founder of Atlas, helped to establish.

In 1991 my husband retired from IDB and we returned to Ecuador. Upon settling down, I established the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Economía Política, IEEP, in an office from my home. The institute bylaws were prepared when I was in training at Atlas. Our first public event was an International Workshop of Atlas held in Guayaquil. This event was a good initiation for the institute because important business people, politicians, journalist and academicians attended the seminar. Atlas support to IEEP during this decade has been crucial in accomplishing our objectives and helping us to keep in contact with people from other institutes who are doing the same type of work. We have also had received financial support from Foundation Francisco Marroquin and Earhart Foundation for seminars and courses to teach basic economics for university and high school students.

We had organized seminars and workshops to discuss the more important issues affecting the Ecuadorian society, such as constitutional reforms, free trade, the moral basis of capitalism, reforms to social security, property rights, government and corruption, democracy and liberty. IEEP has a monthly publication to spread liberal ideas among business people, academia, journalists and students. Our institute is part of the International Freedom Network and the Fundacion Internacional para la libertad. In 2001, I was elected a member of the Mont Pelerin Society.

When I returned to Ecuador we did not find people who believe in liberal ideas. No other liberal think tank existed in our country. The liberal concept was associated with the traditional liberal party which is really a social democrat party. At the beginning it was very difficult to attract 20 persons to attend a seminar; now we have had 500 participants. A similar number of people receive our publications.

It is difficult to influence decision makers. Progress in the battle for the ideas is one step after another. Your gains are very small, and the frustrations are great when you try to change collectivist ideas. One of our significant contributions was to participate in a campaign to officially adopt the dollar of the United States as a substitute for our local currency for over a century, the sucre. Ecuadorians had lost all confidence in the sucre. The banking system was in crisis. The government had frozen all savings and deposits. The sucre was devaluated 289 percent in the period between 1998 and 2000. A small group of economists and IEEP proposed dollarization as a policy to stop the monetary crisis. In a desperate decision, President Mahuad decreed dollarization in January 2000 to stop the political and economic debacle. IEEP asked Kurt Schuler, a well-known economist and classmate of mine at GMU, to come to Ecuador to give a seminar on how to implement dollarization in Ecuador and also to carry out a study to give the technical support necessary for establishing the new monetary system. After three years of dollarization, all the economic indicators are positive. The economy is growing at the highest rate in Latin America.

Besides Kurt Schuler, another classmate from the GMU days, Dr. Lydia Ortega, has done several studies about the cost of government for us and spent a period as a visiting scholar at the IEEP.

Reflecting back after all that has transpired since my first class with Dr. Lavoie to my present work at the institute, the fact that I became a liberal without any planning catalyzed a series of unintended consequences that have been extremely beneficial to myself, my family and my country. ■

## LIBERTARIAN FROM THE WOMB

TYPICALLY, WHEN I SAY I'M a praxeological austro-paleolibertarian, Rothbardian anarcho-capitalist extremist, Hoppean propertarian, and politically incorrect canonist, people say "Huh?"

The womb was perhaps the birthplace of my libertarianism. After all, I have no Leftist past lurking in my yesteryears, and no prior liberal leanings, unless you want to count the days when I was fifteen, working at Arthur Treacher's Fish & Chips for two-something per hour, and cheering on congressional attempts at raising the minimum wage to three-something per hour. I figured with a raise like that I'd finally be able to afford one of those cool, portable eight-track players. With that kind of reasoning behind me, one can easily absolve me of my earliest economic worldviews.

During my elementary school years, I became an avid reader. This bookmobile thing (a bus turned into a library on wheels) would park on the corner at the end of my street every Friday afternoon, and I'd run to it and ravish the shelves for the next great book. My interests started out with sports and animals, and by the end of my elementary school sentence, my focus had progressed to political biographies, news, and historical events.

I grew up six blocks from 8 Mile, the famous thoroughfare depicted in the current Eminem movie. Detroit was a political hotspot in the nation following the 1967 riot, with the busing issue right on its heels. This issue gave me my first taste of totalitarian government putting the clamp on the right of self-ownership, and thus my individualist radicalism was born.

I had some unusual early influences. In the eighth grade I borrowed an H.L. Mencken book from the city library. I couldn't understand why everybody didn't think and write like he did. Also, I became enamored of the Barry Goldwater legend. I read everything I could about him and the famous campaign that I was too young to have remembered. Despite all his faults and hawkish militarism, I was a Goldwaterite born too late.

In high school, I went through my Russell Kirk phase, absorbing his cultural conservatism and meshing that with my more radical anti-state thoughts. I called myself an "anti-government conservative" because the Libertarian Party was young and had not yet had an intellectual influence on me. In addition, I was oblivious to the fact that there was a process of systematic thinking to libertarianism at that time. Reading Kirk led me to Edmund Burke, T.S. Eliot, James Burnham, and many of the other leading conservative writers.

I also took to watching the TV news, and Bill Bonds, the famous Detroit news anchorman, was my favorite character. It was simple stuff, but his constant assault on

the political elite whetted my appetite for expressing my views more passionately. This is a guy that went on the air inebriated and challenged Detroit mayor Coleman Young to a boxing match, skewed the gay community for its sexual exploits, and berated the political-correctness police.

Unashamedly, I didn't often agree with my teachers, and I thought they were unoriginal and uncharismatic. I felt assaulted by the constant worshipping of presidents, political correctness, and government solutions for everything.

In addition, I followed in my parents' footsteps and eagerly awaited an end to the war in Vietnam. Guys in my neighborhood were getting yanked from their homes to die in rice paddies, and Nixon's promises to end the war always came up empty.

In my 9th-grade civics class, I saw a movie called *The Missiles of October*. (Isn't it amazing how well William Devane mimicked John Kennedy?) My first detailed thought upon watching the movie was how the media and Hollywood continually romanticized government and its leaders. These minions of the regime exalted political leaders, their wars, and their corrupt power trips. I saw that something was very wrong with such idolatry. Besides, that movie seemed to go on forever.

In fact, there was never any government official, in any movie, who ever appeared to be anything less than morally superior, with exceptional leadership abilities and overall God-like qualities. Then along came Oliver Stone to shed some light on that perception.

However, my first full-blown endeavor into politics came in junior high school. Looking back, it was an embarrassing state of affairs. I headed up the *Gerald Ford for President* campaign in the mock election for our social studies class. I knew I was staunchly anti-establishment, and I shunned liberalism, collectivism, and the welfare state—everything I thought Jimmy Carter stood for. I was discovering that I could not argue for government to do anything that interfered in the lives of individuals.

But please don't ask me to explain the Ford affair! A lesser of two evils thing, I suppose.

Next up for me was the Reagan rhetorical machine. I fell in love with Reagan's anti-statist rhetoric and his promotion of the individual as sovereign. He talked in libertarian-populist tones and romanticized a world where a free market would reign. Surely he did what every politician does when they actually get elected, but his early rhetoric had quite an influence on this high school dissident who was seeking legitimate status for her views.

I ended up doing some occasional work for the Reagan campaign—stuffing envelopes and that kind of thing. A turning point for me to get involved in his campaign was the anti-nuke protests of that time, which positively bugged me. I speak not of anti-war nuclear protests, but of the environmental movement where I saw free market haters chaining themselves to gates outside of nuclear power plants, railing against advancing technology, and generally, crusading for an end to the Western way of life.

Another great influence on my early libertarian philosophy was Ayn Rand. Oh sure, she eschewed libertarianism, and the orthodox Objectivists distorted the entire libertarian system; however, Rand's movement always had a profound influence on young, rational minds looking for an intellectual outlet. I thought Objectivism as a whole was corny, cult-ish, and overbearing, but there was much to cull from Rand's work for free markets and individual autonomy. Reading Rand's *Anthem* helped me realize what I was up against.

After Rand's fiction came her non-fiction, all of which I found worthy of reading. However, post-*Missiles of October* viewing, I became cured of any Cold War tendencies. If I ever thought it held any legitimacy at all, Rand's zealous military views cured me of that.

In the early eighties, I remember listening to a local radio talk show host by the name of Mark Scott. Though he is an Objectivist, Mark was and is unapologetically relentless in his fight against statism and societal leeches. I didn't always agree with him, but listening to someone who often thought and spoke like I did gave me even more initiative to immerse myself in my radical passions.

In the course of absorbing myself in the radicalism of Rand, I came upon a reference—perhaps through a footnote—to Ludwig von Mises. Reading Mises and learning of the Austrian School of economics sat perfectly with my worldviews on the free market, which by then had progressed well beyond my hopes for a boost in minimum wage from my fish-and-chips employer.

The war against Iraq in 1991 turned my libertarian views solidly toward a philosophy that saw the eradication of the State as necessary to recapturing freedom from full-blown oppression. During the war, I observed a public that was captivated by CNN's cartoon coverage of smart bombs and its play-by-play of sortie missions. The meaningless yellow ribbons of "support" that hung everywhere during the war were my clue that the masses were reminiscent of sheep going over a cliff. They bought it all, without question, and I knew I was not one of them.

If truth be told, Bush's war saw me go from being a skeptic of wars to being a full-blown opponent of the State and its quest for empire. Following Bush's war, Mark Scott had a gentleman on his radio show: Lew Rockwell from the Mises Institute. My co-workers and I listened to Lew talk for two hours on the evils of the Gulf war, the imperialist State, and the political elite. I was stunned that Rockwell was saying things that were taboo within the collective, mainstream media.

Who was this Lew Rockwell guy and why had I never heard of the Mises Institute? At the behest of a co-worker egging me on, I called the Institute that day, got on its mailing list, and quickly received my first issue of the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*. Hence, my introduction to Murray Rothbard, who became my greatest intellectual influence ever.

Unlike other libertarians who were transformed by great thinkers or particular events, I was not converted by Murray Rothbard's libertarian system. I was affirmed. Reading and learning from his texts taught me three very important things, the first being how to reason through my already principled thinking. He taught me how to mold my thoughts into a consistent philosophical system. Secondly, he taught me that I was not alone in my thinking. I had finally discovered there was more to this movement than the dusty old books I'd been checking out from libraries. After all, I had become distrusting of political processes, and that alone had kept me from ever having any immediate involvement with the Libertarian Party. Finally, Murray's wisdom taught me that libertarianism was indeed radical, and to be radical was not only okay, it was the ideal position.

Reading Murray led me to discover a bevy of influences, including Lysander Spooner, the 19th-century market anarchist; Albert Jay Nock, the anti-State libertarian; Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the acclaimed conservative historian; Frédéric Bastiat, the 19th-century economist; C.S. Lewis, the Christian philosopher; and the great figures of the "Old Right,"

including H.L. Mencken, Garett Garrett, Frank Chodorov, John T. Flynn, and Robert A. Taft. I became an ardent student of the Old Right and its place in history.

Unfortunately, my first excursion to the Mises Institute was not until after Murray died, so I never experienced the joy of getting to know him. But all in all, it was Murray Rothbard and his generation of irrepressible leaders that inspired me to eventually take my own views out into the public to join in the crusade for freedom.

Little of my later adult life has been mentioned, because by that time, I was merely experiencing philosophical growth as opposed to radical transformation. My childhood to post-high school era was undeniably where the groundwork was laid for my becoming a libertarian. Although my parents had only a slight political influence on me while growing up, my Dad is the principled, self-educating type, and a John Galt of sorts. He definitely passed on his rebel genes to this daughter.

My growth post-Gulf War has included friendships with those whom I consider to be some of the top leaders in the modern libertarian movement. Without being surrounded with such magnificent friends and mentors, I doubt that I'd have been prompted to get as involved within the movement as I have become.

All in all, it's hard being on this side of the philosophical fence at a time like this. Where it's entirely robotic and painless to cheer along with the pro-war right, agree with the President's domestic actions, and parrot the standard policy lines, it's another thing to stand up for views that are ostracized by the thugs in power and their media skills.

It takes a bulletproof shell to stand on principle and abstain from reciting trendy ideas for the sake of popular status, but someone has to do it. And at LewRockwell.com we all do it every day. ■

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THOMAS J. DiLORENZO

## ARRIVING AT LIBERTARIANISM

I WAS ALWAYS AN INDIVIDUALIST, probably because I spent my childhood and adolescent years playing competitive sports. I grew up in a small town in Western Pennsylvania where all the local governments were run by small-time versions of the Soprano family. It was understood by all that the only reasons anyone would become a mayor, city councilman,

alderman, or other local political “office holder” was to accept bribes, pass laws and regulations that would financially benefit you and your friends, hand out “do-nothing” patronage jobs to friends and family, or plunder the treasury. Sound familiar? That is what government was for, and everyone knew it. Our politicians may have been a gang of crooks, but they were not liars and propagandists.

As my education progressed, I read more and more literature about how government supposedly existed to serve “the public interest,” to cater to “the will of the majority,” to “save the earth,” “help the poor,” “feed the hungry,” and other absurdities, which created in me a sense of indignation over the blizzard of lies thrown at us by the government and the educational and media establishments.

Almost all of the adult males that I knew growing up were second-generation immigrants from Italy, Russia, or Poland who worked very hard all their lives as laborers, tradesmen, or small merchants. They all had a great work ethic because they and their families were so thankful to have the opportunities that America afforded them. With the advent of the “Great Society” welfare programs in the 1960s, all of these men became deeply resentful of the growing presence of young, able-bodied men and women who were signing up for the dole and receiving free lunches, free university educations for their children, and other handouts at their expense. It was grossly unjust, and it was also obvious to all that the welfare state was causing human degradation by destroying the work ethic and breaking up families. I can still recall how, in the late 60s, my older brother’s best friend divorced his wife, not because they wanted to separate, but because they could collect a larger welfare check that way since they had a child.

My older brother was mugged once during the ’60s and suffered a laceration of his head. The police arrested the culprit but the judge refused to convict him because—and I can still recall his words—that would “create racial tension” in the city. “These people must be handled with kid gloves,” is exactly how he put it. In the 1960s, government was busy destroying the work ethic, the family, and the criminal justice system as well.

I was born in 1954, and only became eligible for the draft as the Vietnam War was ending, but I was old enough to witness how the warfare state disrupted or ruined the lives of some of my older friends and relatives. One older neighbor, who was a great natural athlete and destined to be an NFL quarterback or wide receiver, fled to Canada to avoid the draft and never made much of himself. He had the same kind of athletic ability as Joe Namath, Joe Montana, Tony Dorsett, and Dan Marino, who all grew up within 35 miles of my hometown. There’s obviously something in the water there.

Some of my friends became addicted to drugs by polluting their bodies with LSD and other hard drugs for weeks or months prior to their military induction physicals in hopes of flunking them. Others went to Vietnam and returned with grisly stories of mass killing, but most could not bring themselves to speak a word about their experiences. Their very silence spoke volumes, however.

Quite a few people I know got married in order to avoid the draft. At the time, married men still had a deferment. Most of these marriages turned out to be disastrous.

So, I hated government by the time I was 18, at which point I entered college and discovered some of the libertarian literature that began to put it all in perspective. During

my first semester in college, I took Principles of Microeconomics. My professor used a standard textbook and a book of readings by Milton Friedman entitled, *An Economist's Protest*. It was a compilation of Friedman's *Newsweek* columns. At the time, he and Paul Samuelson took turns writing op-eds in the magazine. I immediately read as many of them as I could, and concluded that Friedman was a genius who had government all figured out, whereas Samuelson was constantly trying to pull the wool over our eyes. I also loved Friedman's clear-as-a-bell writing style and worked at imitating it.

At about the same time, I discovered *The Freeman* in the library and set about reading as many back issues as I could. This introduced me to the whole world of libertarianism and for the rest of my college career I would spend as much time as I could reading some of the great libertarian authors that *The Freeman* had brought to my attention.

I also had a favorite professor who was familiar with the literature of public choice, and so I investigated that area as well. I was so interested in it that I chose to attend graduate school at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, where James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock were on the faculty.

That is where I was introduced to Austrian Economics. Just as my first semester in college introduced me to Friedman and the Chicago School, my first semester in graduate school introduced me to Ludwig von Mises and the Austrian School. The two main texts for the first graduate micro class were *Human Action* and Friedman's *Price Theory*, in a course taught by Richard Wagner. I devoured *Human Action*, hung on every word that Professor Wagner said in his lectures, earned the top score in the class on all the exams, and pursued more of the Austrian literature. This is what economics is all about, I decided while reading *Human Action*. This conclusion was bolstered by the fact that all my other classes consisted of the usual cloud of math and "models" that did not always seem relevant.

The economics department at VPI held weekly seminars with guest speakers, and at the end of the academic year a "big shot" was brought in to deliver a series of lectures over two days. In that year (1976), Professor Wagner was in charge of the seminar series and chose Murray Rothbard as his "big shot" lecturer. There was talk of what a "crank" this guy was, and how his talks would be more entertainment than substance, but in fact they had more substance to them than all the other seminars combined. I decided to start reading Rothbard and am still at it.

There was plenty of exposure to Austrian economics at VPI in the 1970s, but the real emphasis in the department was public choice. This was the heyday of the Public Choice Center, where more than a dozen faculty members were doing public choice research; there was a steady stream of international visitors doing the same and many of the advances in the field were being presented at the weekly Public Choice seminars at the center, which was in the old president's house on campus.

All of my classmates were libertarian oriented, but a few of us were especially hardcore because we were so influenced by Professor Wagner and his introduction to us of *Human Action* and the Austrian School. Professor Buchanan's book, *Cost and Choice*, was also hugely influential among a small core of my fellow students.

I have long been convinced that: (1) the best way to understand how the economic world works is to educate yourself in the insights of the Austrian School; and (2) one

cannot fully understand economics without also understanding the interaction between the economy and the state. That's where public choice comes in and, just as importantly, that's where the work of Murray Rothbard is so important. Murray never hesitated to combine economics, history, history of economic thought, political philosophy, sociology, and statistics to get at the truth—whether he was writing about America's Great Depression, welfare policy, regulation, or any other topic. His relentless pursuit of the truth is what always impressed me most about him, and it is a model that ought to be followed by all libertarians. ■

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MICHAEL EDELSTEIN

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### MY JOURNEY TO LIBERTY

MY TRANSITION FROM A liberal Democrat to a libertarian began in Brooklyn, New York in the mid-1970s when I met Walter Block.

Two of my passions then were chess and Dr. Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT.) At about this time, I met Bill Shoومان through the REBT network. As Bill and I became friends, he introduced me to his REBT friend, Walter, a chess devotee and Brooklynite.

Walter and I began to play chess regularly in his dining room. Between chess games we debated politics. I won most of the chess games and Walter won the political debates. After two years I was a convert. My last liberal pillar was my naive faith that banning guns would reduce crime. It's logical: if no one has a gun, we're all safer, right?

Today, libertarianism is my greatest intellectual passion and has immeasurably enriched my life. I'm continually deepening my understanding of the freedom philosophy, largely under Walter's tutelage. He and I no longer play chess, though we've become fast friends.

Murray Rothbard was Walter's libertarian mentor as Albert Ellis was my psychotherapy mentor. Both were groundbreakers and geniuses in their respective fields. Both had an intense dislike for Ayn Rand. It only seemed fitting, Walter suggested, that we bring Rothbard and Ellis together. He arranged a late night meeting in Al's office with the four

of us. It was a tame evening, especially considering the iconoclastic and opinionated reputation of each. The highlight involved the four of us singing a humorous song Al wrote, a parody of individuals like Rand. The song, “Perfect Rationality,” is sung to the tune of Luigi Denza’s “Funiculi, Funicula” and has as its refrain:

Perfect, perfect rationality,  
 Is, of course, the only thing for me!  
 How can I ever think of being  
 If I must live fallibly?  
 Rationality must be a perfect thing for me!

In 1984 or '85, Walter introduced me to Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, when Jeff and I were both living in Brooklyn. Jeff resided near Prospect Park. He and I began running together in the park. I found Jeff a fount of libertarian knowledge (among other kinds), so I availed myself of his wisdom during our runs. To be optimally efficient, I often carried a list of questions and a pencil for taking notes on our run.

Jeff, in turn, introduced me to David Ramsay Steele, a true Renaissance man. After a discussion with David about a book idea I had, he and I embarked on collaborating on *Three Minute Therapy, Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life*, a psychology self-help book based on my psychotherapy practice and the pioneering work of Albert Ellis. It was published in 1997.

We’re presently collaborating on a second, *The Revolution in Psychotherapy*. This traces the history of the psychotherapy movement from Freud to the present.

As a libertarian, I’ve contributed articles to *Liberty* magazine. I’ve given many talks to libertarian groups, including the NYC and CA Libertarian Parties, the Mises Institute, the International Society for Individual Liberty (ISIL) meetings in Norway and Canada, and Laissez-Faire Books. I debated Sharon Presley, a libertarian psychologist under the auspices of Free Exchange in San Francisco, and conducted an on-line chat on constructive communication strategies with the Free State Project. I’ve spoken on overcoming libertarian feuding and burnout.

My most famous convert to libertarianism is Nando Pelusi. He went on to play Murray Rothbard in the enactment of Rothbard’s *Mozart Was a Red* at Murray’s 60th birthday fest in New York.

I’m a clinical psychologist and practitioner of REBT. I’ve given talks to libertarian groups on the difference between REBT and libertarianism, and on the REBT notion that self-esteem is bad for you. My libertarian interests included the Free State Project to free New Hampshire of tyranny, Ron Paul’s 2008 presidential candidacy, and active involvement with the Libertarian Party of San Francisco. I’m also a member of a local libertarian Book club.

And it all began with Walter Block.

I’ve had memorable meals with many libertarian luminaries, whom I initially met through a variety of avenues.

They include my friends: Walter Block, Jeff Hummel, Jack Pugsley, Richard Winger (whom I first met at a meeting of the San Francisco Libertarian Party), and David Ramsey Steele, and David Friedman, both of whom I met through Jeff Hummel.

Walter introduced me to others: Murray Rothbard, Marshall Fritz, Thomas Szasz, Richard Stroup, Jane Shaw, Ken Schoolland, Victor Niederhoffer, Ed Stringham, Ben Powell, and Roy Childs.

Some I originally met at libertarian conferences: Harry Browne, Ron Paul, Michael Cloud, Sam Konkin, Vince Miller, Sharon Harris, Mary Ruwart, and Jarret Wollstein.

In addition, I carried on a long email exchange with Nathaniel Branden discussing his fatally flawed notion of self-esteem.

Through many conversations Hummel and Steele have influenced my libertarian thinking. However, I have been—and continue to be—most influenced by Block and secondarily by Rothbard’s writings and archived talks. ■

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RICHARD A. EPSTEIN

## THE ACCIDENTAL LIBERTARIAN

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO comment briefly on the formative influences that have led me to fall into what may be generally called the libertarian camp. I use this term with a certain amount of caution because, like all great concepts, it has attracted multiple meanings that can easily impede analysis. Many individuals regard themselves as civil libertarians. To the logically minded, this group looks like a subset of the broader libertarian camp, with a special emphasis upon such non-economic activities as speech, religion and sexual conduct. While, by and large, this capsule summary offers an accurate description of civil libertarians, it overlooks the fact that many of these same civil libertarians actively support the extension of improper government regulation into economic areas. They think it appropriate to believe in freedom of association for religious groups, or for same sex couples, or gay marriage, but at the same time support the strong imposition of anti-discrimination laws in economic matters. My libertarianism runs deeper and includes both economic and non-economic behavior under a common umbrella.

There is a second sense in which my libertarian instincts are less insistent than those of many modern libertarians. To most libertarians the constant theme is some variation of Mill's famous Harm Principle: that the minimal state should protect *only* against the use of force and fraud. Libertarians are in general quite optimistic about the ability of ingenious negotiators to overcome various hold-up and coordination problems that crop up in any complex social setting. They therefore reject, or seriously curtail, state powers of taxation and eminent domain. My own view is that some limitations on both these (interrelated) powers is surely appropriate, and that it smacks of libertarian Utopianism to think that all coercive force can be eliminated from collective life. The decision of the conscious libertarian to avoid governance and to exalt voluntary alliances could lead to strong conflict situations in which gangsters set up the new territorial government by wiping out their adversaries. Government there will be; libertarians should try to set it up so as to limit its collective scope.

So what then is the core of my libertarian beliefs? Here I would organize these around some very familiar watchwords: individual autonomy, as self-rule, but not unconstrained by the rights of others; private property, with an eye to the commons; freedom of contract, with an eye to externalities; limited government, with a fear of excessive concentrations of power. But on most ordinary social interactions, including the full array of two-party relationships—buyer-seller, landlord-tenant, employer-employee, insurer-insured; partner-partner—contract should ordinarily be king. And while we have to tolerate the use of state coercive power to build highways, we should work hard to keep government out of private employment and property transactions. No minimum wages, no (or very few) safety regulations; no anti-discrimination laws; no labor statutes; no rent control; little (strictly guarded) zoning; no crazy-quilt subsidies to peanuts or raisins; no trade barriers against low-priced imports, and the like. This is a small government relative to what we do today. At a guess, we can cut out well over half of government functions and curtail or contract out many others. All this leaves us with a state that is larger than many defenders of a pure libertarian order might wish. Police and military remain; roads, sewers, telecommunications and electric will all have some level of government ownership or control; the inevitable tax, motor vehicle, voting, and land, copyright and patent lists will need constant upgrade and servicing; as will intellectual property. But the hope is that a small government will yield more sensible interventions of these key areas. Mine is a more cautious classical liberalism. But it is sufficiently far removed from the mainstream to warrant inclusion under the broader, somewhat ill-defined banner of classical liberalism, or limited government libertarianism.

What then brought me to hold this peculiar set of beliefs? Normally one looks for profound personal experiences that show the evils of government intervention. But as a New York boy who flourished in the excellent public school system of the late 1940s and 1950s, first in Brooklyn and then in Great Neck Long Island, I can report no such tales. I received a fine education from public institutions that was, for the most part, remarkably free of various forms of indoctrination, at least for a youngster who did not realize he was singing about race relations when he belted out at age seven, "You get white milk from a brown skin cow, the color of the skin doesn't matter no how." Nor can one find in my background any powerful figure who championed the cause of limited government. My parents were both born and raised in New York City, and like most members of the Jewish

upper middle class were (and in the case of my mother, is) a basic, New Deal liberal who shares a deep suspicion of big business and the Republican Party in equal measure—wise judgments in both cases. My friends and relatives ran the gamut of sentiment, and there were few who had any extreme views on politics, let alone political theory, although all believed that success depended on a combination of brains, luck, character and hard work. To be sure, my uncle Sammy did have a friend who was a strong social Darwinist who inveighed against how charity weakened the spine of the system, but he died, tragically, from a bee sting, which always seemed to me to warn against the perils of excessive individualism. Besides, libertarians support voluntary contributions to the poor and would never ban them because of some indirect harm to the long-term fitness of the species.

So where then does all this come from? Here I would point to two ingrained intellectual attitudes that helped shape my views. I call these ingrained because I cannot remember a time when I had a different intellectual orientation. First, I dislike complex and sophisticated explanations of routine phenomena. I have no claims to be a mathematician or a physical scientist, although I studied both fields with at best modest distinction in some detail, all the way through college. Yet what I liked was the parsimony of the explanations, and the search for general laws that linked together patterns of events or behaviors that looked at first to be wholly disparate.

In the same vein, I have always been a champion of the naïve point of view on every philosophical topic—and these I did study in some depth—from metaphysics to epistemology to psychology, and on to ethics. Never once did I flag in my belief in the external world because of the learned demonstration of how knowledge is acquired through the senses which may, therefore, be all that we have. This suspicion against “deep” and sophisticated truths has always led me to embrace theories that accentuate order in natural events and social behavior and look down on all anomalies regardless of source unless they offer a window into a more powerful general theory. For example, my instincts run against the quirky results of behavioral economics with their appeal to instability of individual preferences. I have not seen many people act in strange ways and think that a few robust assumptions about rationality and self-interest explain a lot more about how legal rules and social institutions operate than any highly ad hoc or contextual explanation. I regard arguments for pragmatism or relativism, whether in the world of action or ideas, as signs of intellectual weakness, which function as poor excuses for having nothing intelligent to say about a given problem. There is nothing particularly reasonable about an appeal to reasonableness, without guides. Rules should come first, and complex balancing only at the margins.

That view of truth influences one’s view of legal rules. If there is little reason for ad hoc justifications in the domain of metaphysics, then it is best to be cautious about the use of similar strategies in social arguments. If there are broad general truths, then the instinct to compartmentalize should be greeted with some suspicion. Hence the modern view to find a particular statute for every occasion cuts against the aesthetic view of the fundamental unity of the legal order. It is the same fascination with ad hoc judgments that gets in the way of a firm understanding of the regularity of empirical phenomena. One reason why the Supreme Court has tolerated so much chaos in the law of takings, for example, is that it has persuaded itself that it can do no better than form “ad hoc” judgments as to what is

or is not permissible. Aim low, and you will never get things right. The libertarian penchant for flowing generalization is a strength. Although it is not the last word, the libertarian attempt to express legal propositions in sweeping terms that purport to maximize the like liberty of all persons consistent with the liberty of others, is a starting point for further refinement that speaks against narrow rules that open up the opportunity for favoritism or vice. The constant concern with the minimization of force and fraud seemed to create a nice, virtual, deductive program that fit my own metaphysical presuppositions. My naïve faith in the basic order of natural and human affairs has led to a distaste of special rules, and an affinity for the generalizations that lie at the core of the libertarian system. Politics had, and has, nothing to do with it.

These intellectual tendencies did not always come out at a young age. One reason I like tidy rules is that I am so messy in keeping my own papers together. But throughout school the emphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic did not conduce to the study of political philosophy or law, and I turned to these areas for the first time only in my senior year in high school when one of my teachers, Franklin Watson, fresh from a tour of duty at Brown University, assigned to us the *Mentor Philosophy Volume on the Age of Enlightenment* edited by Sir Isaiah Berlin. Reading Locke, Berkeley, and Hume on the sensations and the passions and the relationship of ideas to facts did pique my interest, and I quickly learned that it was easy to go astray in dealing with philosophical questions by taking too sophisticated a tack about fundamental relationships. I always believed, for example, in the strong distinction between logical and empirical truths, and with time came to believe that anyone who thought his own political philosophy rested on necessary truths was, well, necessarily wrong.

It was only in college, however, that I was forced to read large chunks of the canon in a more or less systematic fashion. My teacher at Columbia College was a new professor named Paul Noyes who had studied history at Oxford (I think) on a Marshall Scholarship (I think) and, at a young age (he died much too early), had decidedly conservative views on issues that put him into sharp conflict with the liberal New York students placed in his charge. I can still recall when he defended ably the views of Andrew Ure on the virtues of the factory system against the passionate, if inaccurate, charges of literary types like Henri Balzac. He persuaded me that the routine transactions that worked were far more important than the thrilling narratives of weird cases that failed, and showed the link between world outlook on epistemological and political issues. After all, the factory laws were a major issue in the early 19th century which accounted for the first round of debates. The *laissez-faire* forces were widely derided for saying that only time could promote improvement in physical labor. But they were in large measure right. The regulations that were meant to protect workers and their families were often used to strangle their opportunities and one lesson that should be taken away from that debate is to always be aware of the private motives of individuals who trumpet various forms of legislation for the good it will bring to others. Too often, their own motivations lurk behind the apparent level of generosity. The teachers' unions surely come to mind in this context today.

The college that I left in 1964 was quite different from the place that I entered only four years before. We all wore blue beanies on Morningside Heights during freshman orientation, and some of us wore tie-dye shirts (not me, I might add) or worse on graduation.

In the interim I received a first class education in philosophy and sociology, with only a smattering of economics thrown in on the side. My most influential teachers were not particularly libertarian, but they were all hard-nosed. Ernest Nagel, the great philosopher of science, always defended common sense against its intellectual detractors, and taught me philosophy of law with the then new book *The Concept of Law* by H.L.A. Hart. David Sidorsky forced us to read Plato's *Thaetetus*, Descartes's *Mediations* and G.E. Moore's *Ethics* with real care. The last piqued my interest because I could not understand why anyone would care whether the good was a natural or nonnatural quality, but at least I became convinced, without really knowing why, that there had to be some connection between what was good, what was desirable and what was desired. Moore may not have had the right answers, but at least he had the right questions. And a dose of Sydney Morgenbesser on meta-ethics made it crystal clear that there was no easy going through the philosophical thicket. Arthur Danto was ingenious, but I thought always ultimately wrong because he preferred philosophical ingenuity to psychological information. And Daniel Bell, much my mentor, introduced me to sociology and political theory. His was a world of detail and nuance, but he did make it clear that, however Marx might have gone astray, he did understand at least one thing, namely, that there was no understanding politics without power.

This last message packed real punch, because the cloistered discussions within Hamilton Hall were not immune from the massive political pressures that were slowly building up both before and after the Kennedy assassination. Those were heady times, with the civil rights movement in full swing and the terrible events of Vietnam beginning to unfold. No one could fail to think about the problems of race and war, and I can recall the strong sense of support for the civil rights act as a powerful antidote to the evils of segregation in the South. But I can still remember as a junior sitting in Alan Westin's government class, as student after student praised the colorblind nature of the proposed civil rights law while one of my former Great Neck school mates, Stephen Kahan, protested in his high-pitched voice that the new laws were defective because they overlooked the public/private distinction that everyone assumed was either unintelligible or obsolete. It was that initial comment that planted the seed of doubt that later became a full frontal assault on the antidiscrimination laws as they applied to private employers in competitive markets. I have since come to believe that the public/private line does not cover the full front, and that the question of market structure—monopoly, practical or legal, versus competition—also counts. But those refinements came only after those initial doubts about the scope of public power, doubts which at that time were not informed by any political theory.

That missing element of political theory came to me quite by accident at Oriel College, Oxford University where I studied law (for a degree no less) right after graduation from Columbia College. The Oxford legal education is quite different from the American, and at first blush it offered me little reason to expect that I should form a general world view while working in the stacks of the Oriel College library. The English had a narrow and constrained view of what constituted the proper subject of a legal education. In part this came because of the decisive division of power within the English framework, whereby the critical decisions were made in the Civil Service, away from the watchful eyes of judicial review. The bottom line, therefore, was that the development rights in the green belt around

London could be nationalized by statute after World War II, and the diligent law student would only learn of the event because of some administrative law case that dealt with some technical point of judicial review. English socialism, as it were, did not depend on English courts to do anything other than to stand aside.

Equally important was the determined, non-theoretical approach of English education with respect to the common law materials we read. England is a unitary jurisdiction so that it is not unreasonable to expect that the budding lawyer will actually know “the law,” which is a real advantage in doing legal work. But the question of tying the law to first principles was not a central part of my mission, and my teachers over there thought that from time to time I was too relentlessly sociological and functional for my own good. But there was a reason for all this. The removal of the welfare state from the judicial curriculum, and the creation of a single legal system meant that in 1964 (before the great rise of statutes and the membership of Great Britain in the European Union), you read a lot of nineteenth century cases written by judges who had in some cases a very explicit classical liberal orientation and a range of curiosity that was in some sense broader than that demanded by the Oxford curriculum. So left to my own devices, with the occasional tutorial and lecture, I immersed myself in these materials and slowly became a convinced libertarian who saw in the common law a judicial outlook that was consistent with larger questions of political organization. Baron Bramwell, Lord Jessel, M.R. (a genteel title, for Master of the Rolls, or what we would call a big-time judge), Lord Bowen, Lord Blackburn were all formidable intellects with a real political orientation that led me to see the common law as a system of vested rights. And when I read the great cases on predatory pricing and union competition, it became clear to me that the connection between the common law and the great issues of the time was far more intimate than the formal curriculum had acknowledged. I got some glimpse of all this by reading some of the great English writers. Maitland’s *History of English Law* was a particular favorite, and he had an intuitive sense of how social institutions fit together. Hart and Honore on causation in the law was another favorite, but here for the philosophical insistence consistent with my earlier education that hard terms can be analyzed, a rule to which causation was no exception, if you paid attention to detail and proceeded to work through examples with the aspiration of understanding rather than confounding theory. I was no law and economics freak, to be sure, but the functional and the dogmatic were stewing around in my head. The question was how best to organize them. And again the politics of the English system was a backdrop, but not a cause. My intellectual development came from study, not personal experience.

Back in the United States, I returned to Yale. There I had strong teachers in a number of subjects, but found that I was in some sense intellectually isolated from the trendy world of Supreme Court decisions on the grand constitutional issues of the day. More to the point, at that time, the closeness to the English system actually left me something of a doubter of judicial review in the American style, in part because I saw that most of the innovations of the late 1960s were in the teeth of classical liberal values and not in its service. But the Oxford education served me in good stead because it gave me a point of reference with which I could compare the fads and fashions of modern law. It also meant that I had a point of view that let me think critically and independently of my strong-willed teachers. I had every intention

of going into teaching, but no intention of being anyone's disciple. What I needed to learn was to think about the complexities of the American system that went beyond my English background. I had to learn about systems of direct government regulation, which were wholly absent from the English curriculum, which was entirely oriented to the private law. I became much to my surprise something of an expert in taxation, which I taught extensively in my first ten or so years in academia. And I learned, chiefly from Ward Bowman (who to this day describes himself, wrongly in my case, as "not gone, but forgotten") who introduced me to law and economics, Chicago style, where he had trained with Aaron Director.

In one sense Bowman was the strongest influence on my intellectual development because he was the one teacher who added tools to the kit that I had not used. As a pioneer in law and economics, he forced me to think about the consequences of social arrangements in ways that, frankly, started to undermine my strong, libertarian, deductive sense. He could explain why the antitrust cases miss the functional or efficiency justifications for various contractual terms, and started me asking why people entered into contracts in the first place. He was also a believer that monopoly was a wrong, which was not central (beyond contracts said to be in restraint of trade, narrowly construed) to my English background. One day in class I pushed him hard and asked him if he thought that monopoly was equivalent to coercion, to which he replied yes. I told him, in so many words, that I thought he was nuts. But it started me thinking. Maybe monopoly was not coercion, but it was a problem worth thinking about. It is a problem that comes up all the time with everything from common carriers, to licenses to constitutional law. And it took me years to figure out that monopoly may be bad but that coercion is still worse, which seems both obvious and profound even as I write it.

So armed it was off to teaching at the University of Southern California. The day I arrived I met Michael Levine and Lou Brown in Dorothy Nelson's office. Lou had been an expert in what he called preventive law, which asked one question: how do you get the deal right in the office in order to avoid litigation thereafter. He knew all this material because his wife, Hermione Brown, was a leading trust lawyer in Los Angeles, counting among her clients the stars of Los Angeles, for whom if you drafted an irrevocable *inter vivos* trust, you could do it only once. She taught me the fundamental principle of contract through a bit of street wisdom. "You know that a contract is fair, if it leaves both sides happy at formation." To which she added, "and you know that a settlement is fair if both sides are unhappy." Deals are positive games that are Pareto improvements. Settlements are negative sum games relative to initial expectations, but positive relative to the abyss that would otherwise lurk ahead.

But Michael Levine, for his part, was relentless in his belief of the price system as a mode of allocation and was a determined defender of the antitrust laws who found my libertarian skepticism (one contract is as good as another, after all) infuriating. Over billiards, which neither of us could play well, he would lash out at my elegant defenses of cartels by asking why have an arrangement that leaves everyone worse off and no one better off. The germs of a seed were planted. Robert Ellickson who joined that faculty in 1970 pushed a similar line, starting with land use instead of economic regulation. All of a sudden force and fraud were not the only absolutes. There was a forward looking way to envision

the world in which that question—why pick one arrangement if a second leaves at least one person better off and no one worse off—plays a central role. He became ever more insistent, and in the end converted me from a deontological sort, suspicious of consequentialist explanations, into a consequentialist who found new justifications for much of the libertarian thoughts I had developed in my Oxford days.

Four years of USC and then it was on to Chicago. I still thought myself a libertarian at the core, and indeed started to write on questions of tort law that involved two party interactions, for which the libertarian model worked very well. But at the same time, arrival at the temple of law and economics subjected me to a barrage of attacks, many from that well-known academic pugilist, Richard A. Posner, who found the efficiency of the common law in every rule he examined. It was one of my early arguments with him that led me to write *A Theory of Strict Liability*, in which I tried to follow and refine the work that Hart and Honoré did on causation, to explain why the Hand formula so favored by the economists did not make much sense at all, and to defend the libertarian rule that denied any obligation to rescue a stranger. In part I came to think that the Hand formula was wrong, not because it embodied the use of economics, but because it got the economics wrong. For cases of harm to strangers, a strict liability rule invited an actor to take into account the losses to other individuals as if they were his own. For consensual cases, I came to think that no party would choose this particular rule because of the difficulties of information and incentives it created. In fact I later discovered that this was correct: in the explicit contracts in England in the 1860s and beyond, for both mines and rails, a workers' compensation-like system was reached through negotiation. Matters did not get any better when I tried to explain the intentional harm cases in economic settings without reference to economics, which prompted Posner to write a set of comments that was headed, if I remember correctly, "Intentional Harms: An Essay in Self-Destruction," which in part I suppose it was.

As the 1970s moved on I became more confident in my ability to give consequentialist arguments to explain various legal arrangements. As the center of gravity in legal circles shifted from two party torts and simple contracts to collective action problems of zoning, bankruptcy, labor law and the like, the libertarian modes of property, tort and contract seemed to fit less well. In these transactions, a collective solution was highly vulnerable to holdout and free rider problems which the consequentialist theories did a better job of explaining than the strong libertarian theories that tended to overlook transaction costs and uncertainty in their formulation of legal rules. All this came to a head for me when I spent a year on the Stanford Campus at the Center for Advanced studies in the Behavioral Sciences. At this time it came to me that any adequate theory of liability had to take explicitly into account the issue of transaction costs, which for the most part I had regarded as something of a detail. But the law of nuisance, which deals with various noninvasive forms of interference such as smells, fumes, and discharges, offers a fine laboratory to test the importance of these transaction costs in the overall operation of the legal system. Many of these nuisances dealt with one-on-one situations where the traditional rules of liability—keep off, basically—worked very well. But nuisances can come in all sizes and descriptions. A single factory could pollute an entire neighborhood. A vast array of automobile emissions

could pollute the polluters and their friends. A system of tort actions that traced each particle back to its source is so cumbersome that no one could think seriously of its adoption. But the decision of which (low-level) nuisances to ignore, and which to stop by public action, showed the immense diversity of cases that fell within a single legal category. Lo and behold, it turned out that the heavy rule of transactions costs influenced those cases in which the ordinary tort principles had to give way to a set of nuisance-specific rules that took into account the distribution of harm by source and victim. The theory seemed to provide strong correctives to, as it were, a theory of corrective justice, that with time I began to realize that so much of what a legal system tries to do can be summarized in a single proposition that led to libertarian-like results in many simple cases but sounded very different: minimize the level of transaction costs in order to maximize the level of social welfare. The seeds of consequentialism had at last borne fruit.

That single year at the center for advanced studies bore fruit in two other ways. First, quite by chance, David Barasch from the University of Washington organized a program that dealt with the then new topic of sociobiology, which today often travels under the less controversial label of evolutionary psychology. Labels apart, the purpose of this venture was to apply the standard principles of rational self-interest to explain the evolution of animal behavior, both for nonhuman and human beings. The key tools in this approach included the seminal contribution of W.D. Hamilton on inclusive fitness. Rationality, it turns out, is not measured solely by individual behavior, but quite to the contrary, depends on the ability of genes to express themselves in the long-term. Here individuals care about their offspring to the extent of their common genes. And they take care of their progeny to the extent that the gains to them, discounted by the level of genetic connection, exceed the costs of supply. The parent who can spend 4 units to give more than 8 units of benefit to a child will do so, but if the gain to the child is only 6, then that same parent will back off. Early on in the cycle the two-fold (or more) ratio of (child) gain to (parental) cost is so easily achieved that we see extensive efforts on the part of the mature for the benefit of the helpless. But sooner or later—call it weaning—the conflicts of interest start to appear. To me sociobiology was what the doctor ordered because it meant that there was a way to link human evolution to human personality, so that (extended) self-interest in the face of scarcity became a biological conclusion instead of a simple premise for economics. The complications induced by people having interdependent utility functions added richness to the mix because it gave good reasons to understand the need for various forms of altruism. The study of sociobiology thus allowed the bridge to be built between behavior and legal rule. Take advantage of innate or natural impulses where the incentives for individual action line up with social welfare—as with child rearing. Beware of those natural impulses when the incentives were more perverse—as with aggression. Huge areas of behavior became clearer, and so too the premises that individuals in public places should not be presumed to possess the virtues that the biological theory denies that they could have.

In the years that followed all these strands of thought came together in the work that I did on the takings clause in particular and constitutional interpretation in general. The first point of overlap came from my study of nuisance law. Here it became clear that the rules of engagement that governed the relationships between neighbors did not necessarily

carry over—indeed regularly diverged—from the rules that governed the public regulation of land use. All sorts of things that people could do which their neighbors could not stop them from became things that people could not do if the legislature so decreed. And the possibility of compensation to offset the loss of rights was studiously avoided. I had come to reject any discontinuity between public and private law (as with civil rights cases) and thought it would be strange indeed that people who could not achieve actions by private agreement could get legislative approval for those same results and not have to pay for the change. This all led me to start the work on my *Takings* book, which marked me as a man outside of the *New York Times's* mainstream, in this case for life. In effect the government could do to private individuals what their neighbors could do, and not have to pay for the change. Build a tall building for the post office and you do not have to pay for the neighbor's loss of view. But to restrict him from building on his own land requires a restrictive covenant that has to be bought in private markets. The government can force the change, but can only do so if it pays for the loss in value. The takings clause, with its just compensation requirement, violates the libertarian ideal because it permits forced exchanges when transactions cost are high. But it justifies the coercion by bringing about social improvements in which all can share when compensation in cash or kind is supplied. By the same token the state can enjoin conduct (e.g., nuisances, rightly defined) without having to pay a dime because neighbors are entitled to the same relief. This simple theory of governance could be expanded to cover all taxes, all regulations, all shift in liability schemes, as from tort to workers' compensation. It was, I thought and still think, quite ingenious. It is also the recipe for striking down the New Deal for reasons that have little if anything to do with the anti-Roosevelt passions, which oddly enough I have never shared. The ability to combine a libertarian baseline with the social improvements from forced exchanges offered a powerful tool of analysis. Let the chips fall where they may.

And fall they did—hard. The anti-discrimination laws were the subject of my book, *Forbidden Ground: The Case Against Employment Discrimination Laws* (1992), which called for the abolition of all these laws in private competitive markets. Here the coordination problems that loomed so large in nuisance and takings cases did not emerge. So affirmative action survives in private organizations, not because of any special belief in the need for the deviation from some principle of a color-blind society, but as an outgrowth of our general belief in freedom of association. Public universities, I believe, should be allowed to do the same thing, assuming they should be run at all, if only because they are constrained by the competition from private institutions. I have no idea whether the combined position is liberal or conservative. I do hope that this is all correct.

With all this done, I wrote next on those cases in which freedom of contract did not work for government because of its monopoly power, and in the rough waters of *Bargaining With the State* (1993) tried to explain that, even when the government did produce some net good, it was important to maximize the total amount of that good by limiting its ability to redistribute the gain to its friends. Next came my book, *Simple Rules for a Complex World* (1995), which sought to develop the basic principles of social organization found in the earlier works in a way that steered for the most part clear of constitutional argument, making the case on more general grounds of political theory.

My foray into health care, *Mortal Peril: Our Inalienable Right to Health Care?* (1997), picked up on the themes of voluntary contract in a world in which collective action problems do not run rampant, and argued against the theme of positive rights—the right to housing, health care, education or whatever—that have frequently been used to justify massive government intervention into health care markets. Here this constant effort to create government cross-subsidies leaves people frightened to oppose any position that undermines their special benefit, even if they have to pay through the nose to maintain other programs that work for the benefit of others. It is here that we see the great dangers of the use of even limited government. Any program of forced exchanges requires the government to take from A and give to B—thousands of times over. But in order for this to work, something has to be given back to the A's of this world to make it all come out even. The great temptation of the political fixers is to use a program that is designed to foster across-the-board social improvements into one that contains a huge dose of wealth and income redistribution that goes beyond the proper purposes of the state, but which is so hard to stop in its tracks. Even as I write this essay, the Medicare program thrives on implicit transfers, but does little to create any valuable public good. The middle ground is the place where we want to be, but it is very hard to maintain footing, especially in the absence of any real consensus as to what governments ought to do.

*Principles for A Free Society—Reconciling Individual Liberty with the Common Good* (1998), further elaborates on the theme of how a system of private property and free markets can be consistent with the common good and explores in great detail an issue that I had overlooked in earlier writings: when does it make sense to keep the commons in the long run, be it with water or common carriers and network industries? The issue has indeed sparked a lot of work on my part about intellectual property, when does it begin and leave off, so that we know what always should be, and will become part of some public domain commons.

And finally, in *Skepticism and Freedom: A Modern Case for Classical Liberalism* (2003), I seek to summarize earlier work and explain in detail why the fads and fancies of academic life on matters of moral relativism, conceptual doubt, preference formation, and behavioral economics do not undermine the classical liberal synthesis, with strong individual rights and a takings power with just compensation that I had worked so long to put together.

All in all, there is clearly a strong libertarian streak in what I write. The rules on force and fraud are the first improvement that any sensible system will seek to make from a state of nature. But if the logic of takings and forced exchanges is correct, then libertarian thinking is only the first leg of a more comprehensive theory that has to explain the deviations from the libertarian principle as well as conformity to it. I hope that the mix I have put forth will attract attacks from the left, on the ground that it is too hostile to state intervention, and from the right on the ground that it leaves too much to state power. Now that I have hit 60, but still continue to write, the thought that I might be a “moderate” after all has some great appeal. But others will have to decide whether the intellectual positions that I have sought to put together stand firm or fall like a house of cards. I'll let others calculate the odds. ■

## WHY DID I BECOME A FREE-MARKET ENVIRONMENTALIST?

BASED ON MY FAMILY BACKGROUND, I should still worship central government and “service public,” like the great majority of French. My family shared two traditions: on my father’s side, conservative provincial and provençal bourgeoisie engaged in farming a family estate since the 16th century, and on my mother’s side, the value of the liberal, intellectual, Catholic beliefs. But everybody agreed about the sanctity of bureaucracy.

Studying law at the Montpellier University in the 50s could not introduce me to classic liberal thinking, since the clear distinction between civil and administrative law was (and still is) a basic fact. In economics classes, references to Keynes and Samuelson left no room for unknown Austrian economics. The Communist party used to get nearly 30 percent at the general elections, and most “intellectuals” were at least fellow travelers or useful idiots, if not true believers.

Things became worse at the Institut d’Études Politiques (alias Sciences Po) in Paris. There, the ultimate and obvious goal was to become a top civil servant by majoring in the Service Public department. Most professors were high-ranked officials and some of them judges at the Supreme Administrative Court (Conseil d’État).

The teaching was outstanding and students’ entrance limited, but the view that only government was able to set the goals and organize the means to lead the French people toward happiness was a quasi-sacred cow. The idea that goods such as education, electricity, telephone, insurance, banking, even housing and car manufacturing could have been better produced by private business was hardly discussed. It was a matter of faith. However, if Bastiat was not mentioned, Tocqueville was revered and Raymond Aron spoken of.

Just after graduating in June 1959, I managed to attend the one-month July session of the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies in Austria. In addition, I was awarded a one-year scholarship at Queen’s University in Kingston (Ontario) to study business administration. Would these decisions help or hinder my shaky ambition of joining the Ecole Nationale d’Administration to become a top civil servant? In order to make things clear, my uncle Bernard Guyon, then dean of the Aix en Provence University, managed a meeting with his old friend Jacques Chapsal, chancellor of Sciences Po. The answer was that “studying in North America is a coup d’épée dans l’eau” (i.e., a useless and counterproductive strategy). This proved true beyond expectation!

Here I discovered an intellectual world beyond the French one. The Salzburg Seminar was (and still is) a wonderful institution in its physical setting (in a 18th century Schloss)

and its intellectual content. At the July 1959 session, the teachers were rising stars, such as Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset and Walter Berns (whom I met some forty years later at the American Enterprise Institute). I discovered institutions such as self-government, federal constitutionalism, competing democratic systems, citizen participation, etc.

Joining Queen's University in Canada in September 1959 was a real cultural shock, and studying business administration introduced me to authors such as William Whyte and Peter Drucker. I happened to read George Orwell, not yet published in France. Quite a change from Paris!

Coming back to France was both a great pleasure and a great disappointment. Everything looked petty and mean. To make things worse, I had to join the army. I just hated it and I decided that a fair market transaction was to adjust my effort, contribution and zeal to the amount of my pay (some 50 cents a day plus some lousy army cigarettes). In addition, the food was so miserable that we had to buy more just to survive. That lasted nearly two years; I then managed to escape prison with an unexpected promotion to non-commissioned officer.

In September 1962, I was appointed as assistant professor at Université de Montréal to teach public administration. It was the time of the so called Quebec "Révolution tranquille" (Quiet Revolution), and French Canadians thought for a while that the French administrative setting could help them to new and positive institutions. This belief looked to me naïve and misleading. After two years I became persuaded that teaching the beauty of public bureaucracy was not my cup of tea.

Back in France I joined a consulting firm in Marseilles where I did some research for the Commissariat au Plan, a kind of central planning agency which was supposed to control and promote economic growth and set up regional planning.

In January 1968, I came back to the Salzburg Seminar to attend a one-month session on urban and regional planning. Looking over the icy lake and the snowy mountains from the wonderful library is an unforgettable experience. But the main event was meeting Ann Louise Strong, from the University of Pennsylvania, who introduced me to the American literature on urban and regional planning from the perspective of environmental considerations. Reading Lewis Mumford, William Whyte, Jane Jacobs, Aldo Leopold, Thoreau, Edward Higbee, etc., opened my mind to new dimensions.

In March 1968, I joined the "Société du Canal de Provence et d'Aménagement de la Région Provençale," a government-owned company in charge of setting up a large water irrigation scheme in the Provence area. Here I experienced the ambiguity of public intervention based on what I later discovered to be public choice theory.

I was then in charge of surveying farm operations surrounding the booming city of Aix-en-Provence. The idea was to adjust water supply infrastructure to the future of farming production. One wonderful spring morning, we were in the process of filling out the questionnaire with a farmer who happened to be a city counselor of the village. He bluntly explained that, as soon as the water pipes were in operation, the minimum size zoning lot would be revised from two acres to half an acre.

I discovered that public funding (mainly from the French Ministry of Agriculture and European Commission) helped to transform the best agricultural land into urban land. I reported the fact to the executive staff of the company and proposed to submit a water

delivery contract with an easement prohibiting development, or in case of development, compensating the cost of the public investment in agricultural water supply.

Of course this was fair and accepted by the farming community—but the board of the company was controlled by powerful local politicians who had long understood that giving away water for free got them votes and that, anyway, zoning was a kind of Monopoly game. This was the purely perverse side effect of a public policy, i.e., using public money earmarked for agricultural enhancement to destroy the best and limited agricultural land. The company executives paid lip service to my easement scheme, and of course nothing was changed. Creeping electoral corruption continued and still does, more than thirty years later! The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture agreed that the problem did not exist since local land use plans were supposed to cope with it.

In 1969, on behalf of Ann Louise Strong, the Ford Foundation's Bill Pendleton generously offered me a fellowship to spend one year at Penn at the Institute of Environmental Studies. So, in September 1970, I set off to Philadelphia with my wife Ursula and our three children. It was a wonderful intellectual setting. Ian MacHarg's teaching and studio were a brand new way to look at man-nature relationship. His famous *Design With Nature* was just published. Ann Louise Strong demonstrated that compensable regulation was one of the best ways to solve the taking issue. Of course, the role of government, especially the federal government, was to be strengthened, and free market environmentalism was not even mentioned, though I heard there of Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons* for the first time. I still remember the first anniversary of "Earth Day 1970" where students wore the "Stop at two" badge. Since we had already three children, I asked viciously if and how I should get rid of the third baby (at the time nobody was familiar with Julian Simon's ideas)!

I came back to France with mixed feelings, but persuaded that ecological planning could supersede and improve pure technocratic and political planning, and that environmental zoning without some kind of fair compensation system was unstable, inequitable and inefficient. I felt that environmental planning needed a complete reshuffling, but still using traditional tools of government intervention. (It took me ten years to publish *Design with Nature* in French.)

The concept of free market environmentalism (FME) came as a revelation to me when meeting R.J. Smith at a Lincoln Institute conference at Harvard in July 1983. R.J., in a plenary session, briefly explained that land could be best managed by property rights and market instruments. Ann Louise Strong, as chair of the panel, dryly answered that this was outdated and inappropriate thinking. I felt sorry for R.J. and I invited him to discuss the issue at a neighboring pub. It was quite a fascinating evening and, back in France, R.J. sent me his recently published article, "Privatizing the Environment" (*Policy Review*, 1982). I was then introduced progressively to the FME literature and scholars.

In 1985, John Baden chaired a Liberty Fund seminar in Aix-en-Provence and handed me a document with seminal papers from Anderson, Hardin, Stroup, Baden, Simon, Nelson. For the first time I got a selection of the current FME literature and decided to spread the message in France.

However, the political setting was changing. The socialists and the communists, in charge of the government since 1981, were to be severely defeated in the 1986 general election. Classical

liberal ideas gained momentum, notably with congressman Alain Madelin. Free-market economists organized a Mediterranean cruise in November 1985 where academics, politicians, officials, businessmen discussed the new course of action for the incoming government.

I had written an essay, “Libéralisme et Environnement,” which was to be published in 1986 in *Futuribles*, a journal founded by Bertrand de Jouvenel in the fifties. The idea that property rights and market instruments were often better tools than government was like a dirty word. In order to make sure that new concepts were no more than pure non-conformist thinking, Hugues de Jouvenel asked three other socialist-oriented specialists to comment and critique my essay. This article was the first paper dealing with FME published in French in a major journal.

I must also mention the role of the “Université d’été des Nouveaux Economistes” organized by Jacques Garello every summer in Aix-en-Provence since 1977. Each week-long session featured classical liberal economists. There I met top environmental specialists such as Rick Stroup, Terry Anderson, Fred Smith, R.J. Smith, Jean Luc Migué, Jane Shaw, John Baden, Jo Kwong, Roger Bate, Bruce Yandle, etc. The 1992 meeting dealt with “New Resources Economics and Institutions.”

Writing articles was a necessary but small step. Guy Millère and I edited and published “Ecologie et liberté, une autre approche de l’environnement” in 1992 in order to give in French the basic material on FME.

In 1992 Alain Madelin, the only true classical liberal politician in France, and his quasi-spin-doctor Henri Lepage, asked me to help them set up the “International Center for Research on Environmental Issues” (ICREI) which was to be an FME think tank. For some four years, our main activity was to organize a two-hour colloquium every two months in the Assemblée Nationale premises with top environmentalists, both French and foreign. However, in 1996 ICREI was no longer able to find adequate funding since, as usual, the conservatives were no longer interested in pushing ideas and because the succeeding conservative Ministers of Environment were more interested in me-tooism with socialist thinking than introducing reforms.

Several conferences in France and abroad inspired me to write papers, which had but limited influence. Again, Alain Madelin, creating his own party, “Democratie Libérale,” was the best support to spread FME, ideas but this was a mixed support since he was considered as a brilliant but uncontrollable maverick by the conservative establishment inspired by technocratic and bureaucratic Gaullism.

In 1996, in conjunction with Jean Pierre Centi, professor of economics at Aix-en-Provence and a member of the so-called “Nouveaux Economistes” group, we decided to set up a three-day international conference on “Property Rights and Environment.” Michel Massenet, a highly respected top official (Conseiller d’État) chaired the meeting. Funding was difficult, but with the help of land owners’ organizations (both at the French and European level) and paradoxically, some government money, we succeeded beyond expectation, to the point that we decided to set up a conference every two years dealing with each environmental resource, e.g., water (1998), marine resources (2000), coastal zone (2002).

I am indebted to many people. In economics, to the writings of Henri Lepage, Rick Stroup and Terry Anderson, in addition to Adam Smith and Frédéric Bastiat. In legal

matters, Bruce Yandle, Richard Epstein, Baudoin Boukaert and the late Christian Mouly helped me to understand the complexity and the paramount importance of property rights in both civil and common law.

In political science, John Baden introduced me to public choice and the shortcomings of government intervention, as well as to Elinor Ostrom's literature on common property management. In addition, there were close and long-standing links with Competitive Enterprise Institute, Political Economy Research Center, Atlas Foundation, Land Trust Alliance, National Trust, Instituto de Ecología y Mercado, Institute of Economic Affairs, Reason Foundation, International Association for the Study of Common Property, which were constant sources of intellectual ammunition.

Thanks to them and many others, today FME is discussed in France. In the early eighties it was just a kind of pornography. This is no small accomplishment in a country where communist, socialist and Christian intelligentsia alike consider market instruments and property rights as a necessary evil at best, and government the finest instrument to insure "liberté, égalité, fraternité."

The fact that independent think tanks are extremely difficult to set up in France is a major handicap to the introduction of new ideas. Conservative political parties are generally not interested in ideas, except when they are not in power. Big business, largely controlled by ex top bureaucrats, takes advantage of state interventions, and bureaucrats are more interested in turning out regulations than using new tools they do not control. Eventually, and this is a trivial conclusion, "Ideas rule the world" (Keynes) but spreading them needs conviction and constant action.

Beside ideas, the next step is to address the public at large through media. As John Stossel put it, "Bastiat is just too tough for most people in the world to absorb it and my goal is to try to explain this stuff in simple language" (2001). ■

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ROBERT FORMAINI

## FREE-MARKETEER AT THE FED

I GREW UP IN A JFK-democratic household and was a standard liberal through undergraduate work. While in the Army after being drafted in early 1969, I came to have a good deal of free time to pursue things that I had never before much enjoyed—things like reading.

I had always parroted the standard liberal line to my teachers and was rewarded with statements about how smart I was; but not only was I not smart, I came to realize quite quickly that I knew little about little, and absolutely nothing about most things. And this was after 16 years of “schooling.”

Over a weekend in Atlanta, I picked up *Atlas Shrugged* at a store there, returning to Fort Gordon in Augusta, and reading practically non-stop for a week until I finished it. It was a revelation, which is not saying anything at all, I know, because other people feel the same way upon completing it, usually. Naturally, relations within my family and circle of friends were reshaped by my own philosophical conversion, and that is always a painful thing because, while political conversion is not a solo trip, there never seems to be any traveling companions close by when you most need them!

That experience led me to the public library and a host of books on economics, one of which was a book whose table of contents I could not understand and which had never before even been checked out: Mises’s *Human Action*. Coming so soon after Rand, Mises was the final converter. I became an Objectivist, not understanding then the many differences in approach and philosophy between Rand and Mises and, frankly, not caring if there were any! (Later, I came to see many things quite differently.)

Returning to civilian life, I taught in public schools, seeing first hand the destruction the establishment’s educational initiatives, especially busing and forced integration, created in what had been a year before a “good” high school. I resigned because I couldn’t stand to watch, and because I probably would have ended up killed by some “student” had I not. I entered graduate work in economics at VCU which was, at that time, dominated by the beliefs that Marshallian micro–markets work fine, most of the time, and Keynesian macro–markets are dysfunctional and require constant vigilance by public-spirited, brilliant, government planners. Men such as Keynes himself, no doubt.

Needless to say, I ran afoul of some professors. But while I received a political “B” or two, it was a micro professor who went to the dean and demanded that I not be allowed to continue in economics. My sin? I had written a paper critical of indifference curves, citing an article by Rothbard, “Toward a Reconstruction of Utility and Welfare Economics.” That was such a rebuke to this gentleman and the “perfection” of his mathematical, micro analyses that he wanted me kept out of the profession altogether. The dean, a former federal bureaucrat, for some reason overrode the teacher and commuted my failing “C” (graduate work, remember) to a “B-.” I learned the valuable lesson that methodological disputes can be every bit as damaging and vicious as ideological ones.

I don’t know why the dean helped me, but it wasn’t the last time that someone aided me when I really needed help. After I received my Masters in economics, I applied to the law school that I wanted to attend and was accepted, but also accepted for doctoral work in economics. I decided to pursue economics and that, as Robert Frost wrote, “had made all the difference.”

I began doctoral work at Virginia and met Roger Garrison, who was a fellow student, although certainly a better one than myself. I also met several famous and influential professors at Virginia, but none of them really influenced my own thinking much, although I did admire William Breit, Leland Yeager, and G. Warren Nutter immensely. I had read by that point every major work in the Austrian tradition that was in print, and had begun

my personal library, which has grown to be quite a collection in its own right over these many years and to which I make regular, new contributions.

By 1977, I had withdrawn from school, sold the interest I had in my dinner theatre business in Richmond, quit my Richmond Symphony job as a bass trombonist, and was “hunkered down,” wasting time doing not much of anything except playing tournament bridge. Then one day a letter arrived from San Francisco from the Cato Institute. They were looking for a conference director, and my friend Roger Garrison had recommended me to them. In less than a month, I drove to San Francisco to begin work at Cato.

It was at Cato that I met everyone, of course. Murray Rothbard was in residence. Leonard Liggio was there. Ralph Raico and Ron Hamowy were there at *Inquiry* magazine. Gawd, the wonderful dinners we used to have, where I was by far the least smart of anyone at the table, but nonetheless allowed to listen and learn and even get in a word to two.

Splendid days—the creation of so many conferences and seminars, all the scholars that I got to meet, the creation of so many publications, including the *Cato Journal*, something about which I am still quite proud. I rose from conference director to acting CEO in 1980, then left Cato in late 1981 to return to school to tie up a “loose end”—my doctorate.

I had met John Sommer at an environmental conference at Big Sky, Montana in 1980, and we shared a flight back to Salt Lake City, he to travel on to Dallas and I to SFO. He told me that he had put together a new political economy program at the University of Texas at Dallas, and suggested that I finish up there. It seemed far-fetched to me at that moment, but that’s what happened, and John, a wonderful man and a true libertarian, was always there to help me while he was at UTD—which was until 1984.

Along the way, I did a brief stint as executive director of the Center for Libertarian Studies in NY, but their financial condition made it impossible for me to stay on board. In 1982–83, while working off and on at the University of Dallas, Dr. John Goodman and I founded the National Center for Policy Analysis—I was its first Executive Director—which is still operating quite successfully here in Dallas. I ultimately finished my Ph.D. in political economy, and my dissertation was published by Transactions as *The Myth of Scientific Public Policy*, in 1990.

I taught full time at the University of Dallas, both undergraduate and graduate, then moved to Atlanta to teach at Oxford College of Emory University for a year, and then took another job suggested to me by Roger Garrison—the free enterprise chair at Reinhardt College. I founded its Center for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise, once again creating publications and seminars on policy topics. But Reinhardt’s interest in national policy issues was not as enthusiastic as my own. I met Bob McTeer—president of the Dallas Fed and a fellow libertarian—at a meeting of the Association of Private Enterprise Education. In late 1995, I moved back to Dallas and, in early 1996, I started working at the Dallas Fed—the “free enterprise Fed” as we call it. I’m still writing about free markets and speaking at conferences about the same, all the while teaching part time at my old alma mater, UTD. It’s a very full life and, looking back, I have no regrets about becoming a libertarian and an economist. ■

## STUDYING UNDER MURRAY

IT WAS ONLY THROUGH a series of lucky breaks that I studied under Murray Rothbard.

After moving to Las Vegas in 1986, I decided to go back to school and pursue a Masters degree in Economics in the fall of 1989. Why economics? I minored in the subject as an undergrad and kind of liked it. But, at the time MBA degrees were all the rage, and I was advised that an MBA would be better for my career, I decided on economics. This was my first lucky break.

By the fall of 1990, I had taken 12 hours worth of Masters' courses and was trying desperately to stay away from statistics and econometrics classes. I spotted "History of Economic Thought" with Rothbard as the instructor in the UNLV course catalog and thought "perfect!"

I mentioned to one of my classmates that I would be taking the course with Rothbard and he strongly advised against it, contending that Rothbard was "a kook." He said I should take the course, independent study, with another professor.

I didn't know who Murray was, or what Austrian Economics was, nor had I heard of the term Libertarian. But, since I worked all day and took classes at night, I didn't have time to hassle with lining up an instructor for independent study, so I went ahead and took Rothbard. My second break.

The first night of class, Murray hit the door and started talking immediately, something about dumb politicians threatening the evil oil companies that were raising gas prices. From that thought, he just continued right into his "History of Economic Thought" lecture. He didn't take roll, or hand out a syllabus. Murray didn't have time for that; he had centuries of history to cover.

So, the 8 or 10 of us in the class furiously took notes trying to keep up. I didn't know it at the time, but only half of us were taking the class for credit, the other half were just auditing the course, having taken it previously for credit. Murray changed his History of Thought lectures each semester, so students took it as often as it was offered. In the fall of 1990, the course had a financial history emphasis.

I also took Murray for US Economic History the following semester. But, I still didn't know Murray at all. The only time we spoke was one night when there was a bomb scare at Beem Hall where our classroom and the school of business instructors' offices were housed. Not being able to enter the building, I went to the student union and saw Murray sitting with one of my classmates. I asked what was going on, and Murray mentioned the bomb scare. I sardonically suggested to him, "We should send some

underclassman in there to find it.” “I like the way you think, Douglas,” Murray shot back, cackling.

At this point I needed to decide whether to take a comprehensive test to complete my Masters or write a thesis. I was actually leaning toward the testing route, but someone talked me into writing a thesis. My third break.

But, other than the bomb scare conversation and taking him for two classes, I still really didn't know Murray all that well and wasn't comfortable asking him to be my thesis advisor.

So, I spoke with Professor Rick Tilman about writing a thesis. However, Tilman couldn't do it; he was not an instructor in the school of business. Break number four.

My fifth break was that the “Theory and Policy Track” was still available in the Economics Masters degree program. I believe that I was the last student to graduate via Theory and Policy. Subsequent to my completion of the program, the economics department graduate coordinator and others managed to dump the “Theory and Policy Track” to keep students from coming to UNLV to study under Murray and Hans Hoppe.

I then went to Murray and re-introduced myself to him. I asked if he would be my thesis advisor and proposed a subject. Murray welcomed me with open arms. He proceeded to rattle off about 20 sources on speculative bubbles to get me started, and away we went.

I got to know Murray during the researching and writing of my thesis. But, I really still didn't realize his greatness. To me he was just a good guy.

Over time I realized how brilliant he was. As a banker, I met a lot of people—other bankers, customers, regulators, etc. who think they are brilliant, and are anything but. They constantly work at convincing you that they know everything.

Murray was a guy who actually did know everything—but he didn't act like it. He was never pompous, nor did he ever talk down to me or anyone else that I know of. When I asked him a question he would start his answer almost humbly with “Well, in my view . . .”

He didn't act like he had all the answers . . . but he did.

Inexplicably though, he would occasionally ask me for advice: like whether he should get a 15-year or 30-year mortgage.

As for his professional stature, I didn't have a sense of it until I attended a Mises conference at Stanford. When I told some people I was from Las Vegas and studied under Murray these folks proceeded to beg me for my class notes.

Of course, Murray was a walking bibliography. Every time I would meet with him, he would give me more sources for my project. He provided not just the title, but author, publisher and often the year published. I can't imagine having a better thesis advisor.

However, the department chair, Dr. Thayer, didn't give Murray high marks for his 1991 annual evaluation.

Although the chairman rated Murray satisfactory in the area of teaching, he criticized Murray for having “only limited contact with most economics students.” Incredibly, in the area of “Scholarly Research or Creative Activity,” Thayer wrote: “Professor Rothbard's performance in the area of professional growth has been disappointing.” Thayer also wrote that Murray was disappointing in the area of “Service.”

Chairman Thayer gave Murray an overall Satisfactory rating, but concluded his evaluation with: “Also, we expect professor Rothbard to participate in departmental affairs, to teach more students, to be available as a role model for junior faculty.”

As one would expect, Murray blasted Thayer with a 3,000 word “comment” calling Chairman Thayer’s evaluation an “outrage.” Murray pointed out 11 of his scholarly accomplishments for 1991 that for some reason Thayer had overlooked.

Commenting on Thayer’s rating him disappointing for service, Murray wrote:

In the economics department, I have attended and participated in all department meetings, and I have not refused appointment to any department committees. I don’t know what Chairman Thayer means by “seldom participating in the daily life of the department.” Teaching courses, advising students, keeping office hours, attending department meetings: what other “daily life” am I supposed to be missing?

The only clue in Chairman Thayer’s remarks is that I am supposed to be “available as a role model for junior faculty.” Apart from wondering why Mr. Thayer should possibly want someone of “limited professional growth,” to serve as a “role model” I must say that the best way someone, including myself, can so serve, is to be allowed to go about his business as a scholar and teacher without being subject to harassment.

Along with Chairman Thayer, the Graduate Coordinator Tom Carroll was also antagonistic toward Murray and his students. After I had completed my thesis defense, Murray handed me a sarcastic memo that Carroll had circulated to the economics department faculty.

On Thursday, April 2, at 3:00 PM, Doug French will defend his thesis in room 518. Since he has not shared his thesis topic with me, you will have to learn that on Thursday. As far as I know, his committee consists of Murray Rothbard, Hans Hoppe and Terry Ridgway. Nevertheless, all graduate faculty from the department are permitted to attend the presentation, ask questions, and to make recommendations to the candidate’s committee.

Of course the idea that Carroll, as Graduate Coordinator, did not know what my topic was, or who was on my committee, was complete nonsense. He signed off on my Thesis Prospectus form on October 2, 1991, approving my topic, and signed my Appointment Of Examination Committee form on November 21, 1991, approving my committee members.

Carroll’s memo clearly bothered Murray, but he didn’t want me upset, so he didn’t show it to me until after I had completed my defense.

Murray’s mentoring didn’t stop when I completed my thesis and graduated. I moved to Reno, but we stayed in touch by mail.

Murray encouraged me to take the part of my thesis that dealt with Tulipmania and submit it as an article for publication in various mainstream economics journals. He felt that I had a good chance for publication, believing that I had made, as he put it, “a contribution.” However, none of the seven or eight economics journals I tried shared Murray’s view.

In a December 1992 letter, Murray wrote:

Your experience with the journals reminds me that every time I’ve been rejected by a scholarly journal, I’ve been infuriated, not because of the rejection, but because the referees all seemed to be a pack of morons who missed the point of the article. Hence, I rarely submit stuff to the journals anymore.

But, Murray wanted me to continue trying and mentioned three other journals to submit to.

A year later Murray wrote:

That’s monstrous about these rejections; I might have told you that I’ve never received a rejection letter that furthered the alleged purpose of offering helpful criticisms, and I guess it’s still a perfect record. If you haven’t tried *Economic Inquiry*, and the *Southern Economic Journal*, you might try them, if *Journal of MCB* turns it down. If all else fails, don’t forget the *Review of Austrian Economics*, which will certainly be receptive. (It wasn’t.)

I was back in Las Vegas in December 1994, and went to see Murray. I waited over an hour for him to show for his office hours. I gave up and took the elevator down to leave. But, as the elevator doors opened on the ground floor, there he was on his way to his office. We chatted for a while before he had to give one of his finals and (as was his custom) catch the red-eye to New York that night after grading all of his final exams and term papers.

I told Murray about a *Liberty Magazine* conference that I had attended that fall and a talk given by Bill Bradford entitled, “Why Libertarians Love to Hate.” The speech was about Ayn Rand and Murray. Murray howled with laughter when I told him about it. I had ordered a tape of Bradford’s talk and we made plans to get together after he returned from New York to listen to it—what fun that would have been.

Unfortunately that’s a laugh we were never able to share. But, I consider it another lucky break that I waited around long enough to see him for—as it turned out—the last time.

I consider myself extraordinarily lucky to have known Murray and have the rare privilege to study under him. It is because of my good fortune that I feel an obligation to help Lew and Burt continue Murray’s work and further his legacy. ■

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Douglas E. French, a student of Murray N. Rothbard’s, is president of the Ludwig von Mises Institute in Auburn, Alabama. This talk was delivered on the occasion of receiving the Center for Libertarian Studies’ Murray N. Rothbard Award in recognition of his dedication to the ideals of liberty in the Rothbardian tradition.

## HOW I FOUND LUDWIG VON MISES

MY INTEREST IN MISES BEGAN after I answered a “Help Wanted” ad in *The Washington Star*. But a lot of history and living came before that.

I had majored in botany at college as a fluke. A boyfriend at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) had invited me to his senior prom and I was eager to go. It was the night before my final botany exam, so I studied especially hard and received my best mark of the year. So botany became my major. If I had thought the matter through carefully, I should have realized that I would never have been satisfied with a career as a botanist—I was more interested in people than plants.

I graduated from college during the depression when jobs were hard to come by, especially for botany majors. I soon started managing a small family-owned apartment complex that my architect father had created by remodeling and expanding his parents’ old Victorian home in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. But to gain marketable skills, I studied shorthand and typing and soon had two part-time stenographic and secretarial jobs. I also operated my own enterprise, Bets Photo Service, taking pictures of kids, developing and printing them in a homemade darkroom. And I started studying Spanish, hoping someday to visit South America. I wanted to see how people in other parts of the world lived.

Then came the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. Rent controls were passed; it became easier to find tenants but harder to pay the bills. I volunteered as an air raid warden and walked at night with neighbors on similar air raid warden duty. As the war continued, I decided I wanted work that was more exciting, more lucrative, or more supportive of the war effort. In December 1942, I consulted at an employment agency. An interviewer asked if I would like to work for the government. “No!” I replied. “For one thing I don’t like their long corridors.” The interviewer had in mind a job in South America and said I shouldn’t find long corridors there. In less than a month, I was en route to landlocked Bolivia high in the Andes. My prompt assignment was probably due primarily to my youth, my health and my stamina—it takes a strong constitution to survive at Bolivia’s high altitude—some Embassy personnel had left on hospital stretchers.

In 1943, it took three days to travel from Washington, D.C. to Bolivia—by train to Miami, by plane (my first ever flight) over Cuba, to Cali, Colombia, for a night, refueling in Guayaquil, Ecuador (hot!), another night in Lima, Peru, then up to the La Paz airport at 12,500 feet above sea level. I was to serve as secretary to a special U.S. commission investigating labor troubles in Bolivia, presumably instigated by Nazis, the terrorists of that day. The members of the commission returned home after six weeks and I was transferred

to the Bureau of Economic Warfare with offices in the U.S. Embassy. BEW's task was to purchase in Bolivia tin, tungsten and cinchona (tree bark used to produce anti-malarial medicine) for the war effort. My contribution to the war consisted of typing and filing letters and memoranda, each with multiple carbon copies.

I spent two fascinating years in Bolivia, an exotic nation of extremes, snow-capped mountains and tropical jungles, barefoot Indians lugging produce to market in packs on their backs and wealthy mining operators living in elegant homes. By rooming and eating meals with a Bolivian family, I learned something about how Bolivians lived and, along with their three-year old son, how to speak Spanish. I enjoyed life, drinking and dancing in the evenings and sightseeing on weekends. The altitude didn't bother me, except when skiing at 17,500 feet or swimming in Bolivia's 12,506-foot high Lake Titicaca. I had had my fill of books and studying in college and did no reading during my two years in Bolivia except for a few murder stories or mysteries.

On June 6, 1944, Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy and, although the war was by no means over, we began looking forward to its end. I decided I wanted to see first-hand how the Europeans lived and had survived the war. So I resolved to seek a transfer to Europe. I had forgotten almost all the German I had learned in two years at college so I started taking lessons from a German-Jewish refugee in Bolivia.

In the fall, I returned to Washington and asked to join BEW's post-war mission to Austria, which was to be headed by a friend of my old boss in Bolivia—at that time I knew nothing about Austrian economics or Ludwig von Mises. While waiting for the transfer, I was assigned to BEW's Mexican export-import licensing division, consisting of four men and two girls. I had so little work to do that I spent most of the office hours painting my fingernails and making scrapbooks for my one-year-old niece. However, I did type up the division's budget request for the following year—for an appropriation sufficient to double the division's staff to eight men and seven girls! I don't know how their request fared, for I left Washington in March 1945 to join the Austrian mission. But I had had a lesson in Bureaucracy 101.

The Austrian mission was to assemble in Italy. The flight to Europe took many hours and many stops. Our plane had bucket seats along the sides and mail bags on the floor. I hadn't slept at all the night before and was dead tired when we took off. I slept on the mailbags throughout the entire flight: to Newfoundland where we lunched; across the Atlantic to the Azores where we were fed again; and to Casablanca where I played chess with a GI while waiting for our next flight to Naples, our destination.

Our offices were in Caserta, a suburb of Naples, in an old medieval stone palace which had been taken over by the U.S. military. We took advantage of our time there to visit the traditional tourist sights in the Naples area: Salerno, Pompei, and the Isle of Capri. We were in Caserta when Roosevelt died on April 12, and young Italian newsboys, recognizing us as Americans, approached us on the street with their newspaper EXTRAS. It was in Caserta on April 29, 1945 that the German forces in Italy surrendered to the Allies.

After a few weeks, the office staff was flown en masse over Rome to Florence, where we spent another few weeks. We worked regular office hours, of course, but otherwise socialized, and strolled in the hills overlooking the city. While in Florence, we gave blood

to help those wounded in the fighting still going on in northern Italy's Po Valley. My memory is of a lovely city with many churches, interesting bridges over the Arno, and hillsides sprinkled with Italian villas and cypress trees.

Our next staging area was Verona, north of the Po Valley. A group of us jeeped from Verona to picturesque Venice and I remember dining and swimming in nearby Lake Como.

Shortly after V-E Day (May 8), we were relocated to Salzburg, in Austria. They sent me by plane—I was envious of those who crossed the Alps by jeep through the Brenner Pass. We eight BEW secretaries were the first American girls to reach Austria after V-E Day. American civilians in Salzburg, both men and women, were billeted in Hotel Pitter, which had been slightly damaged by bombs; some walls were a-kilter and some doors didn't latch, leading to some unexpected and hilarious encounters. Salzburg was our last staging area before Vienna.

The treaty that ended World War II divided Germany and Austria into four zones, each to be under the control of one allied power: U.S., British, French, or Russian. Vienna, too, was divided into four sectors, each controlled by one of these four Allies. Salzburg was in the American zone but Vienna was in the middle of the Russian, so we had to travel through the Russian zone to reach Vienna. In August the staff set out in a caravan of several cars along the Russian-controlled highway to Vienna.

Vienna was a gloomy city that winter of 1945–1946. Many buildings had been bombed; prices were controlled; a black market flourished; the people were hungry; on weekends shabbily-dressed Viennese would go by streetcar to the end of the line and walk miles in the hope of buying a few cabbages or potatoes. We Americans often traded candy bars and cigarettes for family heirlooms, jewelry and curios. While most Viennese were starving, one young lady who sold us rings, pendants, chinaware and Meissen figurines, on behalf of her friends and acquaintances, actually gained weight from her candy bar commissions. Another Austrian woman we knew, a single mother, slept with GIs in exchange for perfumed PX cold cream in which she fried potatoes for her teen-aged son. I bought an oil painting of the Austrian Alps for ten cartons of cigarettes, which still hangs over my mantle—at that time one carton, i.e., ten packs, cost U.S. \$1.00 tax-free at the Army PX. Every morning, as my girlfriend and I walked from our hotel to the office, she noticed we were followed by the same little old man; when she dropped her cigarette stub, he would stoop to pick it up. She soon took to turning around and handing it to him personally, for which he thanked her profusely. It was depressing how easily we privileged and fortunate Americans came to accept poverty and suffering all around us.

Our office in the U.S. sector of Vienna was in a former boys' school that had been used as a hospital during the war. Life for us U.S. civilians was easy. In order to see how the Austrians lived, I had wanted to live and board with a family, as I had in Bolivia, but that was not permitted by the Army, for it would have been a burden on the local economy. As we civilians enjoyed officer status, we were fed and billeted with Army officers in a hotel, not far from the center of the city. Our contribution to the war effort as secretaries was, as usual, to take shorthand and type letters and memoranda with multiple carbon copies (no copy machines in those days).

We also occasionally attended a quadripartite (U.S.-British-Russian-French) meeting. Responsibility for planning refreshments and recording the minutes rotated month by

month among the four powers. Each competed with the others in the lavishness of the meals and drinks served; alcohol always flowed freely. The Americans provided bourbon, the English scotch, the French wine, and the Russians vodka. Once, when the Russians were responsible for refreshments and for keeping the minutes, their translator phoned our office the next morning: "We remember what happened yesterday, but we would like to know what was agreed upon." Apparently the vodka had flowed a little too freely.

BEW underwent several restructurings and name changes during the war and was finally disbanded in 1945 when the war ended in the Pacific. Those of us still in Vienna could go home or remain in Vienna working with the War Department. I signed a 6-month contract with the War Department in order to stay and see how the Austrians survived their first post-war winter.

After V-J Day, my mother wrote that there was talk of repealing U.S. wartime price controls. I had seen Austrians starving and having to pay black market prices for food just to survive and couldn't imagine how they would manage if price controls were repealed. I thought that the repeal of price controls anywhere would only make matters worse. As a botany major in college, I had taken only a one-semester economics course intended for non-social science majors and was economically very naïve. Our textbook was written by Sumner Slichter. After completing that course, I concluded that the best social system would be rule by an "enlightened dictator" who had the interests of the citizens at heart. The only problem, I then thought, was that there could be no assurance that such an "enlightened" dictator would be succeeded by another equally "enlightened" one. I asked an Army Major in my office who had been an economics professor in civilian life about price controls. He explained that controls didn't make any more food available; as a matter of fact, they created shortages. If things were in short supply and people really wanted them, they would have to pay extra to get them. If a farmer's wife was sick, the farmer might even have to mortgage the farm to pay her medical expenses. The major's explanation that individuals should be individually responsible for themselves and their family made sense to me.

There were, of course, many more American men than American girls in Vienna, so we had dates almost every evening. Our American boyfriends didn't appreciate our talking in German with native Austrians, so I didn't have much opportunity to use what I had learned in Bolivia. I was just becoming fluent enough in German to ask night club orchestra leaders to play special dance tunes when my six-month contract with the War Department was up, and I left for home.

Before leaving, I visited a trade fair in Vienna. Businesses that had survived the war and new ones that had sprung up since were showing the wares they were producing for export. This was before any massive financial U.S. aid had reached Austria. I was impressed by the vitality of her post-war enterprises. Many were using local raw materials to create original, newly designed and crafted artifacts. Some manufacturers were exhibiting complex, precision machine tools. Austrian industry seemed to be recovering nicely from the war.

I left Vienna in June 1946 with a girlfriend from the office. We traveled by train across Europe to France, stopping en route in Frankfurt, Darmstadt, which had been bombed to rubble, Amsterdam, Paris, and finally Le Havre, whence we sailed on a ship crowded with French war brides. Upon our arrival in New York, we went to the Brooklyn Navy Yard to

sign papers separating us from the government. I was determined to leave government employment PERIOD, and asked to have all my retirement money refunded. I shook my girlfriend's hand, and vowed never to work for the government again.

Back in the States, I worked for a time in the export division of a drug company in Philadelphia. When one of the men left the firm to open his own export-import business in Mexico, he asked me to manage the office. But his plans didn't work out. So I went back home to Maryland and again began looking for a job.

As I said, I had had my fill of books in college. But I continued to study when I had a particular reason. I had learned shorthand and typing to help find a job during the Depression. I had taken private lessons in Spanish and German in anticipation of traveling to South America and Europe. But for several years, I had done no serious reading—only an occasional mystery, detective story, or novel, no non-fiction, and few if any newspapers. I decided I didn't like myself. I felt the need for mental stimulation and set out to become more intellectual. I joined the Book of the Month Club and started reading books. I joined the Foreign Policy Association and read their publications. When the opportunity to go to Mexico and use my Spanish fell through, I answered an ad in the *Washington Star* for an editorial assistant. That sounded more challenging than ordinary secretarial work. In replying to the ad, I described my schooling and work experience in and out of government and closed by saying that "I was fed up with government bureaucracy." I was called in for an interview.

The ad had been placed in the paper by Percy L. Greaves, Jr., then Executive Director of the newly organized, tax-exempt Foundation for Freedom. As I recall the interview, it was lively and stimulating. After talking for a while, he said he was still interviewing and would get back to me. He did. He offered me a job and I began work the following week in the Foundation for Freedom's under-funded, sparsely furnished, one-man, one-girl office. That was when my economic education began.

Percy set me to work organizing his files. He said I would begin to understand what he wanted as I looked through his newspaper clippings and read the papers he marked every day for me to clip. I began by making folders for the clippings and arranging them under large subject areas: government, business, international relations, etc. When I told him I would put "housing" under "business," he said that was where it should be, but not where it then belonged. I soon learned that his interest in "housing" was not in the private business of building houses, but in public housing and how government interfered and regulated the business.

I knew nothing at all about money and banking. However, I had learned from my father that inflation was due to government's printing paper money. Percy explained that, under Roosevelt's New Deal, the U.S. government didn't have to print paper money directly; it had been given the authority to create new money by printing government bonds (government promises-to-pay). In other words, the government didn't operate a dollar printing press directly, but it operated a bond printing press. The government could print paper IOUs (bonds) that could be converted into dollars through the Federal Reserve. For instance, if the government printed a million-dollar bond and gave it to the Fed, the Fed would open a million-dollar checking account in the name of the government. Then the government could write checks on this account to buy guns, pay government employees, soldiers, postmasters, social security retirees, etc. When the recipients cashed their checks, the Fed give

them newly printed Federal Reserve notes, up to the full million dollars of the government's bond which had been held as "backing" for the deposit. I was shocked! That was pure inflation! Pure stealing!

Percy invited me to lunch and talked about Pearl Harbor non-stop. He was full of the subject, having just spent an entire year with the Joint Congressional Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, trying to discover how much advance notice of the attack, if any, Roosevelt and his administration had had. I was fascinated!

When Percy was working on an article, he encouraged me to ask questions if I didn't understand. But I didn't know enough to ask questions. Yet one day I did ask, "Why wouldn't it be a good idea for the government to collect the money and distribute it to the people as needed?" Shades of the benevolent dictator idea! He answered with another question: "Who is better suited to distribute money than the person who has earned it, who had the guts, energy, ideas, initiative, industry, and brains to produce it?" From that moment on, I was "liberated" from the "enlightened dictator" idea and began to see the world through free-market eyes.

Percy liked to talk and to explain and he found me a good listener and an eager student. It was a new and exciting experience to be appreciated because I had a mind, not merely because I was a woman. I encouraged him to keep on talking and explaining, and I kept on listening and learning. He gave me some economics books to read, but I found them pretty rough going. He also gave me pamphlets published by the Foundation for Economic Education in Irvington. These I could understand.

Percy had first heard of Ludwig von Mises in 1944 when he encountered *Bureaucracy* and *Omnipotent Government* in a bookstore. He was then Research Director of the Republican National Committee doing his best to keep Roosevelt from being elected to a fourth term as President. In 1944, while he was trying to explain to voters the threat inherent in Roosevelt's interventionist New Deal programs, I was in Vienna doing no serious reading, socializing with Army officers in Vienna, and using my knowledge of German only to ask orchestra leaders to play my favorite dance tunes.

Percy had been so much impressed by Mises's two 1944 books that when *Human Action* came out in the fall of 1949 he promptly bought a copy and started reading it. By then, the Foundation for Freedom had run out of funds and closed its doors, and he was free-lancing as writer and lecturer. During these years, whenever he traveled, he carried with him Mises's 889-page *Human Action* PLUS his large 3,194-page unabridged Webster's dictionary in order to look up the words in *Human Action* that he didn't know. This experience planted the seed for Percy's slender (157-page) *Mises Made Easier: A Glossary for Ludwig von Mises's HUMAN ACTION*, published in 1974.

In 1950, Percy started writing a regular column for *Christian Economics*, a newspaper for Protestant ministers published by the Christian Freedom Foundation, and was spending most of his time in New York. When he heard about Mises's Thursday evening seminar, he registered at New York University and began attending regularly.

I was living with my parents, in the D.C. suburbs, and working in a real estate office. I wasn't yet up to reading Mises, but I had become interested in free market economics and began looking for a job in some related field. I wrote several free-market-oriented organizations, including the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) in Irvington, N.Y., asking

if they had any openings. Percy wrote a letter of recommendation on my behalf to FEE, saying I had a good understanding of the free market economy. I was asked to come to Irvington for an interview, was offered a job and started work at FEE in March 1951.

Mises was an adviser to FEE and a part-time staff member, so it was there that I first met him personally. In June/July 1951, I attended a two-week Mises seminar sponsored by *The Freeman* magazine, then a free-market oriented biweekly magazine produced in New York City and edited by John Chamberlain and Henry Hazlitt. At Percy's suggestion, I took Mises's lectures down in shorthand, transcribed them, had them multilithed and copies sent to the seminar participants. Mises's comment: "Next time, young lady, write your own book."

I began attending Mises's NYU Thursday evening seminar in the fall of 1951 and took shorthand notes at each session. I started reading *Human Action* in bits and snatches every evening—it took me two years to finish. By then, and after having listened to Mises for two years, I was a committed Misesian. For Percy, Mises's word was "gospel," and he kept me focused. Whenever I asked a question, he would answer, "What does Mises say about that?" or "Look it up in Mises."

I persuaded Leonard Read's secretary, Mary Homan, to go with me down to the city to Mises's seminar and we used to drive together every Thursday evening. Mary met Hans Sennholz at the Mises seminar and they got married in 1955. Percy and I got married eventually too, but he had a wife and family, so it took some time to work things out.

So, how did I come to Mises? It was by a long and circuitous route that wound throughout my life for many years. But in the end it all came together: my interest in people, my curiosity about how they lived and my late-developing desire for intellectual stimulation, to learn, to study and to understand. There had been clues along the way leading to an explanation of how people lived: the insight into the nature of government bureaucracy, the consequences of government price controls, and the importance of individual responsibility. But in the end Mises provided the answer. The way people live, and have lived throughout the ages, whether in caves, huts in the wilderness, suburban homes, city apartments, or skyscrapers, always depends on how they use and adapt all the things they have to get as much as possible of what they want. People's wants and goals differ; their circumstances change, and the resources available vary. From time to time, they have new ideas, learn more about the world, discover better ways to work and cooperate with others. But throughout the ages and throughout the world, the way people live depends on how they use what they have to get what they want. And they live better, more comfortable, and more happy lives when they are free to pursue their various wants and to cooperate with others in peace, confident that they will be protected from violent and coercive interference by beasts or brutes. In other words, people will cooperate peacefully with others and live better when they are free to act as they think best, confident that their lives and property will be protected. ■

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Bettina Bien Greaves compiled a two-volume annotated bibliography of books and articles by and about Mises (1993 & 1995) and was on the staff of the Foundation for Economic Education from 1951–1999. She was a student of Ludwig von Mises and attended his NYU Graduate Seminar in Economic Theory for 18 years, from 1951 until Mises's retirement in 1969.

## HOW I BECAME A CLASSICAL LIBERAL

IT IS INTERESTING TO REFLECT on the people and events that shape one's fundamental views. My parents taught me both personal responsibility and accountability. These are cornerstones of liberal thinking. My father was a farmer and my mother a teacher, and they typified the middle America of the 1950s. While they sent their three children to college, my parents were not very interested in philosophical, political, and economic ideas, and neither was I during high school and my first couple of years of college. The Russians had launched Sputnik and they were ahead of us in the space race. I was going to help change that by becoming a physicist.

But things began to change during my sophomore year at Ottawa University, a small (600 students) liberal arts school about 60 miles from where I grew up in Kansas. That's when I took my first economics course and met an enthusiastic young professor who had just finished his doctoral degree at the University of Kansas. His name was Wayne Angell and he exerted a major impact on my life. After taking a course in economics it dawned on me that I liked economics and did better in it than physics. As I reflected on one of the basic principles of my economics class, the law of comparative advantage, it suddenly occurred to me that maybe my comparative advantage was economics rather than physics. Thus, I changed my major to economics.

In essence, Dr. Angell was the OU Economics Department. He taught virtually every course, and I took all of them. Like just about everyone else at the time, Angell used Paul Samuelson's *Economics* as the text in the Intro course, but he often criticized it. It was obvious that Angell thought markets worked well, and he had little confidence in the ability of government programs to improve on market outcomes. Angell was a Republican and a strong backer of Richard Nixon during the presidential election of 1960. However, his family owned a large wheat farm in western Kansas and Professor Angell was actively involved in the operation. I vividly remember how, on the day following Kennedy's electoral victory over Nixon, Angell explained in class how Kennedy's agricultural subsidies and price support programs would approximately double the income of big wheat farmers like himself. Jokingly he remarked, "At least this will make it a little easier to accept Nixon's defeat."

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, I realize what a great undergraduate educational experience I had. It was a fantastic opportunity to take about 30 hours of economics from a person who would later become a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and Chief Economist for Bear Stearns. In many ways, Angell was ahead of his time. He was a critic of Keynes and the concept of the Phillips Curve long before expectations were

integrated into macroeconomics. He taught his students about “government failure” prior to the Public Choice Revolution. To this day, I cannot think of a more enjoyable way to spend an evening than having a lengthy discussion of economics and related issues with Wayne, much like those that used to occur both inside and outside of his classes during my undergraduate years. My wife Amy and I count Wayne and his wife Betty among our dearest friends.

After completing my undergraduate degree, I attended graduate school in economics at Washington State University. My knowledge of graduate programs was limited and I chose WSU because the program provided me with financial aid in the form of a teaching assistantship. I quickly discovered that the WSU graduate program was vastly different from my undergraduate training. Keynes was king among the WSU economics faculty of that era and the University of Chicago was the incarnation of evil. In a graduate-level seminar in public finance, a friend and I used to keep track of the number of times the professor attempted to refute an argument merely by pointing out that a supporter of the position had some association with the University of Chicago. As I recall, 33 was the record for a one-hour class. When asked a question about Milton Friedman’s views concerning the importance of monetary stability, the leading macroeconomist on the faculty responded by pointing out that Friedman was a “crackpot who favored things like privatizing the Post Office.”

Early on, I realized that my choice of graduate programs was a mistake, but I decided to stick it out for the entire year. This proved to be a wise decision. The course work was not that difficult and, because I had already decided not to pursue a doctoral degree at WSU, I had time to do a lot of reading. Even though I had read Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom* and various libertarian publications such as the *Freeman* and the *New Individualist Review* as an undergraduate, I was not well grounded in classical liberal thought. My year “wandering in the wilderness” at WSU provided me with the time to read works by Friedman, Hayek, Mises, and other leading free market economists.

The year at WSU also motivated me to want to do something about the under-representation of classical liberal thought in American colleges and universities. Increasingly, I began thinking about becoming a college professor. By the summer of 1963, however, I faced a practical problem: I was married, my wife and I had a child, and we had very little money. Thus, we moved to Seattle and I began working as a purchasing agent for the Boeing Company. I bought electrical connectors for 707s and 727s all day and read classical political economy literature in my spare time. I also got involved in Barry Goldwater’s ill-fated 1964 campaign for president. Young and naïve, I was convinced right up to the night of the election that Goldwater was going to be elected president.

It was also during this period that I attended a student workshop sponsored by the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, now the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. One of the speakers was Donald Gordon, a professor of economics at the University of Washington. In a private conversation following Gordon’s lecture, I asked him several questions about the Department of Economics at the University of Washington. He informed me that the department had recently hired a number of young professors from the University of Chicago and, if one wanted to become a professional economist, it was an excellent place to get an education. Following that discussion with Professor Gordon, I knew that I wanted to return to graduate school and pursue my dream of becoming a college professor. Shortly thereafter, I entered the UW Economics Program.

During the latter half of the 1960s, the University of Washington was an exciting place to study economics. The chairman of the department was Douglass C. North, who would later win the Nobel Prize for his work in economic history. Even though I was not particularly interested in economic history, I took several courses from Professor North, and he was on my doctoral dissertation committee. I had the opportunity to take microeconomics from Walter Oi, whose empirical work on the economics of conscription eventually convinced even the Department of Defense that it was a good idea to abolish the draft. I studied history of economic thought from Professor Gordon before he was wooed away to the University of Rochester. I took several core courses from John Floyd, Yoram Barzel, and Allan Hynes, all of whom were recent graduates from the University of Chicago. Tom Borcherding, a prodigy of Jim Buchanan's, introduced me to public choice and the writings of Buchanan, Tullock, Niskanen, and others of the public choice school. Each of these people exerted an enormous impact on my thought process and I am hugely indebted to each of them.

Finally, the works of two of the profession's giants, Milton Friedman and James Buchanan, have exerted a major impact on both my professional career and classical liberal views. I never took a course from either and did not really meet them personally until the late 1970s. Nonetheless, they have been my heroes for many years. Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* is the most influential book I have ever read. After reading the book in 1963, I could hardly wait to see him in action. While still in graduate school at the University of Washington, a couple of friends and I drove 200 miles to hear him give a lecture at Reed College. We were awe-struck at how he was able to disarm hostile questioners and destroy the arguments of his antagonists. I also remember going to the auditorium nearly an hour early to hear his 1968 presidential lecture to the American Economic Association that, in effect, demolished the Phillips curve argument.

While the writings of Friedman provided the foundation for my market liberalism, those of Buchanan shaped my views with regard to how one should expect the political process to work and why it was important to both limit the powers of government and keep them widely dispersed. His public choice views also motivated me to write the first edition of *Economics: Private and Public Choice*. At the time, introductory principles texts (1) discussed the workings of markets, (2) explained why they often failed to achieve the ideal outcomes (market failure), and (3) indicated how government intervention could improve things. There was "market failure," but there was no "government failure." The primary goal of *Economics: Private and Public Choice* was to correct this imbalance. Even though he was unaware of it, Jim Buchanan was the godfather of this text, which is now in its 10th edition.

I also owe a major debt to many others, particularly colleagues, and co-authors. As the above comments indicate, teachers and writers have exerted a major impact on my thought process. Moreover, teaching and writing has been the focus of my professional career. During times of discouragement, reflection on those who have influenced my own life has often provided me with the inspiration to continue and to reach for higher levels. May God bless teachers and writers, particularly those with classical liberal views. ■

## EMBRACING LIBERTARIANISM

THE FIRST ONE TO INFLUENCE my thinking in a libertarian way must have been my life-long friend (since we were each about 4 years old), Steven Schwartzman. Steve is the libertarian son of Jack Schwartzman, who is the author of *Rebels of Individualism* and was Editor-in-Chief of *Fragments*, a libertarian/Georgist publication that Jack produced from 1963 until his death in 2001. The Schwartzman family lived right around the corner from my family in Franklin Square on Long Island.

During our high-school years (1960–1963), Steve and I and several other interested students from our school attended meetings at Jack Schwartzman’s law office with Jack and other luminaries from the *Fragments* group. We listened to these elders discuss topics such as individualism, Henry David Thoreau, Ayn Rand, and Henry George. These sessions firmed up my belief in individualism, but the Georgist idea of taxing land never made sense to me and stood in sharp contrast to the otherwise libertarian philosophy of the *Fragments* group.

The first writers to influence me in a libertarian direction were Henry David Thoreau and H. L. Mencken, whose works I began reading in high school. Then in my senior year of high school, our English teacher required us to read *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. I enjoyed it so much that I ran out and bought and read all her other books, and I even subscribed to *The Objectivist*, which was the official organ of her cult. I liked Rand’s economics and her strong support for individual rights, but I thought she was off the mark in her attack on altruism and her glorification of business tycoons. The love-life of the characters in her novels also struck me as out of touch with reality from the male perspective.

At Grove City College (GCC) I was influenced by two classmates: John Peters and Walter Grinder. John had come to GCC after corresponding with Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard, who both recommended GCC as the best college for studying Austrian Economics. By the time John arrived at GCC he had already read most of Mises’s and Rothbard’s works, as well works by others of the Austrian School. He brought a bookcase full of these books with him. When I met John, I had never heard of Rothbard, I had never read any of Mises’s books, and the thought of reading economic literature struck me as too tedious to pursue.

GCC is a liberal arts college affiliated with the Presbyterian church. When I attended GCC (1963–1967), the school required all students to take courses in history, English, the Bible, philosophy, a foreign language, mathematics, and science, regardless of the subject

that the student chose to major in. Each department established its own attendance requirements. Most departments allowed students to skip from zero to three class sessions per semester, but the English department allowed students to cut as many classes as we wanted to. I thought the English courses were a waste of time, so I asked a friend in my class to keep me informed about upcoming exams, and I attended English classes only when there was a test. On the days when my English class had no test, which was usually the case, I audited Hans Sennholz's classes in economics instead. I began to realize that economics was not as dull as I thought. I ended up auditing two or three economics classes and actually taking three or four others.

John started feeding me essays by Rothbard on political and historical topics. Each Rothbard essay caused me to have an epiphany. I adopted new attitudes on the cold war, American imperialism, disarmament, and collusion between business leaders and government. And I became an anarcho-capitalist. I had been a near anarchist before, when I was under the influence of Thoreau, but I back-slid a bit when I read Ayn Rand's books and Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*. Conversations with John Peters (who became my roommate in my junior and senior years at college) and reading Rothbard's essays convinced me that anarchism logically follows from the non-aggression principle, which I was already committed to.

Observing the fascination with which John read Austrian economic literature got me curious enough to try it. I started with the best. I read von Mises's *Human Action* on my summer vacation between my junior and senior years. I now believe that no one is well educated unless they have read *Human Action*. I spent more time in college reading books that had nothing to do with the courses I was taking than I did studying for my courses—and my grades reflected this. The books that influenced me during this period include: *Theory and History*, *Socialism*, and *Epistemological Problems of Economics* by Mises; *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* by F. A. Hayek; *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant; *What Social Classes Owe Each Other* by William Graham Sumner; and *The Man versus the State and Social Statics* by Herbert Spencer.

Sometimes I would become obsessed with an issue, and I would shut myself in my dorm room for two or three days, cut all my classes, and write about the issue until I had resolved it to my satisfaction. For example, when I read *Human Action* I noticed that Mises argued for determinism on the grounds that it follows from the law of causality, but when I read "The Mantle of Science" by Rothbard he argued for free will. So I stayed in my room, thought and wrote about the issue, and when I emerged two or three days later I had changed my opinion and agreed with Mises.

On another occasion, Rothbard's essays on war and disarmament caused me to hibernate for a couple days. When I rejoined the outside world, I had changed my views to agree with Rothbard's.

The only other hibernation event that I recall concerned the issue of punishment. It struck me that punishment might not be consistent with the non-aggression principle, but Rothbard argued strongly in favor of eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth, and stripe-for-stripe retribution. After thinking about it for two or three days, I came out of my room opposed to punishment, and I have held that view ever since.

As much as I admired John Peters for having read so much libertarian literature, John, in turn, looked up to our classmate Walter Grinder, who had read even more. John and Walt began going to coffee shops and having long conversations about economics, history, and political philosophy. I began to tag along with John to these coffee-shop meetings. I listened and learned a lot.

John corresponded with Murray Rothbard and arranged for us to visit him in New York over one of our school breaks. John knew enough about economics to have an intelligent conversation with Rothbard, and I knew my way around New York City well enough to find Murray's apartment, so we made a good team. Also, I got my parents to put us up at their house on Long Island. The meeting went well, and John arranged another visit. Walter Grinder went with us this time, and my parents graciously put us all up. Rothbard was very impressed with Walter.

After graduation I got a job with IBM in Kingston, New York, and I continued to visit the Rothbards periodically. Joey Rothbard always seemed glad to see me. Several times she dragged poor Murray out of bed to entertain me when I dropped in on them too early in the afternoon. Joey was a practicing Presbyterian, and I think one reason why she liked me to visit her husband was so that he could include more goyim in his circle of friends and followers. I got to know most of the people in Rothbard's inner circle: Leonard Liggio, Jerry Woloz, Joe Peden, Walter Block, Robert Smith, Jerry Tuccille, Roy Childs, Karl Hess, Gerald O'Driscoll, Mario Rizzo, et. al.

Walter Grinder and his wife and daughter moved to the Metropolitan area, and I visited them frequently for the next few years and eagerly absorbed more knowledge from Walter.

After a thirty-year career as a technical writer and editor for IBM, I retired in 1997. Since then I have created my own website and gathered together all the libertarian articles that I have written over the years that were published in *The Grove City College Collegian*, *The Libertarian Forum*, the *Atlantis News*, *The Abolitionist*, *Outlook*, *Formulations*, and *Fragments*. I also finished writing a book on justice and published it on my website: *Enforceable Rights: A Libertarian Theory of Justice*.

Over the years I have been involved with attempts to establish a libertarian nation, participated in libertarian scholars conferences, was a founding member of the Radical Libertarian Alliance, and have been a Libertarian Party candidate three times. In this past election cycle my sons Matthew and Jesse and I were all Libertarian Party candidates here in Raleigh, North Carolina. See *Operation Atlantis and the Radical Libertarian Alliance: Observations of a Fly on the Wall* for my perspective on libertarian activities in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s. ■

ROTHBARD AND HAYEK:  
A PERSONAL MEMORY

BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINES OF THE LIFE and work of Murray N. Rothbard and F.A. Hayek—listing their major achievements and their accomplishments, awards and honors—are easily available. Rather, I thought I would recount a few of the many fond memories I have of these two men, which might give you a small sense of what they were like and how I felt toward them.

I first met Murray and Joey in the mid-1950s, soon after starting college, through George Reisman, who had been a friend of mine since junior high school. George and I formed part of a group of somewhat strange kids who had little in common with our fellow students. While we shared a wry sense of humor that kept us continually laughing whenever we were together, we each had our own private eccentricity, George's being to read Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* from cover to cover while still in the ninth grade. George had managed to find his way to Ludwig von Mises's Thursday evening seminar at New York University and I began joining him when I moved back to New York City from Ithaca in 1956. It was there that I became acquainted with Murray and Joey, and this soon flourished into a very close friendship.

From that time until Murray's death in 1995, their apartment on 88th Street and Broadway was a second New York home for me whenever I visited the city, and I felt as comfortable there as at my mother's apartment in Queens. Nor was I the only regular guest. Among the regulars were George Reisman, Ralph Raico, and Leonard Liggio who, together with Murray and Joey, spent most of our time together doubled over with laughter at our burlesques of the social democratic left and the *National Review* right.

Murray and Joey's guests, especially we regulars, were always warmly received and made to feel welcomed no matter how late we stayed, which occasionally was as late as five or six in the morning. Joey was a terribly generous hostess and no matter how often I or other members of our group showed up, she would bring out a tray laden with liquor and mixes.

Since we were all ardent movie fans, we often went to the movie houses on Broadway, especially to the New Yorker, a revival house that served us in the same way as does Turner Classic Movies today. And it seemed that when we weren't spoofing our enemies or composing parody operas (Murray's magnum opus was a Randian operetta entitled "Mozart was a Red") we spent our evenings playing board games (nothing as intellectual as chess, mind you, but those whose boxes were customarily marked "fun for ages 8 to 80") like Mille Borne, Monopoly,

Scrabble, and, if we felt particularly adult, Diplomacy. Our favorite was Risk, which gave rise to Murray's perennial comment, which we were forever repeating: "Harry him in the Congo!"

We were all keen political buffs, Murray—who read three or four New York newspapers every day—far more than the rest of us, and we spent the time between going to movies and playing games discussing contemporary politics and libertarian theory. We were forever posing theoretical questions that hinged on some incredibly complex issue of responsibility and trying to work out its libertarian implications. "Should I be legally culpable for the destruction of someone's property if I am ordered to destroy it under threat of your harming my wife?" "Who's responsible if you throw me through someone's plate glass window?" And on and on. We spent hours trying to work out the minutiae of libertarian theory, avoiding no hard issues from children's rights to intellectual property.

When not debating theoretical issues, we'd end up discussing some topic in history, economics, sociology, or that day's headlines. It soon became evident to all of us how truly amazing was the depth and breadth of Murray's knowledge. He appears to have read everything and could cite the relevant bibliography on almost any topic that came up. One of our more erudite games involved the Book Review section of the Sunday *New York Times*. One of us would read the book title and as brief a description as a quick scan of the review would allow, and the others would then have to guess, given the political inclinations of the Book Review's editorial staff, who had been chosen to review the book. Looking back on those days it is amazing to me how often we guessed correctly.

Everyone familiar with Rothbard's writings is aware that he wrote a truly prodigious amount. What is not as well known is that he seems to have totally mastered the literature in those fields in which he had an interest. He had a vast library and, unlike the books in my own library, all of Murray's books had been read, and read with care. All one need do is scan a book out of Murray's library, and he will find marginal comments in Murray's hands scribbled on each page ("Bull \_\_\_\_!", "Ugh!" "Right on!", etc.), and that almost every line on every page was underlined. One of the great mysteries for all who knew him, at least at the outset, was where on earth he found the time to turn out the dozens of books, hundreds of articles, and literally thousands of letters he wrote and on top of it to read so much. In addition to have written a massive amount, he seemed to have read everything that came within his grasp, newspapers, magazines, journals, newsletters, even flyers and advertisers.

I discovered the answer to this conundrum one day when reading an interview with W. Somerset Maugham, who was asked how he could turn out so many novels and short stories when he partied every evening. His reply was that if he devoted only four hours a day to writing, he'd be able to produce three or four pages each day. That meant, he pointed out, that if he were to keep to that schedule regularly, he could produce no less than 1,000 pages a year! I don't mean to suggest that Murray's schedule was the same as was Maugham's, but he certainly devoted a good part of almost every day to reading and writing, and even if he spent his evenings in conversation and otherwise enjoying the company of his friends, that left him each afternoon in which to work, which he did religiously. I don't recall ever going over to his apartment without finding him in the midst of either reading or writing.

Murray composed at the typewriter, footnoting his material in the text itself. During my last year as an undergraduate at City College, I agreed to take on the job of typing the

second volume of *Man, Economy, and State*. I must say that it was one of the most pleasurable work experiences I've ever had. Not only was I provided with an endless supply of Pepsi-Cola and potato chips, but I got the chance to work under two good-humored and accommodating employers who excused every failing in their employee, while at the same time having had the opportunity to read and discuss a first-rate text in economic theory. One of my major subjects as an undergraduate had been economics, but I confess to have learned more economics during the six-month period I spent typing Murray's manuscript than I did during my whole undergraduate career.

There are few things more irritating than having to defend a proposition against someone who clearly has given almost no thought to the issue but is speaking off the top of his head, and Murray, like most of us, had little tolerance for such people. However, when asked to explain a point one didn't understand or about which one was unclear, Murray was extremely patient and uncomplaining, and doubtless this must have accounted for why he was regarded as a fine teacher at both Brooklyn Poly and UNLV while still being incapable of suffering fools gladly.

Those of us who knew Murray in the 1950s were aware that he disliked traveling and that he had a phobia about flying. In this, as in so many other ways, Joey's forbearance was almost superhuman, as she slowly enlarged Murray's world to include places as far away as eastern Europe, Asia, and South America. I remember with absolute clarity receiving a postcard from Murray from Washington, D.C. after his very first flight, on which he'd written in bold letters: "Finally made it!"

Murray's strong opposition to the Vietnam War and his sympathies with the New Left's distrust of government led, in November 1970, to his being invited to speak in Los Angeles at what I vaguely recall was billed as a Festival of Light and Freedom, or some such New Age title. Among the other speakers, if my memory serves, were Thomas Szasz, the foremost authority on the relation between psychiatry and law, Tim Leary, the apostle of LSD, Paul Goodman, the author of one of the 1960s most influential books of social criticism and the guru of the New Left, and Nathaniel Brandon, who was then archbishop of the Randian Church. The organizers' aim, apparently, was to bring together the establishment's major critics in the hope of creating a grand coalition that would fuse elements of the drug culture, libertarianism, and opposition to the military-industrial complex into a new, impregnable alliance. But despite the many cries of "Right On" that punctuated Murray's speech, it soon became apparent that he and most of the audience were on very different wavelengths and that their attempt to fuse Rothbard with the Grateful Dead was doomed to failure.

Most of those who participated at the Festival were simply incapable of appreciating just how conservative Murray's approach to social issues was, and that neither he nor Joey carried around their own roach clip nor were ready to join in sharing a plate of hash brownies. Murray might have sympathized with some of the anti-orthodox elements of the counter-culture, but those who knew him were keenly aware of where he stood on love-ins, dropping acid, and turning his back on industrialism in favor of the world of unspoiled nature.

In 1974 the Mt. Pelerin Society held its meetings in Brussels and, via separate routes, Murray and Joey and I arranged to meet there. I had flown to southern France to visit Lee

Brozen, who had a summer home there. She and her two boys were planning a leisurely drive to Brussels, and I had agreed to accompany them. It was a marvelous trip, made even more pleasant by our decision to use a Michelin restaurant guide to determine our route.

Meanwhile, Murray and Joey had met up with Ralph Raico in Germany, and they made their own way by car to Brussels. As is customary, the Mt. Pelerin meetings were held in one of the most expensive hotels in the city, as befitted the fact that almost all attendees were either think-tank executives traveling on expense accounts, South American latifundia owners, for whom hundred-dollar bills were small change, or the officers of the Society itself, a self-perpetuating oligarchy who, thanks to its members' dues, traveled around the world in first-class accommodations.

One of my fondest memories of our stay in Brussels was our first evening there. Following dinner a number of us had found ourselves in Murray and Joey's hotel room, laughing and joking as we recounted our recent European adventures. Over the course of the evening more and more people kept dropping by, to the point where the Rothbard's room began to look like the Marx Brothers's cabin in *A Night at the Opera*. We had started to sing and, in a fit of bravado, had decided to do the whole Cole Porter canon. Someone, I think it was John O'Sullivan, maintained that he needed something to lubricate his throat if he were to sound his best.

Since Cole Porter clearly had priority, Joey opened the room's minibar and we all helped ourselves to whatever was available. Needless to say, by the time we left the room the bar was completely empty. Neither Murray or Joey gave a thought to what their hospitality would end up costing, but I can imagine the bill turned out to be staggering. I know this because, while staying at the same hotel, I made the mistake of having the hotel do eight or nine days' worth of laundry and cleaning. I had not had the opportunity to get anything cleaned while traveling north from the Mediterranean and figured I'd splurge instead of waiting until I got back to New York. There is no way I could have predicted what I would have been charged for a week's worth of laundering and cleaning. I shall never forget my final bill; while the room's substantial cost was perfectly predictable, the cleaning bill was \$225.00!

F.A. Hayek began his career at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1950, and during his tenure there he was associated with the Committee on Social Thought, an interdisciplinary department headed by the eminent economic historian John Ulrich Nef. Milton Friedman reports, and there seems to be every reason to accept its accuracy, that the Department of Economics was reluctant to hire Hayek because his approach to capital theory was at odds with departmental orthodoxy. Equally important, Hayek's salary while at Chicago was paid by the Volcker Fund, and the Department of Economics, according to Friedman, was opposed to accepting a member appointed from outside the department.

I first met Frederick Hayek in the fall of 1960, when I entered the Committee on Social Thought to do graduate work with him. I had been preceded the year prior by my close friend Ralph Raico, whom I had met in New York and who was a regular visitor at the home of Murray and Joey Rothbard. When I joined the Committee in 1960, Hayek had been at Chicago for ten years and was to remain for only another two. Although his tenure there was brief, he had a substantial impact both on the Committee on Social Thought and on the reputation of the University as a center for free-market thought.

Hayek was a somewhat formal man, invariably considerate and good-natured. He was immensely erudite and had a thorough knowledge of the literature in economics and social and political philosophy, both historical and contemporary, gained from books and articles in half a dozen languages. Hayek's primary concerns, by the time he arrived at Chicago, were in the area of social theory, although he continued to remain active as an economist and regularly taught an excellent graduate course in the history of economics prior to Adam Smith.

Hayek always impressed me as self-possessed and unflappable, although he occasionally allowed himself to loosen up, at least two or three times in my presence. Hayek's office, as were the offices of all members of the Committee on Social Thought, were on the fifth, or top, floor of the Social Sciences Building, an old Gothic structure at the corner of University Avenue and 59th Street. For some reason, probably because it had least seniority among the departments that made up the Social Sciences Division, the Committee was relegated to the eaves of the building, and each of its cramped and bleak offices were jammed into its gables. Hayek's was a particularly small office with room for one desk, a couple of chairs other than his own, a filing cabinet, and a table tucked against the wall directly across from the door.

Study on the Committee was done through tutorials, in which students studying a particular work or author would meet privately with that member of the Committee most conversant with the topic. Most of the time, this presented no problem since, given the diversity of topics being studied by each of us, it was usually the case that we met alone with our instructor. In this particular case, however, for some reason there were no less than three of us meeting with Hayek at the same time, three students and only two chairs!

Having arrived last, I was compelled to use the table as a seat, which I tried to mount by turning Hayek's wastepaper basket upside down to use as a step—all this while Hayek continued to complete the point he was making when I entered his office. It probably comes as no surprise that my attempt proved disastrous. The wastepaper basket overturned and rolled away, I fell to the ground, and the table, unable to sustain the pressure I was placing on it as I grabbed for it, tipped over, knocking one of the other student's chairs into Hayek's desk. All and all, the effect was that Hayek's office looked a shambles, but to my great surprise and pleasure Hayek was guffawing to the point where his eyes were tearing. It took several minutes before decorum was reestablished, but my dreadful embarrassment was substantially eased by the humor Hayek seems to have found in the incident.

During the many years I knew Hayek, I recall only one occasion when I saw him really angry. It occurred soon after the death of Dag Hammarskjöld, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, who was killed in a plane crash in the Congo in September 1961 while attempting to bring some order to the chaotic situation that obtained there. Hammarskjöld, an economist by training, was, like Hayek, particularly interested in business cycles. Indeed, his doctoral dissertation at the University of Uppsala had been on that topic. Unlike Hayek, however, he was a firm adherent of planned economies and of the need for government intervention in the market. Despite the ideological differences that separated them, however, Hayek and he became and remained quite friendly.

Soon after Hammarskjöld's death, William Buckley, in some comments attacking Hammarskjöld that appeared, I seem to recall, in the pages of *National Review* had maintained

that Hammarskjöld had been a less than honest man and had suggested that he cheated at cards—the phrase, “had an ace up his sleeve” comes to mind. This attack on Hammarskjöld’s personal integrity so infuriated Hayek that he wrote a blistering letter to Buckley denouncing his maliciousness and asking that *National Review* stop sending him future issues of the magazine. Buckley responded to Hayek’s letter, regretting Hayek’s reaction and pointing out that the characterization was only “un jeu de mot,” but it made no difference to Hayek, whom, I believe, remained only on the most formal terms with Buckley for the rest of his life.

I indicated that Hayek was given to a certain level of formality, and this was reflected in his appearance. He was extremely distinguished-looking, with an air of courtly elegance about him that, at least in my case, discouraged close familiarity. Whenever we spoke, I always called him Professor, even though the last time I saw him I was in my forties and we had known each other for over twenty years.

Hayek was not an effusive person, but I suspect that he genuinely liked me. There were two occasions when he was demonstratively warm. The first occurred at a going-away dinner that was held for him by the Committee on Social Thought on the eve of his departure from Chicago in the spring of 1962. I was chosen to speak on behalf of his graduate students, and among the things for which I thanked Hayek was his generosity in lending his name to the *New Individualist Review*, a publication several of his students on the Committee had started.

I was then the journal’s editor-in-chief, and as such it fell upon my shoulders to turn down an article that had been submitted by John Nef, the Committee’s chairman. Nef, who had done excellent work in European economic history and had become one of the leading scholars in his field, had, by this point in his life, almost totally lost touch with reality. I assume that he was allowed to continue on as chairman of the Committee because the position was one in which he could do little if any damage. It was, however, somewhat of a strain on the few students on the Committee who had anything to do with him. In one case I went through a whole tutorial with him in which he referred to me by another student’s name. On leaving his office, I realized that I had forgotten my umbrella and once again knocked on his door. This time he greeted me by my correct name although it had been only a matter of a couple of minutes since I left.

The situation with respect to his submission to the *New Individualist Review* put the editors in an impossible situation. There really were no circumstances that could justify the journal carrying Nef’s crackpot article, which was a plea that the nations of the world choose Jesus Christ to replace Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary General of the UN. Nef seemed to take it quite well when I told him that the editors did not think that our small student journal was an appropriate home for a piece of this sort, which deserved far wider distribution.

However, he made his feelings abundantly clear at the farewell dinner given for Hayek a month later when he referred to Hayek’s graduate students—that is, the group that edited *NIR*, as unfeeling, calculating machines whose only interest in life revolved around questions of profit and loss, and that none of us was worthy of having Hayek as our supervisor. Needless to say, everyone in the room, especially Hayek, was stunned by these comments and Hayek, in his own remarks went out of his way to speak glowingly of us and, to my great pleasure, especially of me.

The second occasion when Hayek showed an unusual amount of warmth toward me was at the 1982 meeting of the Mt. Pelerin Society, which was held in Berlin. Although we had occasionally corresponded, I had not seen Hayek for five or six years, so it was particularly pleasant to find him active and in good health. We both entered the main reception hall where the meetings were to be held at about the same time, but at opposite ends of an enormously large room, and we both appear to have noticed each other at about the same moment. Both of us began to briskly walk towards each other. Hayek appeared genuinely delighted to see me; when we met, he beamed down at me and I was surprised to find that, in shaking hands, he put his other arm around me in what amounted to a half-hug. He went on to tell me how pleased he was to see me again and that he had often thought of me. It was the last time I was to see him and I remember that meeting with great fondness and affection.

In composing these comments, it has occurred to me how terribly lucky I've been to have had the opportunity to get to know both Murray and Hayek. They were both truly brilliant men from whom I have profited immensely. Indeed, they—together with three other great men I've been fortunate enough to know or study with—have given shape to everything I've ever written. I can claim no originality because everything I've composed can be traced back to them. One of my regrets is that I did not get to know one of these three, Ludwig von Mises, better than I did. He, together with my old college professor of intellectual history, Hans Kohn, and Sir Isaiah Berlin, under whom I studied at Oxford, are all responsible for how I understand the world. But this is especially true of Murray Rothbard and Friedrich Hayek, whom I knew best and whom I loved most. ■

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ERNEST HANCOCK

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## BEING LIBERTARIAN—I ONLY SEEK THE TRUTH

BY THE TIME I WAS 28 years of age in 1989, I had been lied to far too many times by representatives of the government for me to put any faith in what they had to say.

As with most libertarian activists, I had personal experiences with government that made it clear that they were not the defenders of freedom, but its enemy. I was young and naive and wanted to help my father's company help himself and the U.S.A. by exporting his already

domestically successful product overseas. What I was exposed to at every level of government made it very clear to me that the world was not as it was being reported on the nightly news. Soon after, I realized that the media was part of the deception. Everywhere I turned there was another layer of red tape and lies that provided nothing more than jobs for those who produced nothing in return. With my 4th child just born in 1989, I was heavily invested in the future of this country and keenly aware that our government had gone over to the dark side. Just this last year we have been first hand witnesses to the passage of laws that I didn't expect for another 10–15 years, and many thought that I was exaggerating even then.

The only people that I came into contact with that had a full understanding of what was going on, without having to embellish it, were libertarians. They were clear minded, for the most part, and had the understanding of the need for a clear message that wasn't cluttered up with details of what people should do with their freedom once they got it. A good libertarian friend, Kent Van Cleave, made it very clear that libertarianism is a means to an end. Libertarianism is the process principled people advocate to regain their liberty in order to deserve the freedom that they seek. The "goals" are left up to the individual. The idea that you can force freedom on someone else is stink'n think'n from the beginning.

I found what I was looking for. I was free to do as I wished as long as I didn't initiate force upon another thus violating their rights . . . cool. My first contacts were Gary Fallon, Mike Dugger, Kathy Harrer and Rick Tompkins. These people answered all of my questions (first time that had ever happened) and I would later come back with more. They were all principled, articulate; and I strove to be as consistent. A copy of L. Neil Smith's speech to the Salt Lake City Libertarian Party National Convention in 1992 was given to Mike Dugger by Rick & Kathy. They saw it presented in person and knew we would like it. Our favorite part was the quote, "Those Nerf Libertarians with their Foam Core Platform . . ." We knew exactly what he meant, and we immediately became friends with him and his family and fans of his books. Arizona activism was greatly influenced by this no-compromise, call 'em as you see 'em, in the face of the enemy style of L. Neil Smith tempered with the easy-going demeanor of Rick Tompkins. Each of us added our own special energy to what quickly became the most voter-supported libertarian group in the world. Decentralization was the key. . . "Freedom baby, yeah!"

I quickly understood the difference between large and small "L" libertarians all too well. To me, electoral politics was nothing more than a free soap box for the advocacy of libertarianism while others saw it as a path to their own seats of power. While many of my mentors were students of Spooner, Rothbard, Mises, Hazlitt, and Rand I was more in search of a "bumper sticker" philosophy. I did a lot of reading but found that *Atlas Shrugged* covered most of the philosophical bases, and I was far more interested in Hogan, Heinlien and L. Neil Smith's Science Fiction for the activist in me to be entertained and stimulated.

I would read much of what was "assigned" me by my new libertarian friends and found that the common theme was the same, "voluntary association at all levels" was the key. Almost all of the words were in support of this doctrine.

I came to the realization that the world was broken down into two major types: those that wish to be left alone and those that will not leave them alone. Activism is nothing more than making certain that there are consequences for unprincipled behavior by individuals

and/or groups that would otherwise know no end to what they can do to satisfy their lust for control over others.

I am very happy that so many of us have taken this journey together over the years and that so many like-minded people have become our new friends. I no longer feel that I am the most radical and sometimes am considered one of the calm activists . . . just not often.

Soon after my “awakening,” I was constantly told that only after I contacted my lawmakers, ran for office and used the court system would I truly be able to say that the system was broken. Well, I have stood for at least 6 elections, campaign chaired several, been a party officer several times, filed at least 4 federal lawsuits Pro Se and argued one before the 9th Circuit. I have filed over 6 State lawsuits, with 2 being argued before the State Supreme Court in Arizona. I have championed several initiatives and have caused the passage of more “Ernie Laws” than I can count (most of them bad laws in response to my activities). I have the attention and often even the respect of many politicians and the media for my advocacy of no-compromise libertarian activism while helping to drive the issues in many campaign seasons. Soooo, I think that I am very qualified to say that the system is very broken.

My partner and friend Marc Victor and I have focused a great deal of our attention on making sure that each year our friends and supporters are updated at the annual Freedom Summit, [www.freedomsummit.com](http://www.freedomsummit.com), that takes place each October here in Phoenix, Arizona. We are of the opinion that there is no centralized plan for freedom and encourage liberty lovers to contribute their talents and observations each year at the Freedom Summit, so that we are all fully armed with the information and contacts important to libertarians.

So how did I become a libertarian? It was a natural evolution of my desire to “Live Free and Prosper.” ■

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Ernest Hancock has been a libertarian activist in Arizona informing the masses via campaigns, court challenges, and general rabble rousing as a method to use mass media for the greatest benefit.

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JOHN HASNAS

## THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG-TIME LIBERTARIAN

HOW DID I BECOME A LIBERTARIAN? It happened in the fifth grade at Public School #6 in Woodmere, New York at approximately 9:10 in the morning. In my elementary school, we began every day with the Pledge of Allegiance. Each morning, I and 29 of my

ten-year-olds colleagues would tramp to school around 8:45, hang up our coats, take off our boots or rubbers when the weather was bad, put our books in the old-fashioned lift-top desks with attached chairs, and fool around while waiting for the bell to ring at 9:00 a.m. When it did, we would all quiet down, stand in line to the right of our desks, place our right hand over our hearts, and look at the upper right-hand corner of the classroom. Hanging there was an American flag next to a loudspeaker attached to the school's public address system. Immediately after the bell, the school principal's voice would emanate from the loudspeaker and lead us in the Pledge. Every school day for each of the last five years, we had mumbled the same meaningless words in unison, continually reaffirming our allegiance to the republic for Richard Stanz. But this day, something was different.

Immediately following the Pledge, our teacher instructed us to take out our "social studies" books. This was the day we were reading about the Soviet Union and why it was such a bad place. Our book explained (in language appropriate for fifth graders) that the Soviet Union was bad because its government enforced conformity on its citizens. To drive this point home, the book contained a picture of an elementary school class in the USSR showing the boys and girls lined up beside their desks (all wearing uniforms and hats with little red stars on them) reciting something in unison. Looking at the picture, something clicked in my ten-year-old brain and I thought, "Hey, didn't we just do that? If government-enforced conformity is bad in Russia, why isn't it bad here?" I remember looking around the room expecting a similar reaction from my prepubescent colleagues. I detected none. But I nevertheless began to regard the pronouncements of the adult authority figures in my state-run school with a little skepticism. And as we all know, the willingness to question authority puts one on the slippery slope to libertarianism.

This story, which is as true as an adult reconstruction of a childhood event can be, is, of course, not a full account of what led me to libertarianism. But it is the story I tell because it reflects my belief that libertarianism is a position one arrives at through a process of open inquiry. The number of libertarians who became so through indoctrination or who learn it at their mother's knee must be vanishingly small.

I usually flatter myself that I adopted a libertarian political philosophy as a matter of conscious reflection. The truth is that I was probably predisposed to become a libertarian by cultural and familial factors. In the first place, I am a second-generation descendant of what is probably a stereotypical Eastern European Jewish immigrant family. My grandfather came to this country from Romania to escape the official oppression and utter lack of opportunity he faced as a Jew. Arriving with nothing, he worked unbelievably hard to earn the price of passage for the wife and children he had been forced to leave behind. Those children and my father, who was born in America, faced an employment market where opportunities were severely limited by anti-Semitism. By forming a family business, they worked their way out of poverty sufficiently to provide my generation with the opportunity to go to college. I was raised in an almost entirely Jewish enclave in the suburbs of New York City.

This is a family background designed to engender a skepticism of power that borders on paranoia. The experientially-based world-view of my extended family was that all gentiles would like to exploit and kill the Jews, and if they ever got the power to do so,

they would. As a child, I attended Hebrew school where we were taught Jewish history. Jewish history is the story of millennia of oppression by church and state culminating with the Nazis. Although the lesson usually drawn is that the world is beset by irredeemable anti-Semitism, it requires only limited powers of abstraction to move to the more general conclusion that the evil resides not in who is oppressed, but in the existence of the power to oppress itself.

Another factor predisposing me toward libertarianism was that my parents (inadvertently, according to them) inculcated in me a belief that knowledge came from investigating and thinking for oneself. Like most Jews, my parents placed an extraordinarily high value on learning, but they had neither the education nor time to answer most of my questions. The best they could do was to encourage me to figure things out for myself. The response I almost invariably received to my requests for information was, "Look it up." Thus, I grew up thinking that one was supposed to engage in independent thought rather than just receive wisdom from others; that one should believe something because it made sense rather than merely because an authority figure said it was true.

This cultural and familial background imbued me with a strong, if inchoate, skepticism of power and a desire to discover truth for myself. These two factors, when combined, would inevitably make one susceptible to the appeal of libertarianism. Thus, I was probably at least as predisposed to become a libertarian as the child of alcoholic parents is to become an alcoholic.

Of course, being predisposed toward a particular trait does not ensure that the trait will be expressed. Not all children of alcoholics become alcoholics. Something must trigger the predisposition. In my case, the trigger was a combination of my experience in the New York public schools system, my childhood love of science fiction, and a mistake.

In my day, the government-run elementary schools spent several years indoctrinating their students with belief in the value of liberty. We were taught that the American Revolution was fought to achieve freedom from an oppressive government that taxed its citizens unfairly. We learned that the Declaration of Independence recognized individual rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and restricted government to protecting these rights. We were told that Americans possessed rights to freedom of speech and religion before we even knew what the Constitution was. We were taught that the Civil War was fought to free the slaves. In short, our early education was basically libertarian propaganda.

In middle school (what we used to call "junior high school"), this early indoctrination was followed immediately by the glorification of government power. We were taught how the federal government saved old people from being cast into the street, ended the vicious exploitation of poor women and children, repelled the depredations of the robber barons, provided education for all, empowered the working man, helped the needy, ended the Depression, and generally righted the wrongs inherent in the capitalist system.

Although the seamless passage from government is bad unless it is restricted to preserving liberty to government is good and should pursue all good ends was accepted without question by my public school compatriots, it was troubling to me. Was government good or bad? How could it be true both that people should be able to live their lives as they choose and that government should be allowed to tell them what to do? How could liberty be both

good and bad at the same time? Something didn't make sense in what we were being taught in school.

Meanwhile, from my elementary school days on, I loved reading comics (Marvel only please) and science fiction. Like most boys of my generation, I thought nothing was cooler than the astronauts. One day when I was rummaging through my father's books, I found one called *1984*. Assuming this was science fiction, I started reading it. Without realizing I was reading a political book, I found it fascinating, especially the parts about the concepts of newspeak and doublethink. The idea that certain thoughts could be eliminated through the manipulation of language and that people could be taught to believe both halves of a contradiction seemed to provide a good explanation for what I was experiencing in public school. This, and other books I encountered such as *Brave New World*, began to form my budding skepticism about authority into something resembling a political position.

Then came the mistake that crystallized my inchoate musings into a definite political philosophy. I was at a bookstore looking for a science fiction book whose title I could not remember clearly. Although actually looking for Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*, I accidentally bought Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*. I found the individualistic philosophy it contained quite inspiring, rapidly read the rest of her fiction and nonfiction, and found myself convinced that a morally proper government should be limited to the protection of individual rights. Even though the word was not in use at the time, I had become a libertarian.

Having arrived at this intellectual position, I quickly learned that it was a prescription for loneliness. It is difficult for students today to appreciate what it meant to be a libertarian before the term "libertarianism" was even coined. Today, being a libertarian means having to defend a minority position. In the 1960s and 70s, it meant total and utter isolation. Today's students often complain to the one or two libertarian professors on their campus of feeling besieged. In my day, a libertarian had no one to complain to. There were no libertarian professors. Worse, virtually no libertarian sources were included in either high school or college curricula. A perhaps apocryphal story about William F. Buckley has it that when he addressed university audiences, he would write four names on the blackboard at the beginning of his talk. On one side of the board would be John Maynard Keynes and John Kenneth Galbraith; on the other side would be Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. He would ask his student audience how many of them had heard of Keynes and Galbraith. All would raise their hands. He would then ask how many had heard of Mises and Hayek. No hands would go up.

It was not merely that all of your teachers and contemporaries disagreed with you, it was that they treated you as though you were crazy. One reason early libertarians became good arguers is that they were constantly trying to make their position sound reasonable to absolutely incredulous listeners. There is a scene in the 1987 movie *Broadcast News* that aptly captures what it felt like to be a libertarian in the 60s. Holly Hunter's character continually disagrees with her boss over something, giving good reasons why his judgment is wrong. Exasperated, he says something like, "It must be wonderful to be so much smarter than everyone else and to always be right when everyone else is wrong." To this, Hunter's character responds, "No, it's horrible." At least part of the reason I became a philosophy major in college was that it was the only discipline in which one's

work was evaluated on the basis of the quality of one's reasoning rather than the acceptability of one's conclusion.

In my case, the situation quickly went from bad to worse. Beginning from a classical natural rights-based, police/courts/national-defense, minimal-statist position, I found myself drifting toward anarcho-capitalism. The problem was that all of the arguments I used against the monopolistic state provision of services beyond the minimal protective services I supported seemed effective against those as well. Logic was leading me to support a free market in all respects. I was being seduced into thinking that competitive forces alone could solve all the problems of human interaction. And if people thought you were crazy for being a libertarian, imagine what it was like being an anarchist.

Fortunately, later in life, I discovered Hayek and became acquainted with the history of the common law. This freed me from the economists' conception of a free market as the realm of unregulated voluntary transactions. Instead, I came to regard the free market as the realm of human interaction free of *political* interference, that is, as the realm of human interaction regulated by custom, ethics, and common law. The position that I now hold, which I perhaps inaccurately refer to as common law libertarianism or common law liberalism, is consistent with the arguments against the monopolistic state provision of services without implying an absence of all morally legitimate coercive regulation of human activity.

The concept of common law libertarianism has great explanatory power and I am firmly convinced that it is correct. Nevertheless, I expect and hope that as I learn more and gather more information, it will continue to evolve and change. This reflects my belief that libertarians usually are driven to their position by the logic of ideas. After all, no one sets out to adopt a position that almost everyone else regards as absurd and that subjects one to, at best, ridicule, and more typically, to scorn and characterization as a selfish bastard lacking in compassion. No one likes advocating a position everyone else disagrees with and having to constantly defend one's beliefs as a minority of one. (Alright, if you really do come from an Eastern European Jewish background, maybe you do.)

This is what makes the process of engaging in open inquiry so dangerous. The fact is that it is extremely difficult to make convincing arguments for false conclusions. And because so much of the justification for our current political system rests on utter falsehoods, the willingness to subject its supporting arguments to close scrutiny is almost certain to lead one to radicalism. A moment's reflection about whether majority rule is really *self*-government, whether politically-motivated elected representatives really express the "will of the people" or act for the common good, or whether government courts truly apply definite rules of law in a neutral and impersonal manner is likely to set one's feet on the path to the social ignominy of being outside of the mainstream.

Many years ago, I taught the critical thinking course in the philosophy department at the University of Texas at Arlington. This course involved acquainting students with the informal rules of logical argument and teaching them how to both distinguish good arguments from bad and construct good arguments themselves. I used to begin this course by warning the students: "If you master the techniques covered in this course, no one will like you." Not a semester went by in which some number of students didn't tell me that their ability to recognize logical fallacies and construct valid arguments for their opinions was

causing them domestic strife and that their spouses or parents didn't want to talk to them anymore. Applying these techniques to political matters is a prescription for alienation, not merely from the members of your immediate family, but from all of polite society.

So, how did I become a libertarian? How does anyone? Libertarianism is what happens to you if you are willing to question assumptions and undertake a truly open-minded quest for the truth. But one should embark on such a quest aware of the potential consequences. It is immensely satisfying to discover a political philosophy that both integrates one's experience into an intellectually consistent conceptual whole and provides an accurate account of how the world actually works. But such knowledge does not come without cost. With it comes the scorn and derision of those who chose not to undertake the quest; those who do not wish to see that the emperor has no clothes. So tread the path with care, for the price of knowledge can be loneliness. ■

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RANDALL G. HOLCOMBE

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## WHY I AM AN ECONOMIST, A LIBERTARIAN, AND A SUPPORTER OF THE AUSTRIAN SCHOOL

WALTER BLOCK ASKED ME to relate the events that led them to libertarian and Austrian ideas. Several others began their stories in high school, but I was completely unaware of these ideas until I was a graduate student. I was always a good student, but when I entered college I saw it as a way to make myself more employable, and also as a place to have a good time with my friends. I wanted to do well in my classes, but I was not seeking out ideas. I worked my way through college playing guitar in a series of rock and roll bands, and I would have kept that as a career, but apparently I lacked the talent, or the luck, or whatever it took to earn a decent income. But hey, it was the '60s, and it seemed like a good thing to do. My point is that I did not enter college planning a career in the world of ideas.

I took my first economics course as a college freshman and was immediately attracted to it. One thing that appealed to me was that a few simple models seemed to explain almost everything that happened in the world. Rather than learning a large collection of facts, economics presented a few simple theories that explained nearly every fact! The power of

economic reasoning was intoxicating, and I continue to love economics for that very reason. The remarkable ability of the market mechanism to coordinate the activities of everyone in the economy, and to produce such prosperity and economic progress, was quite a revelation. I could see that materially, people in market economies were quite well off, and economics enabled me to understand why.

In the very first sentence of *Human Action*, Ludwig von Mises claims, “Economics is the youngest of all sciences.” He goes on to say that “. . . many new sciences have emerged from disciplines familiar to the ancient Greeks . . .” but that economics was based on something never before recognized: “. . . a regularity in the sequence and interdependence of market phenomena. . . .” I did not read Mises until I got to graduate school, but this describes what I found so intellectually enticing about economics. That regularity of market phenomena explained in a simple way a lot of things about the real world that, before I knew economics, seemed very complicated. I liked the ideas of economics, and sometime around my sophomore year, I started thinking that I’d like to be a college professor. I was very attracted to economics, and became an economist first. The ideas of economics then led me to a broader world of ideas.

Part of my interest in pursuing an academic career came from a group of “intellectual” students that I hung around with some (but I confess I didn’t spend nearly as much time with these intellectuals as with my rock and roll friends). These students lived mostly in the world of ideas, and they were all socialists, so I came to associate intellectuals with socialism. I believed that capitalist economies were more productive than socialist economies both because in the real world things were that way, and because my study of economics showed me the power of the invisible hand. My intellectual friends offered strong arguments for socialism, backed up by scholarship in the form of books and articles, and I began to think that my free-market views were anti-intellectual. All the intellectual arguments I’d heard were socialist, so I thought of myself as more of a pragmatist than an intellectual. I could see that the market system worked, and thanks to my economics training I understood how it worked, despite the weight of intellectual opinion against it.

I did see that even in a market-oriented economy like the United States, more than a third of the nation’s income was allocated through government, and I did hear the arguments in my classes about inefficiencies caused by externalities, public goods, monopolies, and macroeconomic instability. My interest gravitated toward the economics of the public sector, partly because it was more difficult for me to comprehend, and partly so I would be able to address some of the issues raised by my intellectual friends. The private sector just works by itself. People engage in economic activity for their own benefit, and are led by an invisible hand to do what’s best for everybody. But the public sector is designed to overcome the shortcomings of the market, and to work for the public good, or so I was taught. But as I said, the workings of the public sector were not as clear to me as the workings of the private sector. This appeared to be one area of economics where I needed more study.

When I was a junior, one of my professors offered a special topics course in the newly developing area of public choice. The public choice approach analyzes government decision-making in the same way that economics analyzes market decision-making. Whereas the standard methodology of the time was to use economic analysis to show where problems

might emerge with the market, and then assume that an omniscient and benevolent government would do what was required to solve those problems, the public choice approach looks at the information available to those in government and analyzes the incentives they face to determine how they will act. I found this approach to the economics of government very revealing.

One of the books we used in my special topics class was *The Calculus of Consent* by James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock. Buchanan and Tullock had recently established a Center for the Study of Public Choice at Virginia Tech, and I went to graduate school at Virginia Tech specifically because I wanted to study under them. I was not alone. A number of my classmates went to Virginia Tech to study under Buchanan and Tullock, and as a graduate student I was introduced to the ideas of Austrian economics and libertarian politics by my fellow graduate students.

The two classmates who had the biggest influence on me were John Metcalf (who is now an attorney in Jacksonville, Florida) and Jack High, who subsequently earned a Ph.D. in economics from UCLA and has been a leading figure in the resurgence of the Austrian school. Jack had the largest influence on me because he took a lot of time to introduce me to ideas, suggest reading material to me, and he was willing to endlessly discuss those ideas with me. On the recommendation of Jack and other classmates, I read Mises, Hayek, Rothbard, Rand, and others, and my eyes were opened.

The ideas of each of those writers had substantial appeal, but the whole was more than the sum of its parts. Thanks to Jack and John and a few other classmates, I discovered that there was a substantial and long-standing intellectual foundation underlying free-market economics and libertarian politics. I had thought my anti-socialist views to be anti-intellectual because I was completely unaware of the substantial intellectual output of libertarian writers and the Austrian school. I was never introduced to it as an undergraduate, and it was certainly not a part of the graduate curriculum. But my classmates in graduate school were very interested in the Austrian school, and I did a lot of outside reading. More than once I recall annoying my professors by arguing the ideas of the Austrian business cycle in macroeconomics, or arguing the merits of privatizing government activities in public finance class. And I remember as if it was yesterday Gordon Tullock telling me that I would never be able to find a job because of my extreme libertarian views. (I can smile about this now, because I am a tenured professor.) I had entered graduate school as an economist, wanting to learn more, but thanks to the education I got from my classmates, I left as a libertarian with a good Austrian background.

Jack High, John Metcalf, and I attended the now-legendary Austrian economics conference in South Royalton, Vermont, in 1974. The faculty at that conference was composed of Murray Rothbard, Israel Kirzner, and Ludwig Lachmann. I had read Rothbard's and Kirzner's work before, and meeting them was wonderful. Meeting Murray was especially memorable. From reading his work, I pictured him as a serious and bitter man, but in person he was as jolly as Santa Claus! He loved to stay up late telling wonderful stories, and anybody who knew him will tell you he was very a funny man. Listening to Murray was always a delight. Israel was more the serious scholar, but very warm and generous. Over the years I sent him some of my work hoping for comments, and he was always kind and helpful.

In addition to the faculty at South Royalton, I met a large number of younger scholars who attended, as I did, to learn more about Austrian economics. Looking back at the list of attendees, it is impressive to see how many of them have gone on to be leaders of the contemporary Austrian school. I also attended the follow-up conference the next year in Hartford, Connecticut, so in one sense I can claim Austrian connections that go back to the beginning of the Austrian revitalization.

By the time I left graduate school I had a very good familiarity with Austrian economics, but I remained very interested in the economic analysis of government, and much of my academic research has been in the area of public choice. I wrote my dissertation under Jim Buchanan, one of the founders of public choice, who has been a major influence on my thinking, and who has been so helpful to me throughout my career. After graduate school I taught at Texas A&M University for two years, where my first graduate assistant was Bruce Benson, who had just entered the Ph.D. program there. As a result of that, I try to take credit for all the work Bruce has done since, although people who know both Bruce and me will not let me get away with that.

From Texas A&M, I moved to Auburn University where I was on the faculty for 11 years. The Auburn faculty at that time was young, and very free-market oriented, and I was fortunate to have a number of excellent colleagues. Roger Garrison stands out among them. He was one of the people I had met at South Royalton, and in a marketplace for ideas that does not readily accept non-mainstream thinking, Roger's steady success in promoting Austrian macroeconomics has been inspirational. Leland Yeager was also a colleague and friendly critic, and I learned much from him. Don Bellante was another Auburn colleague with Austrian leanings, so at Auburn I was in a department that was very congenial to the Austrian approach to economics. And I was at Auburn when Lew Rockwell moved to town and started the Ludwig von Mises Institute. Lew's first office at Auburn was right next door to mine.

We started a Ph.D. program in economics while I was at Auburn, and the presence of the Mises Institute helped us attract some of our best students. We had an evening Austrian economics seminar where we exchanged ideas and had a chance to present our own work for critical analysis from the group. The graduate students were full participants in the seminar, and among the many fine students in that group, I recall Don Boudreaux, Roger Koppl, Mark Thornton, and Sven Thommesen. My 1989 book, *Economic Models and Methodology*, was written (in bits and pieces) for that seminar, and I owe much to the participants for helping me develop the ideas in that book. All in all, Auburn was a wonderful intellectual environment, and my only regret in mentioning the names I did is that I know I have left out many.

In 1988 I took a faculty position at Florida State University, where I remain today. Two of my colleagues who were instrumental in attracting me were Bruce Benson—my former graduate assistant—and Jim Gwartney. Anyone familiar with Bruce's work on law will know what a privilege it is to have him as a colleague, and Jim is an excellent economist with a strong free-market orientation. Jim and I have co-authored a number of articles since I've been here, and I have been especially influenced by his emphasis on the importance of institutions to the successful operation of a market economy. With Bruce's emphasis on

law and Jim's emphasis on what he calls the institutions of economic freedom, my colleagues at Florida State have more of an institutional emphasis than an Austrian emphasis, but the libertarian slant is still there.

I continue to be associated with the Mises Institute, which has pulled my academic work in more of an Austrian direction. Faculty research is evaluated largely based on publications, and until recently there have been few outlets for explicitly Austrian economic research. The Mises Institute established the *Review of Austrian Economics* in 1986, the *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics* in 1998, and holds an annual Austrian scholars conference. These outlets for Austrian-oriented academic research mean that I can devote more of my research time to specifically Austrian topics and have more of a chance to get them published, and have those vehicles to disseminate the results of my research the academic community. I'm excited to see a growing community of libertarian and Austrian faculty in our universities, and I try to provide my students with an introduction to this set of ideas that I never knew about when I was in college. ■

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JOHN HOSPERS

## LIBERTARIAN THOUGHTS REBORN

I WAS BORN IN PELLA, a town of about 5,000 in central Iowa. It began as a Dutch colony in 1847, settled by a group of emigrants from Holland who were rebelling against certain Dutch laws and regulations of the State Church of Holland. My great-grandfather, John Hospers, was leader of the Second Emigration to Iowa in 1849. He and his wife and eight children made the move to Iowa on the suggestion of a missionary who said that this portion of Iowa had the richest soil in the world.

My great-grandfather, whose diary of the journey I still possess, was en route from Holland to Iowa for about two months. He lost two children on the way when scarlet fever broke out on the ship. He landed in New York and traveled by boat up the Hudson to Albany, where he buried yet another child who had contracted scarlet fever. Then via the Erie Canal to Buffalo, and a Great Lakes steamboat to Chicago (described as “a flourishing

city of 23,000 souls”), finally overland to his Iowa destination. Here were thousands of acres of land waiting, as he thought, to be cultivated for human use.

My great-grandmother, born in 1839, was still alive when I was a child (she lived to be 100). I remember her descriptions of the endless vistas of land, of felling trees and the labor required to build on it, and the howling of wolves in the distance at night before she went to sleep. (We conversed in Dutch, which she spoke much better than English.)

Concepts like “government assistance” were entirely alien to these settlers. Life was precarious, but when illness or natural catastrophe struck, relatives and neighbors were there to give assistance; it would not have occurred to them to ask money from the government any more than to rob their neighbors’ houses. God had given them this rich land, was that not enough? When I grew up there was some envy of the rich, but no bitterness or resentment. If Henry Ford was a millionaire, it was because he had earned it through inventiveness and industry, and my father, proud owner of a Ford, was grateful to him for helping to make the horse-and-buggy days obsolete.

I vividly remember the Roosevelt election landslide of 1936. One of my uncles, owner of a clothing store in Newton, thirty miles away, deplored the results of the election, and was sure that from then on taxes would gradually rise as people became more dependent on government for services. My uncle’s close friend, Fred Maytag, manufactured (and his company still manufactures) washing machines and refrigerators. Maytag feared that the risks involved in starting an industry or invention would become so great because of high taxes, that the entire industry would go bankrupt, thus leaving thousands of workers unemployed. “This is the end of freedom in America!” he predicted.

Though the political complexion of Pella could be described as *laissez faire*, the same could not be said of attitudes toward religion. While members of other sects (or no sect at all) were not harassed—the Constitution respected freedom of religion, and the Dutch emigrants were second to none in their respect for the Constitution—most people in the community were members of the Reformed Church of America (“the Dutch Reformed Church”). Dissenters were viewed as outsiders, but also as the potential beneficiaries of spiritual reformation.

There were at least a dozen Reformed churches in the community. Theirs was not a revivalist-style of worship of the dancing-for-Jesus type—the residents had only contempt for such shenanigans; rather, church was more like a catechism in which one learned The Truth and was told how to act on it. It was almost a case of “if you accept such-and-such premises, these are the conclusions that follow,” except that one was expected also to accept the premises. These premises became increasingly questionable to me as I came to think on my own. For example, I was taught that Jesus is the Son of God, co-eternal with Him, but at the same time that he lived on the earth for some 33 years and died like anyone else. I wondered how Jesus could be a son—isn’t a son an offspring of a father, and didn’t the father have to be there first? And yet, we were taught, this son, like the Father, had been present before the creation. How could a biological organism living at some particular place and time also exist at all places and times? I would learn later from reading Santayana that the word “eternal” is ambiguous, meaning either timeless, like the number system and the truths of mathematics, or everlasting, that is, existing throughout time, like the material universe, so-and-so many years. But this still didn’t solve the problem of how a being—who

spoke and issued commands—could be both timeless and everlasting, as the received doctrines taught.

Much of the religious teaching we received seemed to be not in the Bible itself, but a creation of the doctrine-makers like those who wrote the Creed of Nicea in 385, deciding which books were to be included in the Christian Bible, and through careful selection of words trying to cast some light on theological questions, such as how a temporal Jesus could also have been a timeless God. It was all very puzzling, and I became increasingly skeptical about it all.

It did, however, give me a keen appetite for philosophy, which as yet I knew nothing about. In college I came to read David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, which presented in rich detail the same problems that had tormented me. I still wonder how I could have survived without it. It was my one consolation at a time when I was being inundated with conflicting views.

Meanwhile there were other fascinating subjects. At age ten, chancing to read the school encyclopedia's article on astronomy, I devoured everything I could find to read on the subject, soon exhausting the resources of the town library and the college library. By the time I was a freshman in college (Central College, in Pella), the dean, who taught the astronomy course, turned it over to me, saying, "You know more about it than I do." And so at age eighteen I was teaching a course for college juniors and seniors. I delighted in every minute of it, and decided that explaining complex concepts was something I wanted to do forever. I would take the class to the college observatory late at night and show them the rings of Saturn in the telescope, and certain double stars we had discussed in class. I would take the class imaginatively through millions of light-years of space, and it seemed to be as much of an adventure for them as it was for me.

Astronomy, however, was not a prominent subject in American colleges. A cousin, who was majoring in literature, advised me to shift my major subject to something "more practical," with the result that two years later I had my Master's degree in literature from the University of Iowa, equipped, I hoped, to teach Shakespeare and Shelley to not-so-eager undergraduates.

Then fate took another quick and unexpected turn. I received a generous scholarship from Columbia University, and decided to pursue the Ph.D. in my favorite but hitherto neglected subject, philosophy. Equipped with the degree in literature, aesthetics was a natural division of philosophy in which to pursue a major. By the end of the second year at Columbia I had finished my Ph.D. dissertation, *Meaning and Truth in the Arts*, which was published by the University of North Carolina Press. It was often cited in the literature and remained in print for about 35 years.

I taught Humanities at the undergraduate school of Columbia University, leading the class through the "great classics of Western civilization" (ancient Greek the first semester and the moderns the second semester). All the while, I was drinking in the cultural life of New York—theater, concert halls and opera were only a few minutes away by subway. But an invitation to a more permanent job came from the University of Minnesota, through my Iowa University professor, Wilfrid Sellars. I taught aesthetics, ethics, philosophy in literature, epistemology, and other subjects at Minnesota, and wrote

a fairly lengthy book, *Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, which became quite influential. It is now, in 2003, in its fourth edition, and a paperback edition remains in considerable use in the United Kingdom.

When an invitation came from City University of New York, however, I found it impossible to say no. The most dramatic event of the decade for me was meeting Ayn Rand. She gave a talk at Brooklyn College in 1960, on “Faith and Force: The Destroyers of the Modern World” (later printed), after which I asked her to lunch. She said she could spare an hour for me—but more than four hours later we were still sitting there immersed in philosophical conversation. I described our conversations in a two-part article in *Liberty*, “Conversations with Ayn Rand” (1990), and will not repeat the description here.

She was indeed a philosopher of stature, I decided at once, but more versed in traditional metaphysics and ethics than in “philosophy with a linguistic turn” in which I was more at home. It seemed to me that many philosophical issues have their origin in the use and misuse of language, and it was difficult to share that orientation with someone of a different philosophical background. If she had only been trained in Oxford instead of Leningrad, I thought. I think I understood where she was coming from more than she understood where I was. On some issues, such as “truths of logic” vs. contingent truths, and ways in which aesthetic value can be called objective, we never did come to agreement.

Nevertheless, this was not the end of our exchanges. I was invited to one of the NBI lectures, and within a week thereafter I was invited to her apartment for discussion—just the two of us, no one else. We met regularly many times thereafter, starting at about 8 p.m. and continuing till 2, 4, or even 6 in the morning. Meanwhile I was reading *Atlas Shrugged* (I was ashamed to confess to her that although I had heard a lot about it, the length of the book was forbidding and I had not read it before)—teaching in the daytime hours, writing on my ethics book in the evening, and spending the wee small hours eagerly devouring *Atlas*.

We agreed to spend the first few discussion sessions on *Atlas*. I was lost in admiration of the development, the structure, the climaxes, the dramatic speeches, and gave her the reasons for my admiration. I had assumed that many people had already shared such reflections with her, but in fact, to my surprise, almost no one had. Instead, there were either carping critics who read without insight into what she was about, or mindless enthusiasts from whom she gleaned nothing. I was quite sure that they had read it only superficially; and that most of the content had escaped them. After a devastating review of it appeared in the *National Review*, I heard Buckley say on television that he had never read the book.

In any case, Ayn kept inviting me back. She saw my marked copy of *Atlas* and said, “May I trade you?” removing mine and putting a new signed copy of her own in its place. I noticed (and she noticed that I noticed) “little things,” such as the fact that reference to the god *Atlas* occurred only once in the entire novel, and why section headings had been given the titles that she gave them. She gave a knowing smile when I said, “I don’t want to pull a Dr. Stadler on you, but . . .” In turn, I appreciated her description of a conversation she had had long ago with Isabel Paterson, in which Isabel had planted a seed of *Atlas* in her mind: “What would happen if all the producers went on strike?”

As to the content of the novel, however, the things that critics had ridiculed became for me the main source of its power: its underlying philosophy. For me it was as if something with

great life and energy was being reborn. The political and economic beliefs in which I had been brought up, were now living again as an explicit philosophy rather than as a largely unexamined set of assumptions never discussed in family gatherings but always there lurking in the background. Now with Ayn Rand, they came to life, and I seemed to come to new life with them.

One evening after a long discussion she said to me, “You are not at all like the liberals of today. You have a nineteenth-century mind, and I intend that as a compliment. You do believe in liberty; now why don’t you do something about it?” At first I thought she meant that I should give up teaching and do something else. But no: “You are in the greatest profession in the world. Mostly you are unrewarded for what you do. But you deal with IDEAS. The world is full of bad ideas, ideas that could mean the end of the world itself. And the only substitute for bad ideas is good ideas. The world is starving for good ideas. In your life you should have many opportunities to acquaint people with good ideas.”

Here, I thought, I am sitting with someone who grew up in Russia, in the shadow of the arch-exemplars of bad ideas, Lenin and Stalin. She has expressed in her works what happens when bad ideas are accepted on a massive scale, and she has just spent twelve years of her life writing *Atlas*, which presents it for all of the world to see. First, “just a little bit of evil,” in the form of the state giving to some (as a token of “government generosity”) by robbing others, perhaps in some small little-noticed way. But then the disease spreads, and the state gains a stranglehold on people’s lives, so that they come to depend on it and can no longer exist without it, and then the state comes in for the kill, destroying the civilizations it proposed to save. (In years that followed I would read the “*Gulag*” trilogy and many other works by Solzhenitsyn, reemphasizing her point about the decline and fall of nations.)

Ayn condemned all existing governments as intrusive, as restricting people’s freedom and violating their rights. But she didn’t find them all equally intrusive. She thought highly of the America envisioned by the founders, minus the slavery. She saw it as the nearest approach thus far in history to a “constitution of liberty,” a republic, not a democracy, its citizens possessing the right to do as they chose as long as these choices involved no violation of the rights of others.

I was somewhat skeptical of people’s references to “government with the consent of the governed”: certainly not all of them had consented. Most people have not consented to the system in which they were born; and if you can’t get unanimous consent even in a small roomful of people, how can you get everyone’s consent to the constitution of a nation? Some people will approve of capital punishment, others will condemn it totally. Not everyone will agree on what “cruel and unusual punishment” means. People have conflicting desires and convictions, and perhaps no one gets exactly the system that he wants.

There is, of course, an enormous difference between life in the United States and life in the Soviet Union, a most conspicuous difference being that people are free to leave the one but not the other. But she did say, and later wrote, that in any enterprise involving two or more persons, the voluntary consent of all parties is required. But I was uneasy: if there has to be unanimous consent in starting a business or forming a club, why not also in the formation of a government? If numbers are what makes the difference, why not say so outright? And if numbers don’t make the difference, why doesn’t the unanimity rule apply not only to clubs but to the millions of American colonists in 1789?

I never seemed to get a clear answer on this, but perhaps, I thought, I was missing something essential to the argument; and I had learned, when I continued the questioning, not to push her too far, lest the mood of pleasant intellectual interchange be lost.

Through the passing weeks, memories of people I had met, and bits of conversation with them, and speculation about what they would think or say, would intermingle in my mind: Ayn Rand, Hank Rearden, Fred Maytag. What a combination! One evening I was invited by Ayn to join Ludwig von Mises and his wife, and Henry Hazlitt and his wife, for an evening's conversation in her apartment. I felt honored, and enjoyed the occasion, although no new thoughts were born that evening. I had met Hazlitt before, when I had a chance to praise him for his *Economics in One Lesson*. We exchanged letters and phone calls occasionally around the time that he moved from Washington Square to Connecticut. Ayn had chastised him for not reviewing her *Objectivist Ethics* in his book on the welfare state. He responded that he didn't understand her views enough to comment publicly on them. She was less than pleased by this: how could he not understand her when she wrote in plain English? But I think their views were ultimately irreconcilable: Hazlitt was very much a utilitarian, and favored a *laissez-faire* society simply because it had more total utility than any alternative.

As for Mises, Ayn admired him greatly and gave me a copy of his book *Socialism*, though the one I came most to treasure was *Human Action*. I wish I had attended his Thursday evening seminars on economics at NYU—but I was very busy as it was, and many of these Thursday evenings were spent in discussions with Rand. I did meet Mises again at one of the last lectures he gave, at Long Beach State College in the late 1960s. He was well into his 80s then and ever so sweet and accommodating to students, no matter how ill-informed their questions, but never enough to blunt the precision of the points he was making. I deeply regretted that I had never studied under him.

As program chairman of the American Society for Aesthetics, I had invited Ayn to address their annual meeting in Boston. As critic I could not simply say how great her remarks were and then sit down, so I offered criticisms on her new paper, "Art and Sense of Life," which my colleagues considered quite mild. But apparently she thought I had betrayed her. She cut me off after that, as she had already done with so many others, interpreting disagreement as betrayal. I never saw her again. As the months went by, I came to miss her enormously. I missed especially her parting words after each meeting: not "Good night," but "Good premises."

Not long after that I accepted a position as chairman of the philosophy department at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Among other things I became faculty adviser to the Ayn Rand Club there. In the course of time, a representative of the newly formed California Libertarian Party suggested that I go to Denver where there would be a meeting of freedom-oriented people from across the nation to discuss whether a national Libertarian Party should be formed with Dave Nolan, the founder of the Colorado party, in charge. (I wrote about this in a 1998 paper in *Full Context* and wrote at length about the 1972 presidential campaign in an article in *Liberty* 6, no. 2.)

I went to the exploratory meeting on a June weekend in Denver in 1972. My book, *Libertarianism*, had been published the previous year, and some of the delegates in Denver had copies of it and even quoted from it on the convention floor. There were two days of

discussion on platform and principles, and I was delegated to write the party's Statement of Principles. It was then argued whether or not this party in its infancy should float a candidate for U.S. president, and it was decided that the response should be yes. I was somewhat overwhelmed when I got the nomination: there were people there far better known in libertarian circles, both Ed Clark and Ed Crane were there at the convention. But the outcome, I think, was the result of the fact that my book had already been trumpeted as a kind of "textbook of libertarianism".

I was a little bit thrilled, and a little bit terrified. One day I was a college professor, and the next day a candidate for the nation's highest office. I knew I would never attain to that office—anyway I was a complete unknown—and was not at all sure that a virtually unknown party having a presidential candidate so early on, was a good idea. But, I thought, perhaps initiating a political party that stood for liberty more unambiguously than the existing ones might succeed, and even lead to something bigger, as the dissolution of the Whig Party had done for the newborn Republican Party in 1856.

Ayn Rand had said to me: "If you believe in freedom, why don't you do something about it?" Here, suddenly, was an unexpected chance to do something, however small. Perhaps it would all come to nothing—a flash in the pan. But then again, perhaps not. We would never know unless we tried.

At any rate, having a captive audience in a college classroom was worlds away from a public meeting devoted to a specific agenda. To be a political candidate was to be a target of ignorant and often hostile questioning, when one had thirty seconds or less to answer, as often happened on radio programs I was involved in during the campaign. "What will you do for me if elected?" someone asked, and I would reply, "I'll leave you alone to live your life as you choose." Or: "How are you going to have education without government?" I would be asked, explaining that there are few if any communities who would not gladly pay something voluntarily for the education of their children, and reminding them that in the entire Constitution there was not one mention of government in connection with education. But it would take many a lesson in simple economics, I decided, to convince most people of something that seemed obvious to those of us who had studied it. It would be a long haul, to say the least. But gradually I resurrected a bit of the preacher in me and learned to give brief (but necessarily incomplete) answers, and to construct *bon mots* to throw back at the challenger.

And thus passed the campaign of 1972: one day Dallas, the next day Houston, the following day Tulsa, then Chicago and so on to New York and Boston. Most exciting of all was Seattle: Tonie Nathan, the vice-presidential candidate, and I were pictured on millions of brochures that went out to every voter in the state, along with the Statement of Principles. Sometimes I would be recognized walking on the sidewalks of Seattle.

There were many radio interviews, TV interviews, and many meetings thereafter on college campuses and university lecture halls, especially in California.

The biggest surprise of the campaign, heard by millions of listeners and viewers, and intoned by Vice-President Spiro Agnew (as prescribed in the Constitution), was the announcement, ". . . and one electoral vote to John Hospers for president, and one to Theodora Nathan for vice-president." I had known about this for several weeks but kept it secret—Roger MacBride, an elector from Virginia (he became the presidential candidate in 1976),

threw his vote from Republican to Libertarian in a sudden, unexpected move. In the next few weeks I was flooded with a myriad of letters and telephone calls—"Congratulations!" and "Remember, I voted for you!"

I had met Mises and Hazlitt, but not Murray Rothbard, the encyclopedic, libertarian scholar. Rothbard was hardly an object of great affection in Randian circles, and she had never once mentioned him to me. But we met one day at a lunch at USC, and I was afraid that my association with Rand might cause some hostility; besides, he was a hundred times the libertarian scholar that I was. I told him on meeting him that it was he and not I who should have been the presidential candidate. He said he didn't want the job, and wished me well. As things turned out, though an anarchist, he became prominent in Libertarian Party circles for the next decade or more. I read several of his books: the one that I admired the most was the shorter book, *Power and Market*. But I also greatly admired his *Man, Economy, and State*, though disagreeing with parts of his *Ethics of Liberty*, even devoting a meeting of the Karl Hess Club to a presentation of my partially dissenting view. (I had read some economics, but never had even one course in the subject.)

Then, at seventy years of age, came my compulsory retirement from teaching. I took this event as a personal loss, for I believed I was still able to conduct classes as well as ever. I totally revised my book *Human Conduct*, the manuscript of the first edition of which I had delivered on foot, back in 1961, from Ayn Rand's apartment to the Harcourt Brace office few blocks away, promising her that I would mention her ethical views if there were ever a second or third edition (a promise which I kept). I continued to write, though my 1998 article *A Libertarian View of Open Borders* in the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* made me some enemies within the Libertarian Party. These sins may have been partially atoned for in my essay "Thoughts on Democracy" in Tibor Machan's 2002 anthology *Democracy and Liberty*. Not long thereafter I was invited to Indianapolis, where Tibor Machan interviewed me for an hour-long video on my life and work, which is listed in the *Classics of Liberty* series published by the Liberty Fund of Indianapolis.

In 2002 I returned to USC to attend an ongoing seminar. In Philosophy Hall, where I had taught so many classes through the years, fresh young faces were writing their final exams. Since I had now been retired for more than ten years, they did not know me and I did not know them. My portrait hung on the stairs leading to the Hoose Library of Philosophy. I spoke with Ross, the head librarian: did anyone remember me after all these years? Yes, he said, but they remember you as presidential candidate more than as head of our department. Do they read any of my books, which are here on the library shelves? Yes, he said, they are out most of the time, and some of your articles, such as the one on truth in fiction and the one on free-will and psychoanalysis, are still read quite a bit. What about my essay on artistic creativity, which was the presidential address I gave to the American Society for Aesthetics in 1983, here in this auditorium? No, that was probably too far back for our students to remember. What about the magazine I inherited when I came, *The Personalist*, in which I published manuscripts from some then-unknown philosophers such as Tibor Machan and Doug Rasmussen, which no one had been willing to publish before because of their libertarian slant? Well no, he suspected that only the authors of those articles would still remember them after that much time.

Time passes, I reflected with some disappointment, and in the end all is forgotten. Has the result been worth the effort? It was all so important to me at the time, and now it is as if none of it had ever existed. Meanwhile time speeds on, or struggles on, or slouches on, as the case may be, and most of people's fond hopes and dreams remain unrealized. Well, don't expect to live for others and don't expect them to live for you—didn't Ayn Rand teach you that at least, among many other things, all those years?

But that was only one of the things. Another was: in general, bad ideas have bad consequences, and good ideas have good consequences. Twenty years ago a student of mine at USC, George Squyres, suddenly quit school and did manual labor for years, like Howard Roark. He never graduated, and I didn't hear from him again until the summer of 2002, when I ran into him at the national Libertarian Party meeting in Indianapolis. He is even now heading a committee dedicated to revamping the Libertarian Party platform, after some years of comparative inattention. He has chaired a committee designed to set forth the tenets of libertarianism in bold strokes and expand its influence on society, so as to help it become what we, the starry-eyed visionaries of 1972, had dreamed of but failed to achieve. Perhaps we hadn't given our movement enough publicity, or perhaps the time was not yet ripe. We knew all along that it would be a long haul, didn't we?

And so it is: hope springs eternal, and perhaps this hope can still be realized, here in America, while we are alive and able to witness for ourselves the unfolding of events, perhaps even able in some degree to influence them. ■

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STEPHAN KINSELLA

BEING A LIBERTARIAN

UNLIKE MANY LIBERTARIANS WHO DALLY with socialism before seeing the light, I have never been attracted to leftism. Indeed, although I of course welcome former pinkos to our ranks, I'm always a bit suspicious of anyone who could ever be swayed by that bunk.

Born in 1965, I was reared in a small town near Baton Rouge, Louisiana. My natural aversion to leftism stems from this upbringing. The milieu—if South Louisiana can be said to have one—was nominally Democratic, but relatively apolitical, culturally conservative, and Catholic. I can't recall ever meeting any open or hardcore leftists until college.

There were other contributing factors that made me ripe for libertarianism. For one, I have always been strongly individualistic and merit-oriented. This is probably because I was adopted and thus have always tended to cavalierly dismiss the importance of “blood ties” and any inherited or “unearned” group characteristics. This made me an ideal candidate to be enthralled by Ayn Rand’s master-of-universe, “I don’t need anything from you or owe you anything” themes.

Another factor is my strong sense of outrage at injustice, which probably developed as a result of my hatred of bullies and bullying. I was frequently attacked by them as a kid, because I was small for my age, bookish, and a smartass. Not a good combination.

I attended Catholic elementary and high school in Baton Rouge. I had a love-hate relationship with Mrs. Reinhardt, Catholic High School’s librarian. When she was not expelling me and my cronies from the library for pulling pranks, she would recommend books to me, as she knew I was an avid reader of both fiction and nonfiction. One day she recommended Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead* to me. (I believe this was in 1982, when I was a junior in high school—the same year Rand died.)

“Read this. You’ll like it,” she told me. *Ex nihilo*—something. Rand’s ruthless logic of justice appealed to me. I was thrilled to see a more-or-less rigorous application of reason to fields outside the natural sciences. I think this helped me to avoid succumbing, in college, to the simplistic and naïve empiricism-scientism that most of my fellow engineering classmates naturally absorbed. Mises’s dualistic epistemology and criticism of monism-positivism-empiricism, which I studied much later, also helped shield me from scientism.

By my first year of college (1983), where I studied electrical engineering, I was a fairly avid “Objectivist”-style libertarian. I had read Henry Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson* and some of Milton Friedman’s works, but I initially steered clear of “libertarian” writing. Since Rand was so right on so many things, I at first assumed she—and her disciples Peter Schwartz and Leonard Peikoff—must be right in denouncing libertarianism as the enemy of liberty.

And yet in my reading, I kept coming across libertarians, whose views seemed virtually identical to Rand’s “capitalist” politics. Finally, out of exasperation at trying to reconcile Rand’s denunciation of libertarians with their seemingly similar views, I read Rothbard’s *For A New Liberty*, and then several other works, such as Nozick, the Tannehills, David Friedman, etc. Before long I realized Rand’s minarchism was flawed. Individual rights entail anarcho-capitalism; a state, even a minarchist one, necessarily violates the individual rights that Rand so passionately championed. Rand made a lot of sense on a lot of issues, but her arguments in favor of government were strained.

I remember attending my only Objectivist conference, in Dallas, with my good friend Jack Criss (a libertarian radio talk show host from Jackson, Mississippi). Entitled “Meeting of the Minds,” the conference showcased Objectivist stars David Kelley, John Ridpath, and Alan Gotthelf. I believe this was around 1988, before David Kelley had been purged from official Objectivist circles for daring to praise Barbara Branden’s biography *The Passion of Ayn Rand*. I had corresponded with Kelley, who was gracious enough to take time to reply (this was before email) to my precocious and presumptuous questions. I have always admired and respected Kelley.

I had several stimulating conversations with him at the conference, mostly on epistemology and philosophy. But I remember at a reception one of the students was telling how he had taken his copy of *The Passion of Ayn Rand* and burned it in a private ceremony in his mom's back yard, when he realized how "evil" it was. I think he sought to gain points among his audience by relating this tale. I recall Jack and I looking at each other with cocked eyebrows. "Book burning." Yes. Well. That was the last and only Objectivist conference I ever attended.

In the late-80s, I started publishing columns in the LSU student newspaper, *The Daily Reveille*, from an explicitly libertarian perspective. As my interests became more sharply political and philosophical, my girlfriend (later wife) and friends urged me to consider law school. I was by this time in engineering grad school. Unlike many attorneys, I was not one of those who had always wanted to be a lawyer. In fact it never occurred to me until my girlfriend suggested it over dinner, when I was wondering what degree I could pursue next, so as to avoid having to enter the workforce. At the time I thought one had to have a pre-law degree and many prerequisite courses that engineers would lack; and I feared law school would be difficult. I remember my girlfriend's chemical engineer father laughing out loud at my concern that law school might be more difficult than engineering. In retrospect, I can say that law school is not easy, it is a lot of work—but it is not that conceptually difficult. Lots of morons graduate from law school.

By 1988, I was in law school, and becoming a more well rounded libertarian, having read by this time Rothbard, Mises, Bastiat, the Tannehills, and a non-trivial portion of the books offered in the *Laissez-Faire Books* catalog. In that year there were two significant events in my life, from a libertarian perspective. One was Hans-Hermann Hoppe's controversial and provocative article in *Liberty*, "The Ultimate Justification of the Private Property Ethic". In this article Hoppe sets forth his "argumentation ethics," which holds that the libertarian private property ethic is implied in the very activity of argumentation—because those engaged in argumentation already presuppose the value of conflict-avoidance and the ability to control property and thus, those arguing in favor of socialism contradict themselves.

The second thing that I encountered the legal principle of "estoppel" in my contracts class. This is the ubiquitous legal principle that precludes someone from asserting a legal claim or position that is inconsistent with earlier statements or behavior. I remember sitting in contracts class, as Professor Morris lectured on this topic, thinking "Eureka!" to myself, as I began to see that the concept of estoppel meshed perfectly with libertarian logic (and also with Hoppe's argumentation ethics). The libertarian non-aggression principle holds that force may only be used *in response* to (initiated) force. There is a nice symmetry here. One may use force, if and only if it is response to initiated force (aggression).

I saw in class that day that the principle of estoppel could help explain and justify the non-aggression rule. Force was justified against an aggressor, because having used force himself he would be estopped from objecting to retaliation. For him to assert that force is wrong—which he must do in order to object to retaliation—would contradict the "force is permissible" maxim underlying his own act of aggression. He is "estopped" from asserting a claim inconsistent with that underlying his earlier behavior.

My estoppel theory complements and draws on Hoppe's argumentation ethics. For years I believed that I first came up with my estoppel theory and then read Hoppe's work, and linked the two together. Now I am not so sure, and think that I first read and absorbed Hoppe's argumentation ethic, which made me fixate on the similar logic of estoppel when I coincidentally studied it in law school shortly thereafter.

I was at King's College London—University of London in 1991, pursuing a master's degree in law, when I produced the first draft of a paper arguing estoppel can help justify libertarian rights. Somewhat naïvely, I submitted it to King's College Law School's law review, whereupon it was summarily rejected. Not daunted, I submitted an improved draft to Tibor Machan for his journal *Reason Papers*. I had read many of Machan's works, including his *Human Rights and Human Liberties* and *Individuals and Their Rights*, and he had been kind enough to respond to several of my letters. I remember speaking with him one night, about the submission, from a students' pay telephone at King's College in London, and then getting drinks at a pub with friends, none of them knowing or able to appreciate I had just spoken with a libertarian writer whose books I had read. *Estoppel: A New Justification for Individual Rights* was published in the Fall 1992 issue of *Reason Papers*.

Another shift in my libertarian life occurred in 1995, when I first met Lew Rockwell, Hans Hoppe, and Murray Rothbard. But let me back up. After finally completing all my book-larnin', I had to earn a living, and in 1992 started practicing law in Houston. When Hoppe's second English-language book, *The Economics and Ethics of Private Property*, came out in 1993, I decided to do a review essay for a law review; the review was published in 1994 in the *St. Mary's Law Journal*. I promptly sent it to Hoppe, who sent back a warm thank you note.

By mid-1994, I had moved to Philadelphia (I was there for three years, until I returned to Houston in 1997, where I reside today), and resolved to attend the John Randolph Club meeting in October 1994, near Washington, D.C. My primary goal was to meet Hoppe, Rothbard, and Rockwell. I was thrilled to meet them, and was able to get Murray to autograph my copy of *Man, Economy & State*, which he inscribed, "To Stephan: For *Man & Economy, and against the state*—Best regards, Murray Rothbard." Well, I know the nicer one-volume edition is out now, but just try to get me to part with my musty two-volume copy. Rothbard unfortunately passed away on January 1995, but I shall be forever grateful that I was able to meet him.

Since then, I have attended many Mises Institute conferences, including every one of the annual Austrian Scholars Conferences, initiated, if I am not mistaken, in 1995. Over the years, I gained more appreciation for Mises and Austrian economics, and for the unparalleled scope of Rothbard's scholarly contributions to economics, political philosophy and related fields. I am now not only an anarcho-libertarian, but a Misesian-Austrian. I have gained an increasingly deeper respect for Lew Rockwell and the singular achievement that is the Mises Institute. It has become my intellectual home. ■

## WHAT? LIBERTARIAN?

ISN'T IT CURIOUS HOW so many individuals arrive at more or less the same place by following their own path? And this in an egalitarian age where to think for yourself is anathema? How can this be?

For me, the path began with a purely emotional contemplation of Jesus in the Stations of the Cross posted in our parish church. I was seven, an impressionable first grader who liked to interpret pictures, and ask questions. Although I had no words for it at the time, I saw Jesus as a radical individualist who turned his back on both the reigning political government, and on the religious establishment, to preach his own insight into the nature of reality. He put his life on the line for the truth, and he paid the price. This emotional understanding, however childlike in simplicity, became the foundation of my thinking.

I stumbled across Thoreau at the age of ten, and my vague notions of independence and individualism began to acquire a secular tone, and even a sense that action was possible. This did not correlate with my school experience, however, where I almost instinctively resisted authority, and refused to march in lockstep with my peers, either physically or intellectually. This attitude spelled disaster on the university level and, sure enough, I wasted seven years searching for the right finger to point out the right path to knowledge, not training.

I discovered *Atlas Shrugged* in a drugstore during a brief sojourn in Denver in 1965, my twenty-fifth year. Here was the finger, and there was the path. I read everything Rand wrote, and everything she recommended, an ever widening circle of literature that came to include Mises, Hazlitt, and Rothbard. The world was finally making sense to me, and then in 1972 I met Galambos.

For better or worse, Andrew J. Galambos was a master salesman, and a compelling lecturer. Although I didn't like the man, or completely trust him, I listened to him for six years (on tape), and I read every book he recommended. From him I learned that government could be conceptually divided into what I now call political, or government by force and fraud, and economic, or government by voluntary participation in institutions selling security and justice.

A decade after I dropped out of the Galambos School, I began to write about my own interpretation and possible application of the multifarious ideas of social organization that I had learned. Seven years later, I published *Atlantis, A Novel about Economic Government*, which has come to be called by some a description of a libertarian society. Actually, I never paid attention to the word, libertarian, while I was writing it, so this designation was purely serendipitous.

I never expected to find a web site like [lewrockwell.com](http://lewrockwell.com) either, and I was surprised and delighted when I did. Here the libertarians gather to share their thoughts and their experiences. I never guessed there were so many! Each an individualist, yet each caring deeply about community, about civilization, about honor, truth, security, and justice, and about the elimination of force and fraud. And by so many different paths did we arrive here! Isn't it curious? ■

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Robert Klassen is retired from a forty-year career in critical respiratory therapy.

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DAN KLEIN

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### HOW I BECAME A LIBERTARIAN

I WAS DELIGHTED THAT Walter Block wanted me to participate in his collection of libertarian memoirs. Reading back over my own, I see that it is a general account of my intellectual bearings up to age 30, rather than a narrow telling of how I became a libertarian.

I don't recall hating my kindergarten or 1st grade teachers, but from the 2nd grade I think I hated most of them. Now I am a teacher, and I think I am popular as a teacher because I have a natural hatred of teachers.

Born in 1962, I grew up in a nonreligious-Jewish, nonpolitical-Democrat family, the third of four boys, in northeastern New Jersey. As a kid I thought pretty seriously about time, space, God, free will, causation, philosophical foundations, and other infinite regresses. I think I early saw common patterns to such conundrums. I came to a view similar to that of H.L. Mencken's about theology: "An effort to explain the unknowable by putting it into terms of the not worth knowing."

Until puberty I was smart, handsome, popular, tough, and fairly athletic, but at puberty all my advantages declined at once. Puberty was a period of emptiness and growing cynicism and despair. I did not read. I watched TV.

In 8th grade they put me in the smart class and it was there I met Tyler Cowen. Officially, he was a nerd, but he was profoundly wise to all the bullshit. Like in a Hollywood high-school movie, Tyler was the nerd who was actually the coolest guy around.

At first our friendship was glancing. At school we developed a mutual admiration. He would come out with remarks that made a great impression on me. Most of my friends were

athletic and worshipped our math-teacher/basketball coach Mr. Nickel. I hated Nickel. One of these friends and I disputed the matter, and from nowhere Tyler the brainy nerd interjected with a knowing smile: “Nickel’s a douche.”

In 8th grade I started listening to music and discovered that Tyler and I had similar tastes. The Beatles were primary and we branched out widely, with Tyler scouting and blazing the trails. We were becoming quite friendly at school, but we didn’t hang out outside of school much, probably because our circles didn’t mesh. Neither one of us would have been a natural addition to the other’s circle. Also, we didn’t live that close to each other.

Tyler was very intellectually advanced. He was a bona fide chess champion. Even more remarkable was his voracious reading and broad knowledge. I knew from remarks he made that his political views weren’t the standard stuff, but I was pre-political. My superficial prejudices, from my parents and grand-parents (New Deal Democrats), were against Nixon, etc., as were the prejudices of *Mad* magazine, which was about the only thing I read before I was 16 or so.

I was at Tyler’s house, probably in 9th grade, and we were playing ping pong in his basement. He asked: “Have you ever thought about why school sucks?” “The teachers are assholes, they treat you like children, it’s boring . . .” “No, no, I mean why it sucks?” “No, what do you mean?” It had never occurred to me that school could possibly not suck.

He said it sucked because it isn’t privately owned, it gets its money from politics not the voluntary choice of customers, and so on.

I immediately saw the truth in this. It made perfect sense.

My contempt of school was a major passion in my life. Suddenly I had a powerful theory of why the experience was so disagreeable.

In 9th and 10th grades my general pubescent indirection continued. My main social activities were hanging out with a very cynical neighbor friend and playing poker with a regular group of guys. The first time I took the SAT my verbal score was 490.

Tyler and I continued a friendship based mainly on music (Harry Nilsson was a special favorite), but still we didn’t really hang out together. My disgust with school led me to go away in 11th grade to a boarding prep school in Connecticut. I became more serious about my coursework. I had a science fiction course and I recall Tyler and I corresponding about Arthur C. Clarke and the Overlords coming and establishing Big A. I think Tyler put *Economics in One Lesson* or *Defending the Undefendable* in my hands. These were among the first libertarian books I read. I liked them immediately. I began to get very interested.

That summer I spent 6 weeks in France. I was supposed to be learning French and diddling French girls, but all I actually accomplished was reading *For a New Liberty*. I received a letter from Tyler about his going to an economics seminar at Oxford and that I should travel from France to meet him. I did. I didn’t know where the seminar was meeting. I just went to Oxford and asked the Tourist Centre where an economics seminar was taking place. I actually found it and Tyler and I got to hang out together for about two days. We totally talked libertarianism. He had finished high school a year accelerated and was enrolling at Rutgers Newark in an Austrian program directed by Rich Fink. He suggested that I join him. But I still had another year of high school. Rich got me accepted for the semester starting January, so I started college as a high school dropout.

During what would have been my last year of high school I became increasingly integrated in Tyler's circle of intellectual friends (with whom I was at least acquainted because I had been in the smart math classes). Among them was Randy Kroszner. Tyler was getting him into libertarianism and economics in parallel with me. Randy and I were friendly then but it was later that we became close. Randy is my other best friend, but our friendship, though often playing in libertarian and professional-economics circles and depending on a critical libertarian understanding of things, is not so much an intellectual or movement enterprise. We talk a lot about economists, and some about economics. He has a pretty high standing in professional economics, and he gives me something of an insider view of establishment circles and institutions. His input has very much helped to give me confidence in my irreverence toward the profession. But our friendship is based mostly on flights of satire and absurdity. Randy supplies the imagination and knack for imitating voices and seizing on characteristic utterances. If someone were to tap the phone line he would hardly be able to make sense of it, since every other expression has some special meaning and is interrupted by rifts of giggles. Significant others have had to tolerate these "conversations." Incidentally, and to return to 1980, Randy was the high-school class valedictorian and in cap and gown at commencement he began his speech: "These ridiculous outfits are a fitting conclusion to our 12 years of servitude." It got more radical from there.

At Rutgers Newark, at age 18, I had courses with Joseph Salerno and Richard Ebeling, and seminar discussions also with Rich Fink and Don Lavoie. I was part of the group that relocated to George Mason. There I took courses and interacted with Fink, Lavoie, Jack High, Karen Vaughn, Tom DiLorenzo, James Bennett, and David Levy. Also, about a year after we arrived at Mason, the people of *The Cato Institute* and *Libertarian Review* and *Inquiry* magazines arrived in Washington, DC, and Tyler and I became involved with Tom Palmer, David Boaz, Sheldon Richman, and, most importantly, Roy A. Childs, Jr. I was very, very lucky in all this. Not merely for finding these circles, but also that I had Tyler to get me included.

I wasn't a reader. Having Tyler as a roommate I let him do the reading and tell me about it. He was reading everything from Althusius to Charles Tansill, so, on Tyler's coattails, I acquired some awareness of the big picture and how things fit together. Tyler was pursuing the history-intensive reading program outlined by Walter Grinder.

Although Tyler's knowledge and raw thinking power dwarfed mine, it wasn't as though I sat at his feet in awe. In a back-and-forth process of testing and reformulation, even though I had usually not read anything about what we were discussing, we decided whether we liked an idea. I think there has always been a division of intellectual disposition and tendencies between us. Each has talents and shortcomings the other learned to rely on, play off, and profit from. I don't recall us ever really differing on anything substantive.

For me, the real focus has always been libertarianism as a movement. This I knew to be worthy at a visceral level. I knew that a "philosophical foundation" was at best a dreary stand-in for the rage you feel. At college we were officially Austrians and I suppose non-aggression-axiom libertarians, but by the second or third year our attitude was pretty independent of all that. A friend and peer whom we called "The Master" used to play Mises's "Liberty and Property" audio-tape over and over again, squealing with hysterical laughter

over Mises's emphatic barking. The Master, Tyler, and I would repeat long passages. "Zhe gahrment induhstry makes cloaddths not only for normal people but also der shtout. Book publishers publish not only vesterns and trillers for zhe crowdd, but also books for zhe discriminating rreader."

After doing my bachelor's in economics at George Mason I went directly for the Ph.D. I went to NYU, funded by the Austrian program of Mario Rizzo, Israel Kirzner, and Larry White. Within the program I criticized Austrianism from a McCloskeyan perspective, but was comradely, and learned much from them (I took courses from Rizzo and White). I pursued game theory pretty hotly. I never took model building at all seriously, but career sensibilities led me to think in those terms at the time. Later on, after graduate school, I came to appreciate how valiant the NYU Austrians have been in holding up against the madness and creating the enclave that I was fortunate enough to be part of. Actually I've made a return to Austrian thinking, especially in distinguishing knowledge from information, and have articulated the instinctive admiration I really always had for Kirzner, but my formulation of central Austrian themes is, I think, pretty distinct from that of any of the Austrians, and I now push for retiring the term "Austrian economics."

I did some lecturing for Greg Rehmke's economics-for-debate seminars, and at one such program at Bellarmine College in Kentucky I met John Majewski. John and I hit it off and ventured into toll road history. Together we explored the mysteries and wonders of Plank Road Fever.

In a sense Tyler has been my greatest influence, but throughout those early days Tyler, Randy, and I interacted as peers. Of people with a guiding influence on me, more as idols or role models, there seem to be four who stand out, mentioned here in the order they entered my life.

The first was Tyler's father, Jim Cowen. It would be hard to try to convey his greatness without going on at length. He has influenced me most.

The second is Walter Grinder. For me and many others Walter is the bearer and teacher of the big intellectual picture. He tells you to know the big picture and think of yourself as part of it. There is no separating his being from his vision for the vibrant libertarian pursuit of scholarship. Moreover, Walter maintains a lofty and austere existence, a remarkably independent judgment, upon which a pupil may build certain key ideas and deeply personal scruples and aspirations. Walter's judgment is a sort of North Star for me. His mission is full of integrity and never satisfied. Along with Leonard Liggio, Walter headed most of the academic programs at the Institute of Humane Studies, and our relationship developed with my participation. Walter and I for a time lived about 20 minutes apart and we got together regularly for coffee. For hours we talked of the movement, its history, its ideas, and so on. He's just a great person. Leonard, too, has always been a good friend and supporter, and I am very grateful for the institutions and communities that he, as well, did so much to create. Christine and John Blundell, too.

The third is Prof. McCloskey—Donald then, Deirdre now. She was very important in my formulating why it is perfectly legitimate to be merely a libertarian economist, indeed, merely a libertarian or even just a plain man, why you don't need an Austrian economics or any other protective scientific armor. She is right that, like Samuelson and Arrow, some

Austrians fall prey to anxieties about their scientific status. As someone who has established an appealing and powerful persona within economics, she has been a rare and great role model. Also, she taught me how to write.

The fourth is H.L. Mencken. Although the first author I read avidly was Albert Jay Nock, in 1989 I became really taken with Mencken. His influence on me has been deep and multifaceted. I am half persuaded—but only half—of his thesis that at bottom statism is a mentality of inferior men in opposition to superior men.

Since the age of 30 (1992), I have developed a great admiration for Hayek and Smith. Of course I've learned from many other friends and collaborators.

On my webpage I offer some ideas about libertarianism as political persuasion and movement in “Mere Libertarianism: Blending Hayek and Rothbard.”

In writing out these remarks I experience a satisfaction in knowing that I and most of my friends have secured a rewarding, active intellectual life for ourselves. We are capable and in our good work learn to breathe cleaner cultural air. But day to day I focus on the baneful forces and my sentiments are less serene. ■

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PETER KURRILD-KLITGAARD

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### TO BE CONCEIVED IN LIBERTY

AS A TEENAGER YOU ARE usually an ideological accident waiting to happen: You are either so eager to conform to your surroundings that you may end up supporting anything mainstream, or you are so rebellious that you are willing to advocate basically any odd-sounding idea as long as it will make your family and teachers go nuts. In my case, being a 14-year-old in the welfare state of Denmark A.D. 1981, I guess I was plenty of both.

Looking back, I probably had it coming somehow. In the big picture, Denmark in the early 1980s was—as was most of the western world—an odd mix between the remnants of ancient bourgeois values and the after-shocks of 1968. In the small picture, everyone in my family was (to cut a long story short) either extremely right wing or considerably to the left.

My father had always been a rugged individualist, who did not give a damn about what other people thought about him. If anything he seemed to almost enjoy the very outrage he could create in others. He was a fundamentally conservative, self-made industrialist, who in 1973 had been one of the early supporters of Danish tax-protester Mogens Glistrup's populist and (then) quasi-libertarian Progress Party. My mother was largely apolitical, but liberal in a broad sense even if bourgeois in her manners. She had in the early 1970s, when she was in her mid-30s, had a late flirt with the radical chic, quit her day-job, gone back to school and experimented with her life.

Add to that my parents were divorced and that I grew up without siblings, and then you may picture why I always had an ambivalent attitude toward authority. On the one hand, I always sought recognition from authority figures; on the other hand, there was no surer way to make me adamant than to tell me what I ought to do.

I still clearly remember a summer in the early 1970s, when my mother had moved the two of us to a hippie commune on a countryside farm. There we had to share bathrooms and kitchens and everything with everyone else, and the grown-ups applauded enthusiastically when we kids lined up and shouted "Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi-Minh!, Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi-Minh!" as we had been taught in the municipal kindergarten. I do not know how long we were there, but it seemed like years and I hated every moment of it. If there ever was a politically defining moment for me, it was when a longhaired, bearded guy scolded my mother for letting me play with a plastic toy gun. This was "aggressive, imperialistic toys, produced for profit" or something similar. We left soon after, and since then I have loved guns. Go ahead, make my day.

So in 1981, at age 14, I was a raging radical with reactionary leanings looking for a rebellious cause to join. What particular rebellion probably did not matter, as long as it was outrageous. I can still remember—to my own present embarrassment—that in the summer of 1981 I went to the offices of the youth organization of the Danish Socialist People's Party (my mother's favorite party that year), but the office was closed and I—fortunately—left, in search for another rebellion.

Well, not perhaps just any rebellion; I clearly had some leanings. First, many of my friends at that time belonged to the punk and mod crowds so characteristic of larger European cities in the early 1980s. With them I shared a certain disregard for "the establishment," hippies and the 1970s. Whereas the hippie-types at school always were demanding more attention, more this, more that, we just wanted to be left alone. The pinkos wanted "participatory student democracy," we wanted freedom. For us, fashion wise and otherwise, the creed was "anything goes"—and so it did.

Second, in the early 1980s there was hardly anything more rebellious you could do than dress up in a blue blazer and a tie, praise Reagan and Thatcher, and attack the modern state. And so I joined the Danish Young Conservatives. This was in early December 1981, and before Christmas I was driving my 9th grade school teachers and family crazy. (Some of my mother's leftist relatives even called a family meeting over the phone in order to discuss the matter. They finally accepted my mother's judgment that it was not quite as bad as if I had been a juvenile delinquent.) However, in search for something truly outrageous, I initially became a rabid statist conservative of the Central-European Bismarckian

persuasion. For me the ideal became something like the 1880s Europe: A strong Christian government to enforce traditional values, defend the nation, keep out the foreigners and smooth over social tensions.

So, I was, in other words, a teen, who was a punk by night, dressed in black, doing the pogo and screaming the lyrics of the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy for the U.K." with my friends, while in daytime I was a conformist neo-conservative, dressed in blue, handing out leaflets for local conservative candidates and praising God, King, and Country. As Dave Barry says: "I am not making this up! It was a fascinating time, but clearly not a stable equilibrium."

And then I became a libertarian, a classical liberal, a market-liberal, or whatever you might want to call it. Free minds and free markets. It really began when two libertarians among the Danish Young Conservatives, Palle Steen Jensen and Villy Dall, sent me a thick package of photocopied translations of various classical-liberal and libertarian tracts. A few months earlier Palle had, in a long late night discussion involving lots of cheap port, convinced me first that church and state should be separated and second that hospitals could be private. That in itself had been two large mental steps for a statist conservative, and pretty soon the dominos started rolling faster and faster.

I now felt that I needed more "answers." Among the readings Palle and Villy sent me was F.A. Hayek's essay, "Why I Am Not a Conservative" (from *The Constitution of Liberty*). I read it in January 1983 on a two-hour train ride from Odense to Aarhus, and when I arrived, I had been on an ideological ride, from statist conservatism to classical liberalism.

And so I wanted more. I hastily acquired copies of first Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* and then Hayek's *Law, Legislation and Liberty*. At age 16 these were just about the worst possible places to learn more about classical-liberal/libertarian ideas, although Nozick's analysis made me focus on individual rights of freedom and the legitimacy of government activities.

Shortly after that I read an obituary of Ayn Rand, and in my mother's bookshelves I found *We the Living* and *Anthem*. While these did not rock me, the latter certainly tickled my individualistic tendencies further, and so much that I later devoured Rand's other works. I also read some excerpts from Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, which brought me further down the road of a radical individualism.

Then it was Milton and Rose Friedman's *Free to Choose*, their TV-series had been broadcast the previous summer. I liked it, but while it was good at showing how capitalism worked better than we were taught in high school, and how governments often produced perverse results, it somehow did not get to the basics and the really tough questions. My next step came from the succeeding generation: some excerpts from David Friedman's *The Machinery of Freedom*, which was fun and radical but still did not address the most basic questions about why freedom is good, what it is, etc.

By the summer of 1983, I had basically bought most of the classical-liberal/libertarian package, but for a 16 year old this was still pretty difficult stuff to comprehend, swallow, and digest. Some of it obviously still is for adults! In this process, one long night stands out with particular clarity: I was at a café drinking beer with my high school chum and

ideological comrade-in-arms from the Young Conservatives, Nikolaj Hauberg Mortensen, and he and I were discussing the “acceptable” size and functions of government in a semi-dialectical fashion: I would be defending government intervention in one area, and he would apply free-market logic against me. It was a long night, and there were so many unsettling thoughts. Suffice it to say, that many a fence was moved that night, if not simply torn down and destroyed.

At this time I had been asked by the national organization of the Danish Conservative High School Students to write a policy report on privatization together with one of the organization’s young, radical turks, Morten Holm. Morten, who was a first year law student and an in-your-face-take-no-prisoners libertarian, sent me a draft of his sections, which included some rather hefty suggestions for how far to take privatization. In order to win me over to his ideas Morten also sent me a photocopied copy of Murray Rothbard’s *The Ethics of Liberty*.

Kapow!

Suddenly everything started coming together. It just seemed my entire new world was right there in that little, unknown book. The premises. The arguments and counter-arguments. The logical implications. Natural law philosophy. A political philosophy of rights and liberty. Economic analysis of market solutions to tough problems. Sophisticated replies to the most prominent counter-points. Aristotle meets Aquinas meets Ayn Rand meets the Austrian School of economics. The works.

Within a year and a half I had gone from being an ideological loose canon as a statist conservative to embracing hard-core Rothbardian libertarianism. As in most conversions, night had been turned to day and chaos to order. Good guys had become bad guys, and new heroes and friends had been found on the way.

Soon I devoured everything by Rothbard I could get my hands on, and within the next ten years I gathered what I still believe may be the most comprehensive collection of Rothbardiana existing in Scandinavia; I even bought Marty Zupan’s *Liberated Cooking* just to find out what Rothbard’s favorite dessert was. But *Ethics* will always have a very special place in my collection (even if I have come to think that the title is slightly misleading), and in 1989 the author dedicated a fine, new copy to me, to replace my worn-out photocopy.

During these years a distinct libertarian environment began to emerge in Denmark several years after this had happened in most other West European countries. But while the Danish environment had (and has) its conservative-leaning Hayekians, Misesian and Benthamite utilitarians, Milton Friedmanite gradualists, David Friedmanite anarcho-capitalists, Buchananite contractarians, Randians and Randroids, Stirnerite anarchists, Georgists, etc., what has always surprised non-Danish libertarians is how distinctly Rothbardian it is. This was probably not least due to my mentor and good friend, Otto Brøns-Petersen, who as a young economics student in 1980 had become what was no doubt Denmark’s first Rothbardian. He then had converted Villy Dall and Palle Steen Jensen. If one could somehow make a genealogy of Danish libertarians, Otto would be its Adam.

In 1985–86 many of us, who were active within the Danish Conservative Party and a few with memberships in the Liberal Party and the Progress Party (or no parties at all!) decided to form a forum dedicated exclusively to classical-liberal ideas. I called a meeting,

wrote a largely Rothbardian platform, Otto designed the organization, and the result was *Libertas*, still a vibrant debate forum, with several hundred members and a journal.

Meanwhile, I had entered university as a student of political science. University life was initially a disappointment. When I arrived for my first classes, I had read all the Austrian economics I could get my hands on, a lot of classical-liberal stuff and a little public-choice theory. This was my life, but obviously not a life shared by the university. The political science department at the University of Copenhagen at the time was extremely left-wing. It still is, and—in all fairness—it was not as left-wing as it had been in the 1970s, but it is not unfair to say that most students and many professors alike were slightly to the left of Pol Pot. However, what was unbearable was not that my fellow students or teachers were offended by my views (which I actually, for once, did not parade too much). It was much worse: they just had no idea about what I was saying. No clue. I could tell them the difference between praxeology and thymology, and they would go on about the differences between Poluantzias, Offe, and Balibar. I could argue the differences between the conception of rights in the works of Rand, Rothbard, and Nozick, and they would answer by discussing the characteristics of late-capitalism and the relative autonomy of the state. What planet were they living on?!?!?

Rothbard's writings and ideas had made a big impact on a small group in far-away Denmark. Alas, the man himself we had never met.

We heard from friends that he now rarely traveled abroad, and we did not have the guts to contact him directly. At some point some of us in *Libertas* discussed how we should use \$10,000 that we had accumulated from various sources, and Otto and I fantasized about spending all the money on a round-trip ticket and a honorarium for Rothbard, and the rest on renting a seaside cottage and buying food and then just have him there for a few weeks, quizzing him from one day to the next. Is natural law the best foundation of self-ownership? How do states arise? What would a libertarian do given the choice between two alternatives which both go in the right direction on some issues, but in the wrong direction on others? Does Austrian economics presume that actors maximize utility or not? Does Austrian economic analysis not presuppose that actors are presumed to exercise self-ownership? etc., etc., etc. Unfortunately—for us at least—nothing ever came of the plan.

My first (almost) personal encounter with Rothbard came in a hotel jacuzzi in Stockholm in 1986. Well, no, not quite Murray himself, but Walter Block, who was there as a speaker at the Libertarian International Convention. Over the bubbles, Walter spent hours trying to answer all of Otto's and my questions as to, "What does Rothbard think about abortion?" "Are there two and only two axioms in the libertarian political philosophy?" "If so, how can Rothbard . . . ?" While Otto was an advanced economics student, I was a freshman, barely out of high school, but Walter was exceedingly helpful and encouraging—and entertaining.

My interests were now gradually shifting away from the mostly political side of libertarianism to the more philosophical. Having also met Leonard P. Liggio in Stockholm in 1986, I went to the U.S. to attend the 1987 Institute for Humane Studies "Liberty and Society Summer Seminar" at Marymount. In addition to Leonard, I also met there some truly great people like Walter Grinder, Ralph Raico, Sheldon Richman, Randy Barnett, George H. Smith, Tom Palmer, and Lawrence H. White. And while Rothbard was not on the program—in

person or readings—his ideas and influence certainly were. That summer changed my life in so many ways, including deciding not to pursue a career in diplomacy or journalism but instead going for a Ph.D. in political science and an academic career, softly pushed along—across the Atlantic—by Liggio, Grinder, and Palmer. If Rothbard was my ideological compass, the IHS was certainly the ship, the sails, the crew, the map, and the nautical training.

In particular, when I look back I can see that the IHS taught me two crucial pieces of advice that were useful supplements to my Rothbardian premises. First, with opinions like these, you have almost everyone against you, so if you want to do well academically, you need to be at least as good at the mainstream stuff as the others. Second, you do not have a moral obligation to shock and offend everyone else all the time. In fact, you can be both radical and a nice guy. Not a bad thing to learn when you still have hormones and zeal raging in your body and mind.

Eventually, I did meet Rothbard a handful of times at various Mises Institute events, but alas far too few. The first was in 1989 at the Mises Institute Summer University at Stanford, which I attended with my two Danish comrades, Otto Brøns-Petersen and Mikael Bonde Nielsen. At the conference I circled around Rothbard for days but did not actually talk with him; he was constantly under siege by a swarm of mostly younger acolytes, and I was too much in awe to approach him. Then Sheldon Richman introduced me to the Man, who was extremely friendly while I was a bumbling, star-struck neophyte. Much more successful was one evening, when Pat Barnett and Hans Hoppe took Rothbard and a couple of us kids out for dinner in Palo Alto and then eventually along to the local Denny's. There I enjoyed seeing, listening to, and quizzing the Man for hours. I still regret never having asked him all the questions I had for him, but I shall always appreciate his friendliness, humor, and patience for the questions I did get to ask.

By the late 1980s we in Denmark were a growing bunch of graduate students, who had all become dedicated Rothbardians. In 1988 we launched the (unfortunately now defunct) series of conferences and conference proceedings entitled *Praxeologica*. Two of us, Nicolai Juul Foss and I, subsequently edited *Etik, Marked og Stat: Liberalismen fra Locke til Nozick* (1992), in which Otto published the first lengthy, academically published review of Rothbard's ideas in Danish. We even founded a dinner-club, acronymed ABC, where we would meet on Rothbard's birthday, all wearing bow-ties, and include a toast in his honor. Hey, if we were nerds, why not be radical nerds?!?!?

Our projects were fairly modest ones, but given that we were all in our early- to mid-twenties and the first of a breed, we almost felt we were walking on water, and we certainly broke some ground. My own 1996-dissertation, published as *Rational Choice, Collective Action and the Paradox of Rebellion* (1997), while not very libertarian and certainly more public choice oriented than Austrian, quite visibly owes a great deal to Rothbard, who is one of the most cited authors in it. His understanding of why some political movements succeed and others do not is, I believe, one of the most overlooked aspects of his thought.

Let me also mention that I once wrote an outline for a science-fiction novel that I never finished and which takes places in a penal colony in a galaxy far, far away. It was probably all for the best that I never finished it, but it bears mentioning that one of the central characters is a bow-tie-dressed intellectual rebel by the name of Mayer Aristotle Rosenbawm.

The things I like most about Rothbard's work are these:

- His fundamental premise that it is always restrictions on individual freedom that are in need of justification, not the reverse.
- His consistent use of the rational actor premise as the fundamental axiom of the social sciences.
- His ability to integrate and systematize seemingly disparate ideas into larger wholes. While economics, ethics, philosophy of science, sociology, political philosophy, politics, etc., all are separate disciplines, they should also be approached as a unified whole. Rothbard's original and unique blend of different traditions came closer to doing that than any other.
- His Menckenesque, joyous disrespectfulness for political authority (although certainly not for genuine authority).
- His clear prose, even when writing about very complex matters. How can a world that has the writings of Rothbard have so many who think highly of Foucault, Žižek and the post-modernists?

This has been Rothbard's enduring legacy for me. Much else has happened since I was first inspired by him, not least due to my professional research into constitutional political economy, public choice and social choice theory, and the necessity to address more empirically oriented research than currently done by most Austrians. Yet should I ever pick some thinker's name to use as a specific adjective for describing myself, I would doubtlessly favor "Rothbardian" above all others.

Nonetheless, I would be dishonest if I did not also add that over the years I came to disagree with Rothbard on some issues. Some of these were policy issues—usually areas where I found Rothbard came to deviate from what I thought the truly Rothbardian position should be (e.g., on immigration). Other issues are those where I am inclined to agree with Rothbard's conclusions, but where I do not find his specific arguments convincing (e.g., on the issues of abortion and restitution).

More fundamentally, I have over the years come to be increasingly skeptical about how far we can go in political philosophy with just the two Rothbardian axioms of self-ownership and non-aggression. For me these will always be *sine qua non*, but there are important issues in social and political philosophy, which simply cannot be answered without (implicitly or explicitly) relying on further assumptions. (And for the record, I still think that a neo-Aristotelian foundation of rights is superior to the alternatives!)

But what the heck! If there is an afterlife, I hope to be able to go to the big Denny's in the sky and have a chat with Murray about those issues, medieval Europe, Gothic cathedrals, his encounters with Ayn Rand, his views of Woody Allen's and Clint Eastwood's best movies, and whether Adam Smith really was that bad. That would be fun. Until then, I have his portrait over my office desk and his works close at hand, and that ain't so bad. ■

## MY PATH TO LIBERTARIANISM

I WASN'T EXACTLY A CHILD PRODIGY, but at the same time, I knew I was a bit brighter than the average kid in my Catholic school class in Cincinnati, Ohio. Oddly enough for a pacifist libertarian, I was enthralled by the military in my early days. I loved war movies—you know the bad ones where John Wayne takes out an entire mountainside of Japanese soldiers? In fact, I remember being made fun of for talking to my 5th grade schoolmates about Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. I must've had ten thousand plastic toy soldiers representing dozens of different nationalities in my collection. I also played Avalon Hill war board games like crazy in my teens.

There was one hint of my libertarian future in my grade school years. I spent three or four years doing routine maintenance for a fellow who owned apartment complexes. This is hardly unusual, except that I was about 11 years old when I began. He taught me electrical work, plumbing, carpentry, and many other skills. I could replace a kitchen disposal by myself at age 12 without difficulty. Only years later did it occur to me that we were breaking many laws designed to "protect" me. We violated child labor laws, minimum wage laws, tax laws (I was paid in cash), and occupational licensing laws. But thank goodness we didn't follow those silly laws. To this day, I benefit greatly from that experience.

I think I began high school with the notion of going into the military after graduation. We didn't have a lot of money in my family, and college seemed so remote to me. In my very first day in high school I met a friend, Paul Goins, who was reading *National Review* in class! He shared my fascination with the military, and turned me on to conservatism. The next thing I knew I was a good old-fashioned Commie-hating conservative with my own *NR* subscription. Paul and I are still best of friends. He was my best man at my wedding, and I was his at his wedding.

Fortunately, *NR*, then as now, had enough of a libertarian bent that I started to think a bit about the idea of free markets in particular and freedom in general. After all, this is what we were fighting against the Commies for right? And then something important happened. I still have no idea how he found out about me, because I wasn't even in his class, but the AP Government teacher came to me in the hallway and said, "Here, read this," as he thrust something into my hands. It was a copy of *The Freeman*. I think I was a libertarian from that point on. I devoured it and every copy that I got from then onward. The teacher's name was Mr. Eaton—I don't even remember his first name—and I still have no idea how he came to know about me. I'm glad that he did.

Throughout high school, I was an excellent student and luckily fell into the right crowd of other nerdy-intellectual types, but I hadn't given up the idea of the military completely. I dallied for a while in the Civil Air Patrol and considered applying to the Naval Academy. In the end, I was tempted to take a full NROTC scholarship that was offered to me at Miami University. Fortunately for me, my girlfriend (who is now my wife, Tracy) went to Ohio University, so I followed her there. I enrolled in the Honors Tutorial College at OU which allows you to graduate in three years.

During freshman orientation, one of the leftist student advisors told me I should seek out Richard Vedder in the economics department if I was one of those "right-wingers." I could tell this was not a compliment. Although I was planning to major in political science, I was able to enroll in Vedder's "tutorial" in the principles of microeconomics with 3 other students. By the end of my first quarter, I had changed my major to economics and decided that I wanted to be an economist. I also became active in the College Republicans, which Vedder advised, eventually becoming the president of the group. As it turned out, most of the CRs were libertarians and we learned a lot from each other at our Friday afternoon happy-hour sessions. Those were fun days. Reagan was president and we knew we were on the right side! It was in the CRs that Paul and I (we were still inseparable) met David Sollars. Dave was another one of Vedder's econ students, a senior.

I was groomed to go to graduate school by Vedder from day one. I took graduate level micro and macro as a sophomore, and all the mathematics I could muster. I took a fantastic special topics course in Public Choice economics from him, which made me decide to study that topic in graduate school. Vedder was a distinguished professor at OU which afforded him the right to give away one full academic scholarship to a student each year. As money was always tight, I was unbelievably happy when he offered me the scholarship in my final two years. He set me up in an internship with the Joint Economic Committee in Washington, D.C., and he urged me to attend the second Mises Institute Conference in Austrian Economics in 1987 at Stanford. I probably officially admitted to myself that I was a libertarian and not a conservative at this conference. It was Walter Block in fact whose argument that government redistribution was theft that solidified the case. It was classic Walter Block: "If taking property by force from A to give to B is theft, then welfare spending is theft." I do consider myself a neoclassical economist, but I like to fool myself into thinking that I have avoided the worst of the neoclassical mistakes by studying the Austrians.

Over the winter break in my final year, I stayed in Athens to work for the local County Auditor processing dog tags (a bit of political patronage related to our work with the CRs). I was trying to make some dough to buy an engagement ring. In the long, cold, dark evenings of this December, I read *Atlas Shrugged*. Wow! It is hard to explain the power of this book. After reading it, I knew that the free market not only worked better than the alternative, but that it was moral too.

I also shared housing with John Moser. John went on to get his doctorate in history. He worked for the Institute for Humane Studies for a while, and is now a libertarian history professor. I take a measure of credit for John's conversion to libertarianism by making him read the essay, "Not Yours to Give," which the Foundation for Economic Education had sent to me.

The graduate school decision was tough. I got into Chicago, but they didn't give me any money, which I desperately needed. George Mason and Florida State offered me comparable financial packages. In the end, I decided to go to FSU because my old friend, Dave Sollars had gone there ahead of me, and because FSU actively recruited me (no doubt on Dave's and Rich Vedder's recommendation) by flying me to Tallahassee and treating me royally. I was married after graduation from Ohio University (in three years) and we spent our honeymoon in a rented moving truck on the road to Tallahassee.

At FSU, I found the grad school work hard but not overwhelmingly so. There were many good libertarian students at FSU such as Dave Sollars, Dirk Mateer, Russ Sobel, and Mike Stroup. We had several libertarian faculty including Bruce Benson, Randy Holcombe (who had just replaced Richard Wagner), and most importantly for me Jim Gwartney. I think the plan was for me to study and write under Randy Holcombe. But Jim Gwartney and I really hit it off and I ended up writing under him.

As I was entering my dissertation stage, which was to be on a topic in fiscal federalism, Jim asked me to work up some numbers on the side for a project he had begun with Walter Block. The idea was to create an "economic freedom index" using a few easy to get variables. We presented our first attempt, consisting of about 11 variables covering about 70 countries, at a Liberty Fund meeting hosted by Milton Friedman and Michael Walker of Canada's Fraser Institute. For me, this was my first taste of the libertarian big-leagues. I played tennis with Milton at this meeting, and still consider this a highlight of my career!

Soon enough, I was spending a lot more time on the economic freedom index project than my own dissertation. And it showed. I still consider it nothing short of a miracle that I was allowed to graduate with the doctorate. I think Jim must've twisted a few arms on my behalf to get the committee to sign off on my dissertation!

In the final analysis, it was pretty rational to spend the time on the economic freedom project. The Economic Freedom of the World project is now an internationally respected product. Now I am a college professor and love turning young students on to economics and libertarian ideas. I am most proud though of having mentored a number of young libertarian students who themselves are in graduate school studying to become economists.

Many libertarians mistakenly argue that success in life is based solely on the individual's own hard work and determination. Of course hard work and determination matter a lot. But we all know that each one of us was helped along the way by countless others. Unlike the left, libertarians understand that this help, which was voluntarily given, does not justify using force to "repay society." While I owe society nothing, I do feel that I owe those individuals who helped me along the way. I hope that Mr. Eaton, Rich Vedder, Jim Gwartney, and many others will accept my gratitude as partial repayment for their encouragement and guidance. ■

## A CLASSICAL LIBERAL LIFE

MY PROGRESS TO CLASSICAL LIBERALISM began when I was a child. Until the summer of 1941 we lived in Miami Beach, Florida. Then and until the early 1950s there were many fifteen minute radio commentaries on politics on the four radio networks. My parents listened to them and the news broadcasts. They held opposing views. My father was an Al Smith Democrat (Smith was New York governor and the 1928 Democratic presidential candidate) and opposed the Republican party on its immigration restriction, its protective tariffs, its alcohol prohibition, etc., the issues which created the FDR majority. He adhered to the Democratic tradition of personal liberty. My mother favored sound money and lower government spending, as did the Republicans. My father blindly followed FDR's leadership to take the U.S. into World War II. My mother's conservatism led her to support Republican traditional non-interventionism. She opposed any alliance with Stalin's Soviet Union. My mother's opinion of FDR was similar to her opinion today of Bill and Hillary Clinton, which is not printable. The facts from 1941 to 1945 led me to agree with my mother. My mother was strongly opposed to Progressive Education, and enrolled my brother and me in a Catholic primary school, and later high school and university, even though she was Lutheran. The Bronx was a Communist stronghold, with more Communist Party district offices than Republican ones. In 1945 the Communists elected two members to the New York City Council, as well as a number of Communist front members. The Communists had cells at *Time* and at many newspapers. My father finally turned against the Democrats in 1952 when he saw that "Our Soviet Allies" had been spying on the U.S., as was proved in the Hiss Trial. He finally accepted that it was the graduates of Jesuit universities that had to discover the spies from the Ivy League universities, such as Harvard and Yale.

After the family returned to New York City in 1941 we regularly read most of the daily newspapers. On Sundays we read the *Daily News*, Hearst's *Daily Mirror* and *Journal-American*, the *World-Telegram and Sun*, the *New York Times*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*. (In addition we listened daily to the radio commentators, such as Hans von Kaltenborn, Fulton Lewis, Jr., and Felix Morley on SUNOCO Three-Star-Extra). The most valuable columnist was John O'Donnell of the four-million-circulation *New York Daily News*. (His exposures of FDR's plots to enter the war led FDR during a small news conference in his office to pin an iron cross on his suit.) When I was a student at Georgetown and the Washington *Times-Herald* (a *Chicago Tribune* affiliate) was closed down, I arranged daily delivery of the *New York Daily News*, to my door in my dorm, so that I could read O'Donnell each morning

in order to know what I should think. Other important sources were Hearst columnists Karl von Weigand and George Sokolsky in the New York *Journal-American*.

I was particularly happy with the Republican victory in November, 1946. They won the House and Senate, and gained in governorships. In my northeast Bronx district, Republican David M. Potts won the Congressional seat. Republican Senator Robert Taft became the chairman of the Labor Committee and Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Labor Relations Act of 1947, creating the Right to Work, which freed twenty-two states from union tyranny. It was passed over Truman's veto and I listened as the Senate vote to override was broadcast on the radio. Taft strengthened the Republican tradition against foreign and domestic intervention.

In December, 1950, the American Historical Association (AHA) held a major debate on FDR's taking the U.S. into World War II. Charles C. Tansill had published his *Back Door to War* on FDR getting the U.S. into war in Europe through the back door of the Pacific (those were Herbert Hoover's words). He was joined by Harry Elmer Barnes, who later published *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. They were opposed by two Harvard apologists for FDR. John O'Donnell reported on the AHA debate in Chicago.

I decided that Georgetown University with Charles C. Tansill was the university for me. Georgetown University Foreign Service Dean Edmund Walsh, S.J., was the leading U.S. geopolitician, and Tibor Kerekes was Chairman of the History and Political Science Department.

In high school I had read the works of Hilaire Belloc and Lord Acton, and I continued my reading at Georgetown. In addition to Henry Regnery Publishers, there were Devin-Adair in New York, publisher of Chodorov: *One is a Crowd* and *The Income Tax: The Root of All Evil* (with an introduction by Governor J. Bracken Lee of Utah) and Caxton Publishers in Caldwell, Idaho, publishing classics by Herbert Spencer (*Man Against the State*) and Albert Jay Nock (*Our Enemy The State*).

After arriving at Georgetown I joined Students for Taft and became acquainted with its leaders in New York City, Ralph Raico and George Reisman at the Bronx High School of Science. Ralph called to my attention the Foundation for Economic Education in 1952 after Taft's defeat for the Republican presidential nomination at the June, 1952 Chicago convention. Leonard Read and F.A. Harper were always hospitable to us on our visits to the FEE, and he would invite me to seminars there when I was in New York City. Harper continued to communicate with me as occasions arose. Ralph discovered Ludwig von Mises's *Human Action* in the summer of 1952 and insisted I read it. Through FEE, Ralph, with George Reisman, went to visit Mises at New York University to ask admission to join his graduate seminar as auditors. Mises tested their German and admitted them. Ralph also translated *Liberalism*, and George translated Heinrich Rickert's *Science and History* (the English translations were published for the William Volker Fund by Van Nostrand, in Princeton, New Jersey.)

Ralph and George introduced me to Mises. In the spring of 1953 I began to sit in on Mises's graduate seminar when Georgetown was on vacation. Mises's seminar lectures were from the manuscript of *Theory and History*, which he was preparing for his publisher, Yale University Press. Of course, I was particularly interested in this aspect of history. The ideas that Mises develops in *Theory and History* were foretold in parts of *Human Action*. Mises

analyzed the foundations of historical sciences in the science of human knowledge. I read the manuscript translation of Rickert's *Science and History*. The "sciences of laws" were contrasted with the "sciences of events" in Wilhelm Windelband's *Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft*, a source for Rickert and Mises.

Mises's weekly Seminar was followed by a visit to the Lafayette Café on University Avenue and Eighth Street. Enrolled students went home and the "real" students stayed to discuss the seminar; it was there that I met Murray N. Rothbard. Thereafter during the summer, and after I returned to New York City to study at Columbia University Law School, we gathered around Murray Rothbard and his hospitable wife, Joey: Ralph Raico, George Reisman, Bob Hessen, Ronald Hamowy, and myself (the "Circle Bastiat"). Among the regular participants in the weekly Mises NYU seminar were: Bettina and Percy Greaves, Bill Peterson, and M. Stanton Evans. Through FEE I began to read Frédéric Bastiat's *The Law*, and then his other valuable writings.

The three persons with whom I have had the longest intellectual association were:

1. Joseph R. Peden, who sat in front of me when I started my high school freshman year (1947) at All Hallows Institute and with whom I was in discussion until his death on February 12, 1996. Joe majored in American Studies (and the Italian Renaissance) at Fordham University, and in American History (and the Middle Ages) for his M.A. at Columbia University. For his Ph.D. studies at Fordham University he pursued Roman/Christian and Medieval History. Joe Peden studied medieval money and medieval institutions, as well as opposition to government education in the U.S. and Europe. For many years he was an intellectual and social friend of Murray N. Rothbard. Joe taught European history for almost thirty years at Baruch College (City University of New York).
2. Ralph Raico I met through Students for Taft; he introduced me to FEE, *Human Action*, and Mises's NYU seminar. Mises sent him to earn his Ph.D. with Hayek at the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought. His work on Acton, Tocqueville, and Constant has added to our knowledge, as have his studies of German, French, and Italian Liberalism.
3. Murray Newton Rothbard was a polymath and larger-than-life intellectual. During forty years I always learned something from him. He had boundless intellectual interests and was open-hearted in welcoming persons who shared his inquiries. He had an interest in the contributions of French authors to Classical Liberalism: J.B. Say, Cantillon, Turgot, Condillac, Charles Dunoyer and Charles Comte, and Frédéric Bastiat. He encouraged me to study the work of Charles Dunoyer (1786–1863), who, with Charles Comte, was a disciple of J.B. Say. To that end, he presented me with Dunoyer's *La Liberté du Travail* (1845) for study. In the middle 1960s, Murray and I began writing the history of colonial America that became the multivolume *Conceived in Liberty*. Murray was the principal author, as he was senior and had a fluent writing style.

I was the second author on the first two volumes of *Conceived in Liberty*. Murray already had a background, as his Ph.D. dissertation, which was published as *The Panic of 1819*, was

on the crisis caused by central bank credit expansion in the early American republic. We taught each other a lot during the research and writing of *Conceived in Liberty*.

Classical Liberalism lost a giant with Murray's death in January, 1995.

Early on at Georgetown University, I met Frank Chodorov, who was associate editor of *Human Events*, which was then a weekly newsletter containing four pages of Washington news and a four-page essay by Henry Hazlitt, Felix Morley, George Morgenstern (author of *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War*), Walter Trohan, Chesly Manly (author of *The Twenty-Year Revolution from Roosevelt to Eisenhower*), (all three of the *Chicago Tribune*), Mises, Hayek, John Chamberlain, William Henry Chamberlin, John T. Flynn, etc. My conversations with Chodorov were very informative and we worked on his idea for a libertarian university student organization, which became the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (Individualism is the defense of a person's rights against Socialism, Statism, or Collectivism).

Chodorov put me in touch with Capitol Hill staffers, many of whom had been denied rehiring at universities by the Communist cells. I was able to draw on them for lectures at Georgetown University, as I was an officer for several years of the GU International Relations Club, of which Tibor Kerekes was faculty advisor. These included two former staffers of Senator William E. Jenner of Indiana, Edna Lonigan and Willis Ballinger. At Georgetown I appointed myself president of the film society and showed films with some politics; each year I showed Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*.

At Georgetown I benefited from top refugee teachers: Tibor Kerekes had been Otto von Habsburg's tutor; he came to the U.S. in the early 1920s. Heinrich Rommen left Bonn in the 1930s; he taught Modern Political Thought from Locke, using his book *The Natural Law* (Herder; Liberty Fund). I had full courses in both English and American Constitutional History. I had logic and epistemology taught by John Toohey, S.J., then in his late eighties, who was a strong teacher of Thomist epistemology (cf., *Notes on Epistemology*). The crowning course was taught by Charles C. Tansill. It concerned the strategy of the "Battalion-of-Death" Senators who defeated the ratification of Wilson's Versailles Treaty. It was Tansill who swore me into Phi Alpha Theta, the national history fraternity. The induction was followed by dinner at the Cosmos Club, with an address by George Washington University dean Henry Grattan Doyle.

Another source of ideas was the semimonthly magazine *The Freeman*. It was edited (1950–54) by Henry Hazlitt, John Chamberlain, Suzanne Lafollette, and Forrest Davis. It had articles on current issues, including some by Ludwig von Mises. On the radio there were commentaries by George Sokolsky and the Manion Forum of Notre Dame Law Dean Clarence Manion. Colonel Robert R. McCormick spoke during the intermission of the Saturday p.m. broadcast of the Chicago Light Opera sponsored by McCormick's *Chicago Tribune*.

When I attended Columbia University Law School, every law student in America had to take the course on the history of legal institutions (now it is rarely taught, even as an elective, and when it is taught it hardly concerns European legal institutions). The professor of legal history was the renowned Julius Goebel. Legal history was the course I liked the most, but I did not imagine that from 1990 on I would be teaching the seminar

on the history of legal institutions at a law school. It was in 1983 that I encountered my other major legal history influence, Harold Berman's *Law and Revolution*, which is the most influential book on European legal history. Berman was then at Harvard and is now at Emory University. I have the pleasure of visiting with him whenever he comes to Washington.

An additional legal history influence was Richard Epstein, who I first encountered at a Liberty Fund/Institute for Humane Studies seminar at the University of San Diego in 1979. Epstein, who had studied Roman Law at Oxford, led me to a deeper understanding of the Law Merchant in his explanation that true Roman Law (before the backward Justinian Code of the Bas Empire) was judge-made like Common Law. He had already explained in his essay on "Strict Liability in Torts" that the true Roman Law had very advanced ideas on torts.

Henry Veatch, philosophy chairman at Georgetown University, also lectured.

At Columbia Law School I studied with the top law professors in the U.S.: Julius Goebel, Patterson, Allan Farnsworth, Jones, Jack Weinstein, Herbert Wechsler, Charles Black (and his wife, Barbara Black, later dean of Columbia Law School, was my tutor). A few years later I joined the Columbia University Faculty Seminar on the History of Legal and Political Thought. It was a monthly meeting at the Columbia Faculty Club, of which Joe Peden and Murray Rothbard were members. There, I was able to further develop research areas I had already initiated, such as the Peace of God movement, the Fairs of Champagne, and the Law Merchant. The origin of my interest was the works of the great professor at the University of Ghent, Henri Pirenne (who wrote his two-volume medieval economic history from memory while incarcerated in a German castle as a World War I prisoner of war).

I studied International Law, which helped me since international private law is a modern version of the Law Merchant. I was able to study the work of John Bassett Moore and his beloved student Edwin C. Borchard (whose law students at Yale founded the America First Committee: Gerald Ford (future president); Potter Stewart (future Supreme Court Justice); R. Douglas Stuart, Jr. (future Quaker Oats CEO); Kingman Brewster (future president of Yale University and ambassador to Britain); R. Sargent Shriver (future vice-presidential candidate of the Democratic party in 1972 and brother-in-law of JFK (who joined the AFC at Harvard); and Philip Jessup. These authors influenced Robert A. Taft's views, which he built on William Howard Taft's.

My interest and the interest of Murray Rothbard and Joe Peden in medieval economic institutions and thought had been encouraged by our encounters with Raymond de Roover, who was a close friend of Ludwig von Mises. One of the students of Mises's seminar followed Mises's advice and organized a monthly dinner of the Mises circle at the NYU Faculty Club. Each month someone would speak: Henry Hazlitt, F.A. Hayek, Fritz Machlup, Raymond de Roover, Philip Courtney, Sylvester Petro, etc. De Roover was from Antwerp and was an accountant. He taught at Boston College Graduate School and then at the City University of New York. His knowledge of accountancy permitted him to decipher the accounts of the Florentine bankers (the Medici bank) and to discover that they received interest through having payment, for example, in florins and contracting in letters-of-exchange for repayment in Venetian ducats, or maybe dinars. He wrote very important

studies of the medieval canonists' writings on the permissibility of interest for risk, including repayment in a different coinage. De Roover was a close associate of Joseph Schumpeter, and Schumpeter's treatment of medieval and early modern economists reflects de Roover's influence. Murray Rothbard, Joe Peden, and I spent occasional hours with de Roover over beer after the Mises dinner when de Roover came to New York City from Boston, and later when he joined Brooklyn College.

At Fordham University graduate school I built on the foundations I had been given at Georgetown. The Fordham graduate history department had been created in the 1930s with Hilaire Belloc as a visiting lecturer and with senior professors from NYU, Pennsylvania, and Harvard. Then there had come the harvest of scholars who were refugees from Europe. There is nothing today comparable to the education that I received. The history professors were hardly-achievable models. I was examined in my final comprehensive exam in three fields of my major of modern European history: history of international relations, French history, and East-Central Europe, and in two minor fields: medieval history and American diplomatic history. Fordham professors included: Ross J.S. Hoffman (English history during the American Revolution and history of international relations); A. Paul Levack (French history) (Hoffman and Levack were the editors of *Burke's Politics*) which revived Burke studies); Oskar Halecki (of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Versailles Conference; he had attended Jagiellonian University and had been a dean at the University of Warsaw); Gerhard Ladner (medieval reform movements; he came from Austria and won the 1959 Haskins Gold Medal for his Harvard University book *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*); Fr. Vincent Hopkins, S.J., (American history; he wrote the book *Dred Scott's Case* on the 1857 Dred Scott Decision). I took four year-long seminars with Halecki, as well as courses. Halecki introduced me to conservative historian John Lukacs

At the beginning of 1958 Ayn Rand, whom Murray Rothbard had known some years earlier, invited him to bring his friends to meet her and her friends following the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*. Since my graduate studies at Fordham often involved spending all day at the New York Public Library before going to late afternoon class, I was not suited to her late hours. Famously, I once fell asleep at three a.m. while she was speaking. Since I was a theist I did not continue to join the meetings. A crisis emerged in late spring. Nathan Brandon had sought to convince Murray's wife, Joey, on atheism, which she did not accept. Murray was told he must divorce his theist wife, which he declined to do.

At that point Murray was expelled from the "Randian Collective" on the grounds that his new article, "The Mantle of Science," failed to footnote Ayn Rand as his source for the concept of reason. Murray had cited scholarly books on rational philosophy which predated Ayn Rand's writings, not to mention that he was a graduate of Columbia College's famous Civilization course taught by some world famous philosophers. Ralph Raico and I were called upon on July 4, 1958 to repudiate Murray, which we did not. (Murray had written the article for a William Volker Fund conference at Sea Island, Georgia.)

In late summer of 1958 Murray and I were invited to be guests at the first general meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society in the U.S., held at Princeton University Graduate College. Since I was the youngest guest, Jasper Crane, a vice-president of DuPont and

organizer of the MPS meeting, and his wife, a DuPont heiress, invited me to sit with them at the opening dinner. Jasper Crane's brother Edward Crane was the president of the Van Nostrand Publishing company in Princeton, which was the publisher of the Volker Fund Series in the Humane Studies, including Mises, Kirzner, Rickett, etc. The 1958 Princeton MPS meeting was an occasion to widen my contacts. It demonstrated the cosmopolitanism of classical liberalism.

In June, 1959 I was invited to attend the Volker Fund seminar in political economy, which was directed by Professor Clarence Philbrook (treasurer of the MPS) at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. These seminars lasted for almost two weeks with three lecturers. At Chapel Hill, F.A. Hayek lectured from the manuscript of *The Constitution of Liberty* and when the University of Chicago Press published the book the next year, the Volker Fund sent each seminar participant a copy hot off the press. The second lecturer was Professor Harrell de Graff, American economic historian at Cornell University. They did not have a third senior lecturer, so the remaining time was split between two younger professors: James Buchanan of the University of Virginia, speaking on Contract Theory and Unanimity, and H. Gregg Lewis, a University of Chicago labor economist. I was the only graduate student there. Israel Kirzner attended this summer seminar. Each year the Volker Fund held three summer seminars on political economy; one at Chapel Hill with Clarence Philbrook; one at Wabash College with Benjamin Rogge (at which Milton Friedman delivered the manuscript of *Capitalism and Freedom*); and one at Claremont Mens' College in California with Arthur Kemp (who later was treasurer of the MPS), at which Mises, Frank Knight, Felix Morley, David McCord Wright, and Bruno Leone lectured (*Freedom and the Law* was recorded there).

I was appointed to a postdoctoral fellowship in European Economic History at New York University. It was a rich scholarly program with visiting faculty: Howard Adelson (chairman of the CUNY Graduate History Department) on early medieval coinage; Raymond de Roover on medieval letters of exchange and interest; Herbert Heaton on the role of the textile industry in the early Industrial Revolution; Forrest McDonald on the economic issues in the debate on the U.S. Constitution; Ludwig von Mises on the methodology of the social sciences; F.A. Hayek on the Industrial Revolution and the Historians; Milton Friedman on U.S. monetary history; Murray N. Rothbard on U.S. monetary history, especially from his book *America's Great Depression*; Israel Kirzner on economic theory, from *The Economic Point of View*.

After the Chapel Hill seminar I had more contact with the William Volker Fund. F.A. Harper had already left the Foundation for Economic Education to join the Volker Fund, where he worked on a project for the Institute for Humane Studies in which he included me. I also began to discuss history with Kenneth S. Templeton of the Volker Fund when he came to New York City. Ken had been a classmate and friend of Forrest McDonald when they were graduate students at odds with the leftwing American history faculty at the University of Wisconsin. Among the historians with whom Ken Templeton worked were University of California, Santa Barbara historians Donald Dozer and Philip Wayne Powell, who with Volker Fund support wrote the *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (Basic Books, 1971), which introduced me

to the work of the American Historical Association President, Lewis Hanke, *Bartolome de Las Casas* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952) and the Ghent historian Charles Verlinden (*The Beginnings of Modern Colonization* (Cornell University Press, 1979)). In the summer of 1960 Ken pressed me to accept appointment to the history faculty of Iona College in New Rochelle, New York. I had to teach five three-hour classes a week (fifteen hours) of Western Civilization. I left after one year, and Joe Peden was able to take the history position at Iona College.

I was appointed to a position as analyst, or reader, for the William Volker Fund. The senior analysts were Murray Rothbard, who did economics and philosophy, and Frank S. Meyer, who did political science and sociology. I did American and European history.

The analysts read journal articles and books to discover any remnant of classical liberals in academia. If the article looked promising, we would send a report and copy of the article to the William Volker Fund. Its staff would follow up with contact or a visit to the author. He or she might be invited to one of the summer seminars, and might apply for a grant for leave to write a book. The Volker Fund method was established by Herb Cornuelle, who was succeeded at the Volker Fund by his brother, Richard Cornuelle. Herb had been seconded to assist Leonard Read at FEE and at the first MPS meeting, which Volker helped to fund. When the Volker Fund staff was disbanded in the spring of 1962, Pierre F. Goodrich arranged for the appointment of F.A. Harper as professor of moral sciences at Wabash College, Indiana.

Mr. Pierre Goodrich was very involved in the conception and founding of the Institute for Humane Studies, and he was seeking to give it a base at Wabash, where Ben Rogge was the dean. Harper immediately organized a conference for the new Liberty Fund, Inc. at Wabash for the last few days of December, 1968. I took the Broadway Limited sleeper to Chicago to do research at the Newbury Library and attend the American History Association meeting at the Conrad Hilton Hotel. I took the Illinois Central Railroad's James Whitcomb Riley to West Lafayette, where I was met by Harper's student assistant Jim Bond (later law dean at Puget Sound University and the University of Seattle). The Liberty Fund seminar was "On Power," with readings from the Book of Samuel, Lord Acton, and de Jouvenel. I remained in Crawfordsville several days to meet with Dr. Harper and Pierre Goodrich about the future of the Institute for Humane Studies. Harper shared an office with John van Sickle. In 1963 Harper and the IHS returned to California.

After the Volker Fund staff was disbanded, Ken Templeton became the vice-president for research and education at the Eli Lilly Endowment and I did research for him. I was a research fellow of the Foundation for Foreign Affairs. Murray and I were given a grant to prepare a book on American colonial history and the American Revolution and Constitution. *Conceived in Liberty* was published during the Bi-Centennial in 1976.

In the summer of 1966 I attended the IHS seminar at Appleton, Wisconsin organized by the chairman of the IHS academic council (of which I was member), Neil McLeod, who had been a Ph.D. student of F.A. Harper at Cornell University. Speakers included Henry Manne, Harold Demsetz, Louis M. Spadaro, Sylvester Petro, and Ben Rogge (Pierre F. Goodrich attended, as did Fr. James Sadowsky, S.J., of Fordham University. Pierre Goodrich expressed strong concern about the threat of inflation as President Johnson was hiding the costs of the Vietnam war by printing money.)

I was appointed to the history faculty of the City College of New York (CCNY) in 1968 by two European refugee historians (Thomas Goldstein, from Austria, and Herbert Strauss, from Bavaria) to teach American history (they knew I had worked on *Conceived in Liberty*) because they trusted my European history credentials. Soon I was teaching Modern European history. In using Hayek's *Capitalism and the Historians* as a textbook I told the students that Hayek was a radical opposing feudalism and mercantilism. There were other European scholars in the CCNY history faculty, of which the department chairmen were Howard Adelson (Byzantine gold coinage and medieval Christian imagery) and Herbert Gutman (*The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (1976), favorably reviewed by T. Sowell in *Fortune*).

There were a few occasions at which I met with Mises in his last years. Murray and Joey Rothbard would have the Miseses to dinner on occasion. The last time was a few days after Christmas in December, 1972. Mises was in good form and talked about German history, Bismarck, etc. Mises died at the end of September, 1973 and I drove the Rothbards to the cemetery in Hawthorne, New York where Mises was buried.

I presented a paper at a National Endowment for the Humanities conference on Racism at Tuskegee Institute on "The English Origins of Early American Racism." It was published in the *Radical History Review*. It had gained interest from Forrest McDonald and Eugene Genovese, with whom I was in correspondence. I had been directing the IHS programs in History and in Social Theory (these were alongside the IHS programs in Law, in Economics, and in Private Education). In 1973 I organized a seminar for the IHS on U.S. economic history at Cornell University with Forrest McDonald and Murray Rothbard as the lecturers to young faculty and grad students. On the return, I drove Ken Templeton and R.J. Smith to Woodstock, New York to call on Mrs. Frank Meyer following his death.

In the summer of 1974 I was a Liberty Fund fellow at the IHS in Menlo Park, California to prepare a research agenda on economic history for them. John Blundell had come to the IHS for the summer from England after attending the first Austrian economics conference at South Royalton, Vermont. In November, 1974 I organized a weekend series of lectures at Fordham Lincoln Center by Max Hartwell (visiting at the University of Virginia) on the Industrial Revolution, with the cooperation of the graduate business dean, Louis M. Spadaro (who had done his Ph.D. at NYU with Mises).

In April, 1975 I was assigned by the Liberty Fund to meet Professor and Mrs. Hayek at JFK Airport (Professor Ludwig Lachmann, who was then a visiting professor at NYU, accompanied me in order to speak in German with Mrs. Hayek). Hayek, who had won the 1974 Nobel Prize, spoke at NYU and in Washington he appeared on *Meet The Press*. He went to California as a Liberty Fund scholar at the IHS. His term as Liberty Fund scholar overlapped with the Liberty Fund summer seminar in economic history, which I directed. After Hayek's departure, Professor Gunter Smolders of the University of Cologne was the visiting scholar. In addition to the young historians, the economists included: Gerald P. O'Driscoll, Genie and Gary Short, Richard Ebeling, and Sudha Shenoy. Again, in the summer of 1976 I was director of the Liberty Fund summer seminar in diplomatic history. In 1977 I was moving to San Francisco to join the Cato Institute, and the Liberty Fund summer seminar was directed by the new president of the IHS,

Louis M. Spadaro, the retired dean of the Fordham University Graduate School of Business, and former chairman of the Fordham Economics Department, where Jerry O'Driscoll and Mario Rizzo were students.

In November, 1976 a Libertarian Scholars' Conference was held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City through the generosity of the Liberty Fund (in 1977, it was held at Princeton University, and earlier at the Williams College Club in New York City). It was organized by Walter Grinder, who had studied with Mises and Kirzner at NYU, with the aid of Andrea Millen Rich. I had written an extensive review in the *Libertarian Review of Books* of Robert Nisbet's *The Twilight of Authority*, which I consider his best book, and at the conference I presented an analysis and Nisbet commented. (I had corresponded with Nisbet when he had written an important article in the *Wall Street Journal* on the U.S. presidency's becoming like Roman imperialism; the *Journal* published my response noting that Nisbet's critique paralleled that of Robert A. Taft.) In 1977 I directed a long-planned IHS conference at Fordham Lincoln Center on *The Politicization of Society* (later published by the Liberty Fund), which was a discussion by scholars of their previously published essay, in which Robert Nisbet, John Lukacs, Giovanni Sartori, Jonathan Hughes, Murray Rothbard, among others, participated.

In January, 1973 Howard Adelson was deposed as chairman of the CCNY history department by the left and I was immediately not reappointed by the acting chair, who was a labor historian who felt I did not limit myself to one field. Immediately the executive committee of the history department reversed the decision, as they highly appreciated my scholarship. I happened to be at the Columbia University Faculty Club for a Legal and Political Thought seminar when the senior CCNY history faculty was hosting a dinner for the future chairman of the CCNY history department, Herbert Gutman of the University of Rochester. The new CCNY president was a physicist from the University of Rochester (CCNY had the Science Ph.D. school of CUNY), and he had selected Gutman. In the club lobby I greeted a couple of my colleagues, when Gutman asked who I was, and, when told, he greeted me on behalf of Eugene Genovese (who had told Gutman that I was a very valuable historian on the CCNY faculty). It made some colleagues unhappy, especially as Gutman put me on committees alongside the more senior historians, including the committee to revise long-standing history requirements, which was chaired by the graduate dean, Oscar Zeichner, a historian of the Connecticut federalists.

Herbert Gutman's important book *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* was highly praised as showing that neither slavery nor freedom destroyed the Black family (Thomas Sowell, in a review in *Fortune* magazine, noted that Gutman ended with the 1925 census, and said the destruction of the Black family was due to the New Deal welfare system). Gutman was chairman of the New York Council for the Humanities, and recommended me to the Rockefeller Foundation to be director of a proposed Center for Cultural Diversity. The development of this center was a project of Michael Novak as director of Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation following his working with R. Sargent Shriver's 1972 vice-presidential campaign and the publication of Novak's *Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics*. The Center for Cultural Diversity would work with scholars on research and curriculum development in the City University of New York on European-American Ethnic histories.

After the 1969 minority student takeover of CCNY, new departments were created: Black Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, Jewish Studies, and Asian Studies. The new Open Admissions did not mean more Black and Puerto Rican students, but fewer Jewish students. In addition to more Asian students in the sciences, there was a flood of white ethnic New Yorkers who had thought CCNY too hard when it had had mostly Jewish students (Jews had moved from New York to suburbs, or preferred to leave New York City homes to enroll in the many new universities created in upstate New York by governor Nelson Rockefeller).

(A hypothesis: the publication of Kevin Phillips's *The Emerging Republican Majority* [1969] focused on Northern ethnic Democrats and Southern Democrats. Kevin Phillips grew up in the same north Bronx congressional district as I did, but he lived in an apartment house and not a private home as did the majority of voters [making them Republicans].) He worked for Republican Congressman Paul Fino (1952–68) who was not opposed to the New Deal. Richard M. Nixon's 1972 strong election caused a focus on the second wave of white ethnic former Democrat voters, who began voting Republican (the first was after the 1945 Yalta betrayal by FDR). The Democrats did pick up on it by focusing on the second/third generation of ethnics, often suburban voters, while the Ford White House looked to the 1940s game plan of foreign-language-speaking first generation voters.

The loss by Ford to Carter in 1976 in Ohio by 20,000 votes may be so explained. So can the loss by Conservative Party Senator James Buckley to Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan in New York. Moynihan had written the classic book on ethnicity in New York, with Nathan Glazer, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963). With Carter in the White House, the Rockefeller Foundation did not renew the project and, advised by Senator Moynihan, made the grant to Harvard (where he had been a professor) for an encyclopedia of U.S. ethnicity (Harvard University Press, 1980) edited by Stephen Thernstrom and Oscar Handlin.

Michael Novak (who I did not know at the time) was succeeded at Rockefeller by Joel Colton, a professor of French History at Duke University and author of a biography of French premier Leon Blum. More importantly he was coauthor with Robert R. Palmer of *Modern Europe*, the most recommended survey textbook (no longer used due to its high quality). Since I had been a member of the Society for French Historical Studies since 1960, when I was introduced by Fordham professors A. Paul Levack, John Olin, and Msgr. Joseph Moody (later professor of modern European history at the Catholic University of America), Joel Colton knew I was a known scholar.

At the 1960 Society for French Historical Studies conference at the University of Rochester, there was a major session on the French Revolution featuring Peter Gay (of Columbia, then at Yale) with a radical or Jacobin position; Robert R. Palmer (of Princeton, then at Yale and author of *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth Century France* (Cornell, 1939) representing his two volumes, *The Age of the Democratic Revolutions* (Princeton, 1957); and Crane Brinton (Harvard) representing Voltairian Skepticism. A. Paul Levack had been the first student at Harvard of Crane Brinton. In September 1993 I enrolled in a weekly Folger Library seminar on the "Orthodox Sources of Unbelief in Early Modern Europe," presented by Alan C. Kors (University of Pennsylvania), who had been the last student of

Crane Brinton. (Lenore Ealy and John Pocock, of Johns Hopkins, also participated each week.)

My studies of U.S. foreign policy involved the domestic political influences of European ethnic groups on decision-making, especially in World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, which involved Lutheran, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox as well as Jewish Americans. I held conferences and workshops for many faculty who wished to teach such courses, or to conduct research for their courses. A German linguist came to me to help him find Jewish old age homes where he could conduct research on Yiddish, a medieval form of German. I worked with Fr. Tomaso Silvano, who headed the journal and center for Migration Studies in Staten Island; he later became the secretary of the Vatican Council on Migrants, and now heads the Vatican UN office in Geneva, Switzerland. The office of the Center for Cultural Diversity was located on West Forty-second Street between the CUNY Graduate Center (across from the New York Public Library) and the Rockefeller Foundation on the Avenue of the Americas.

While I was directing the 1976 Liberty Fund summer seminar at the IHS in Menlo Park, CA, I was invited by the Fund to join Ed McLean (Wabash College), Bill Dennis (Denison University), and Charles King (Pomona College, California) to spend a week in Santa Fe, New Mexico to observe the Socratic Seminar techniques at the Great Books curriculum at St. John's College in Santa Fe (affiliated with the historic Great Books college, St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland) Ed, Bill, Charles, and I were to back up Ben Rogge, who had been the sole Liberty Fund discussion leader, now that the Liberty Fund had expanded its colloquia programs.

In the summer of 1977 I joined the new staff of the Cato Institute on Montgomery Street in San Francisco, and became the editor of the Institute's bibliographical quarterly journal, *Literature of Liberty*. The first issue was January, 1978 with a picture of George Mason (1726–1792) on the cover. The lead essays were Forrest McDonald's "A Founding Father's Library" and Murray N. Rothbard's "Modern Historians Confront the American Revolution." These essays were kindly provided by the Liberty Fund, which had assisted in the planning of *Literature of Liberty*. Among the notable essays that would appear in the journal were John Gray on Hayek, Norman Barry on "The Tradition of Spontaneous Order," and Robert Nisbet on "The Idea of Progress" (leading to his book: *History of the Idea of Progress* [Basic Books, 1980]).

In late 1978, Kenneth S. Templeton left the IHS to be executive director under President Neal McLeod at the Liberty Fund. I left the Cato Institute to replace him at the IHS. ■

## MY LIBERTARIAN LIFE

I'VE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH to have spent over half my life in the libertarian movement, and I am very grateful to have received so much in the way of friendship, insight, intellectual stimulation, emotional support, and material assistance from its members over the years.

I owe my libertarianism to two women: my mother, and Ayn Rand.

My mother, Jorie Blair Long, comes from a family of individualists and independent thinkers, and I absorbed those values early on. From her I learned that people should rely on their own judgment, seek out their own destiny, and not dictate one another's goals or poke their noses into one another's business.

My mother's political convictions were individualist as well—her family were all staunch Roosevelt-despisers of the “Old Right” tradition—but it was initially at the personal rather than at the political level that I was influenced by these values. Indeed, as a child I was thoroughly apolitical. Admittedly, I do recall being shocked and incredulous when, at the age of eleven or so, I discovered that the federal government considers a privately built or bought mailbox to be federal property. (My first episode of libertarian outrage!) But for the most part I was utterly ignorant of and indifferent to politics, and barely even knew who the president was; the political leaders who interested me were Agamemnon, and King Arthur, and Aragorn son of Arathorn.

The result of this indifference was that despite having fairly stern moral principles, I had really no political principles whatsoever. I recall, for example, writing essays for my high school social studies class in which I maintained that moral constraints do not apply in war, that a profession's right to strike is inversely proportional to its social usefulness, and other such drivel. In my defense, I can say only that I at least held these views with no particular strength of conviction: I had given the questions little thought, because I found social studies an unbearably boring subject to think about. I had enjoyed reading books like *1984*, *Animal Farm*, and *Brave New World*, but I hadn't seen them as calling into question the political institutions of our country.

Although I had never been interested in exploring the political application of my personal values, the seed had been sown by my upbringing. The harvest came in 1979, when, at the age of 15, I read an article in *Starlog* magazine called, I think, “The Science Fiction of Ayn Rand.” (Incredibly, this now virtually unknown article was illustrated by the famous fantasy artist Boris Vallejo.) Its descriptions of *Anthem* and *Atlas Shrugged* were intriguing, and as an avid science-fiction reader I decided to give them a look.

For me, as for so many 15-year-olds before me, *Atlas Shrugged* was a turning point. Rand's vision hit me like a magnesium flare dispelling murky vagueness; she converted me not just to libertarianism but to philosophy as such. I quickly moved on to reading all of Rand's other books, both fiction and nonfiction (several of which my mother turned out to own already), then to reading authors Rand recommended, and authors those authors recommended, and so on. My libertarian education had begun.

I entered Harvard in 1981, certainly planning to study a bit of philosophy, but still entertaining thoughts of majoring in French or theatre or creative writing instead. In my senior year of high school I had taken a course at Dartmouth on continental philosophy, which I found to be an intellectual emetic; in light of Rand's grim view of contemporary academia, I had little reason to expect any better of analytic philosophy. But after my first analytic course at Harvard—it was Roderick Firth's "Types of Ethical Theory"—I was hooked. I soon realized that no other subject had any chance of luring me away, and I became a philosophy major. Though I was still a quasi-Randian, I had never brought my mind entirely into captivity to Rand (I reckon I would have lasted in her Collective just about as long as Rothbard did), and I soon began integrating the insights I had gained from Rand with the new ideas I was learning from mainstream philosophy. My foremost interests were ethics, philosophy of science, and Greek philosophy—especially Aristotle, who was beginning to displace Rand as my chief philosophical muse.

But my libertarian education continued as well; in the library stacks I was hunting down works by John Locke, Adam Smith, the Founding Fathers, Frédéric Bastiat, Herbert Spencer, Ludwig von Mises, Henry Hazlitt, Isabel Paterson, Rose Wilder Lane, Murray Rothbard, Robert Heinlein, Tibor Machan, Milton Friedman, David Friedman, George Reisman, and Robert Nozick. (No Hayek, for some reason—my introduction to spontaneous-order theory came instead via the physical sciences, through courses on "Space, Time, and Motion" and "Chance, Necessity, and Order" by astrophysics professor David Layzer.) I also learned a great deal by writing for Harvard's libertarian and conservative student newspapers, as well as for the MIT-based Objectivist periodical *ERGO*. And nearly everything I know about constitutional law I learned from my libertarian/conservative roommate Mark DePasquale. (I never took a course from Nozick; his "Best Things in Life" course, focusing on love, sex, and—I am not making this up—ice cream, sounded too touchy-feely to me. Nozick's worst book, *The Examined Life*, was a product of that course, so I probably chose wisely.)

It was through an ad in the *Harvard Libertarian* that I discovered the Institute for Humane Studies. In 1986, my first year of graduate study at Cornell, I attended my first IHS conference. The lineup of lecturers was, for me, a fantastic feast of brain candy: Randy Barnett, Walter Grinder, Israel Kirzner, Don Lavoie, Leonard Liggio, Ralph Raico, and George Smith. (I remember Ralph asking me, "Are you a Randroid?" To this I replied, "I don't think of myself as a Randroid"—which, as he quite reasonably pointed out, did not answer his question. But then again, since neither a Randroid nor a non-Randroid would admit to being a Randroid, it surely follows that Ralph's very question was some sort of violation of conceptual grammar.) The IHS was to be an enormous influence in my life; I am grateful in particular to the loyal support of Walter Grinder, the Institute's academic director at the time.

Over the next few years, my continuing association with the IHS had several beneficial results (in addition to the welcome financial aid!): it introduced the ideas of Friedrich Hayek into my intellectual evolution; it plugged me into an invaluable network of libertarian academics and institutions; and it radicalized me politically. (Yes, the IHS was radical in those days.) In 1987, thanks to a combination of IHS influence, Jonathan Kwitny's excellent book *Endless Enemies*, the grotesque GOP primary debates (Bush-Dole-Kemp-Haig-DuPont-Robertson, ugh), and my increasing attraction to the cultural left, I was finally shaken loose from such Randian-style bad habits as hawkish foreign policy and the Republican Party. I joined the Libertarian Party on Thanksgiving Day, 1987.

By 1991, during my first year of teaching at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—and in the face of the insanity surrounding the first Gulf War—I had also come to reject the necessity of the state. I had initially resisted anarchism, convinced by Isabel Paterson's *God of the Machine* that liberty could be secured only through a constitutional structure; after years of wrestling with the idea, I now came to see that market anarchy is such a structure. I had become what might be called a “left-Rothbardian.” (How big a change this was I'm not sure. When told of my conversion to anarchism, my mother and my ex-girlfriend both replied: “Oh? I thought you already were an anarchist.”)

I began to develop a moral and political philosophy that synthesized what I took to be the major insights of the Greek philosophers, the medieval Scholastics, Rand, Hayek, Rothbard, mainstream analytic philosophy, and the cultural left. (Admittedly, a stew unlikely to be precisely to anyone's taste but my own.)

Through the IHS network I had come into contact with Fred Miller and his Social Philosophy and Policy Center. Now Fred invited me to spend the 1991–92 academic year there, on leave from Chapel Hill, to finish up my doctoral dissertation on Aristotle and indeterminism; this enabled me to receive my Ph.D. from Cornell that spring. While in Bowling Green I sat in on Fred's graduate seminar on rights theory, which sparked new directions in my thinking. (All the seminar participants tried their hands at constructing deductive arguments with numbered steps deriving libertarian rights from Randian self-interest. Mine had the distinction of being the longest and weirdest.) In subsequent years, Fred was to prove an enormous help to my career, generously guiding many conference invitations and other opportunities my way.

In Fred's seminar I had championed the “flourishing” over the “survival” interpretation of self-interest. One welcome bit of fallout from this was that David Kelley, who had led the exodus of the sane and nice people out of the Randian movement, invited me to his Institute for Objectivist Studies to give several lectures critiquing Rand's ethics and epistemology from my own post-Randian point of view; these lectures eventually became my book *Reason and Value: Aristotle versus Rand*.

It was during my Chapel Hill years that I met Richard Hammer, a North Carolina engineer who sent me his manifesto *Toward a Free Nation*. Both inspired and frustrated by the history of attempts to found a new libertarian country, Rich had become convinced that such projects had failed, not because of a lack of potential inhabitants or resources, but because of the absence of believable descriptions of the relevant institutions. Impressed by his level-headed approach to what is all too often a half-baked project, I became involved

in Rich's Free Nation Foundation, a small think tank devoted, in effect, to libertarian constitutional design. Writing for FNF and discussing issues with the other members helped me to work out a more fully developed anarcho-capitalist political theory.

In 1997 I was denied tenure at Chapel Hill. Though it certainly didn't seem so at the time, this was one of the best things that ever happened to me—for in 1998 I came to Auburn, the coolest philosophy department in the world. Here I soon found myself part of two different families of crusading, brass-knuckled rationalists. On the one hand, there were my new colleagues, from whom I would learn more than I'd learned from any philosopher since grad school. On the other hand, there was the Auburn-based Ludwig von Mises Institute, at the forefront of radical libertarian scholarship, in whose programs Lew Rockwell generously invited me to participate.

These two new influences were about to converge in a crucial way. Through Kelly Dean Jolley, one of my departmental colleagues, I became interested in the philosophical approach of Ludwig Wittgenstein (which I had previously dismissed as an obscurantist variant of positivism); through Guido Hülsmann and others at the Mises Institute, I became interested in Mises's "praxeological" attempt to establish economic law on an a priori rather than an empirical basis. I soon began to see how these two projects connected in interesting ways both to each other and to my standing interest in Aristotelean ethics and moral psychology. This three-way connection is currently the centerpiece of my philosophical research, and serves as the unifying theme of my website, Praxeology.net.

So there's my story: a Randian at 15, an LP member at 23, an anarcho-capitalist at 27, and a praxeologist at 36. (And despite all of the above, tenured at 38!) What the future holds I can't say (kaleidic, you know), but it's a safe bet that whatever I'm working on will have something to do with the Science of Liberty. ■

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ALVIN LOWI, JR.

## A LASTING ENCOUNTER

MY SOCIAL "ENLIGHTENMENT" (such as it is) began with my friendship with Joseph A. Galambos, as Andrew J. Galambos was known when I met him in 1957. At this time, Galambos and I were colleagues on the technical staff of the Air Force consultancy

Ramo-Wooldridge before that company became TRW. He was an astrophysicist calculating trajectories for Atlas ICBMs before the advent of high-speed digital computers. I was studying engineering rocket thrust controls to put missiles into certain trajectories. We had both served in the armed forces and had become technologists in the service of the country's national defense, which we assumed to be the vanguard of the free world. Our missiles would keep those commie bastards in their place. Oh yeah! Were we naive or what?

On the side, Galambos was an entrepreneur and proud of it. Right away I could see he was eccentric. Here was this highly credentialed physicist who owned a securities and insurance dealership. Galambos was in partners with another colleague, Donald H. Allen. (Don was a mathematician.) On close examination, they were not only selling securities on company time but also CAPITALISM, for gawd's sakes.

At the time, I was a struggling graduate student in engineering at UCLA, and Galambos generously tutored me in thermodynamics, kinetic theory, and scientific method, among other things. He also sold me an income-protection insurance policy and some mutual fund shares for which he got a commission. His forthright and expert explanation of this transaction captured my interest in his free-enterprise ideas.

Don Allen subscribed to *The Freeman*, which he read religiously. He got Galambos interested in this material on the basis of improving his exposition of laissez faire capitalism. Until then, Galambos behaved as though he had invented capitalism as a tool for selling his portfolio of corporate securities and insurance policies. Regardless, Galambos is fondly remembered by many like me who owe a measure of their financial security to his advice and sales persistence.

Galambos's business enterprise, Universal Shares, Inc., was a compulsory member of the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD). This experience with government regulation provoked his initial ideological campaign. In spite of the bureaucratic regimentation and his anguish over it, the securities business was quite successful financially—paid better than government work—and it accessed kindred spirits who would subsequently patronize his lectures. I was not the only one who bought and held his insurance and investment offerings, and his arguments for doing so.

My preparations for language readings and qualifying exams put me behind Galambos and Allen in apprehending the new social enlightenment flowing from the pages of *The Freeman*. Soon enough, however, we all came to realize our employment made us part and parcel of a racket that, in principle, was not unlike the one against which we were supposed to be defending America. Subsequently, Galambos shucked the aerospace boondoggle and joined the faculty of Whittier College to teach physics, math, and astronomy. He still had his Universal Shares and continued his ideological campaign with the students. When he decided to offer his lectures on capitalism during the weekly chapel period in competition with the college chaplain, his tenure was terminated.

Galambos's aversion to communism was scarcely more intense than his disdain for the dedicated anti-communists of the day. He especially disparaged theocratic anti-communist programs like Dr. Fred Schwarz's. He considered them negative, sectarian, shallow, and hypocritical, that they pandered to chauvinism and domestic collectivism and that they catered to the Washington imperialists.

After a brief but disappointing flirtation with Goldwater constitutionalism, Galambos decided that teaching the positive virtues of *laissez faire* capitalism on an individual basis was the necessary and sufficient program for dealing with communism, foreign or domestic. He thought the Liberty Amendment (income tax repeal) was more important than military preparedness and the color of political regimentation. He believed that the scientific method is the only source of legitimate authority and that the history of science is the only worthwhile part of human history. The Presidential Potlatch and Heist of 1960 taught him that a few write-in votes for Goldwater, or even an avalanche of such votes, could not possibly make any creative history. But it would take him a few more years of study to understand politics as the virulent social pathology that it is.

In the fall of 1960, Galambos went home to New York City to meet the folks at the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) and at the Nathaniel Branden Institute, Ayn Rand's front at the time. Ostensibly, he was out to research and implement a kindred venture in Southern California. I tagged along as though we were taking the "Yellow Brick Road" to Gotham to find the "wizards" of freedom.

So it was through Galambos and after Allen that I was introduced to the wonderful world of Read, Mises, Hazlitt, Rothbard, Harper, LeFevre, Chodorov, Bastiat, Weaver, etc. And I must say it was most reassuring to find that Galambos was not alone in believing that *laissez faire* capitalism was THE way of human life in the world as it is. But then came the realization that building ballistic missiles had nothing to do with building civilization, which created something of a dilemma for those of us who, unlike Galambos, had no entrepreneurial experience.

Curiously, each of us (Galambos, Allen, and I) had previously and independently bonded with Rand, Paine, and Thoreau. So by the time we met, we were already confirmed individualists and Americanists. But until our exposure to the "Austrians," we were lacking key pieces of social knowledge and technology, specifically economics and free enterprise. The Austrian connection was a significant turning point for Galambos and subsequently for me.

Galambos readily embraced Mises's social arguments and economic conclusions, but as a physical scientist, he could not accept the Austrian notion of a priori social knowledge, any more than he could accept such hermeneutic authority in physics. He believed an authentic social science was not only possible but necessary for the future of the race. Mere authoritative opinion would not suffice. For starters, he insisted human action was as much a part of nature as planetary motion; that human nature had to be a part of the whole of the natural world, and that bona fide economic knowledge would have to hold up to the proceedings of natural science.

With postulates and definitions appropriate to the social domain of phenomena, Galambos expected the subject to yield to the scientific method in its entirety as does all natural history. He explained how an a priori deductive exercise consisting of reasoning alone, which comprises only the middle part of the scientific method, would fail to accredit economic knowledge to the degree necessary to overcome controversy. He showed how a complete round of scientific endeavor must include an a posteriori inductive struggle at the beginning and an observational test of the deductive projections at the end to escape the

appearance of dogma. He would have agreed with the declaration of Hayek's friend Karl Popper; "If it can't be falsified, it isn't science, economic or other." Predictably, Mises was offended by these notions, but then, after all was said and done, Galambos was not an "economist" and he paid good money and delivered enthusiastic audiences.

Suzanne Galambos (Andrew's long-suffering wife), Don Allen, and I comprised the original staff of Galambos's Free Enterprise Institute. Initially, Galambos was the sole faculty member in residence. All the courses were his starting with a 20-lecture offering called "Course 100: Capitalism, the Key to Survival" in the spring of 1961. Also in the curriculum were courses on investments and insurance; physics; astronomy, astrophysics, and astronautics; Thomas Paine: Author of the Declaration of Independence. He soon changed the title of his initial course to "Capitalism: The Liberal Revolution" in keeping with his increasingly ideological concentration.

Galambos was eager to have scholars he admired visit and speak to his students. The first such invited lecturer was Professor Ludwig von Mises, whose 1962 seminar in Los Angeles that Galambos promoted was attended by me and many other seekers asking similar questions as Galambos. Shortly after Mises's visit, Galambos arranged seminars for Leonard Read and F.A. Harper. These meetings were well attended and it was all very stimulating and inspiring. Looking back, I don't know how I could have lived without the experience. Galambos also scheduled and promoted a seminar for Spencer Heath, but that one had to be cancelled because of Heath's age and failing health. He longed to host Ayn Rand in "his" market but she spurned him. She would have none of Galambos as long as she had Branden. (Branden was much better looking.)

Galambos welcomed the "objectivists" in his courses. Some bought into his "liberalism" and private enterprise government ideas. Although he did not recommend his students enroll in Branden Institute lectures, many did over his objections. Most of them were already confirmed individualists, and inasmuch as they had been inoculated against "Objectivism" as some special form of knowledge, they were immune to Ayn Rand's misguided affection for Republican Party politics. The intellectual intercourse with the objectivists was just healthy competition. However, the messianic personalities were destined to clash and the "followers" were prone to worship, not collaborate.

Like Galambos, I never answered to the *nom de guerre* "libertarian." It was always easier for me to identify with the apolitical and historical sense of the term "liberalism" as embodied in Galambos's ideological challenge. When Galambos debated Leonard Read on the need for a new public label for the laissez-faire paradigm, I sided with Galambos. Galambos like Mises, Hayek, and other Europeans of the laissez-faire persuasion considered themselves "liberals" in keeping with that respectable tradition. The world could go to hell before they would relinquish this word to a bunch of erstwhile American fascists. Galambos even used "The Liberal" as a pseudonym and named his parent company in the ideology business "The Liberal Institute of Natural Science and Technology," abbreviated "LIONS Tech."

I wondered—if there was no politics, who needs a label? In fact, Galambos was rabidly anti-political, so the fuss over labels seemed a bit incongruous. When the Libertarian Party was formed, Galambos was predictably and immediately repulsed. When he learned Rothbard had joined this political movement, he assumed Rothbard had gone off his rocker.

By the time his former student and colleague Harry Browne became the LP candidate for president (1996), Galambos was mentally incapacitated. But it takes no imagination to figure out what he would have thought of Harry's political campaign.

When I need a label, "liberal" suits me fine. I realize it takes more than a sport coat to make a sport, and I enjoy an argument on the level of "who owns it," a rhetorical device Galambos made potent. Galambos considered the liberal label a weapon in a war of ideas. He saw any opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of FDR's political heirs, the New Deal thugs and their descendents, as a valuable one. He considered the usurpation of this label by fascists to be pernicious and insisted such use should be challenged at every opportunity. I notice some libertarians refer to themselves on occasion as classical liberals. They could well admire how Galambos was able to make that rhetorical device a shining badge of distinction.

Galambos has been characterized as "one of the oddest characters in the shadows of libertarian history." There is no denying he was an oddity, but perhaps no more so than Mises in terms of an uncompromising posture in the teaching of well-considered principles. But unlike the academic Mises, who suffered at the discretion of tenured academics and bureaucratic university administrators, Galambos was an entrepreneur who anguished over the usurpations of the regulatory bureaucrats and tax collectors. As an uncompromising preacher as well as a practitioner of profit-seeking proprietorship, he was in a class by himself. As he might well have expounded in a five-hour lecture with no breaks, I will venture to boil down his thesis to three simple and familiar prescriptions: (1) do no harm, (2) live and let live, and (3) to each his own. His overarching principle that profit is virtuous would take longer to explain.

That Galambos is possibly "in the shadows of libertarian history" is a consequence of his radical ideas on intellectual property. His so-called theory of primary property had the effect of discouraging publication or extrapolation of any aspects of his teachings by any of his students while, at the same time, he himself suffered a writers' paralysis. (See my essay "On Andrew Galambos and His Primary Property Ideas.") Nevertheless, Galambos's influence has been penetrating, unmistakable, undeniable, and creative. During the period 1957 to about 1982, he persuaded thousands of adults to pay him to convince them he was right. (See Harry Browne's poignant but accurate account of his affair with Galambos entitled "Andrew Galambos—the Unknown Libertarian," *Liberty*, November, 1997.)

In 1999, the executors of Galambos's estate d.b.a. The Universal Scientific Publications Company, San Diego, published posthumously some transcriptions of his course lectures. This 941-page volume is entitled, *Sic Itur ad Astra* meaning, "This is the way to the stars."

What set Galambos apart from others in the "freedom" movement was his utter disdain for politics and non-profit organization. He was completely liberated from the polls and he celebrated the individual human profit motive as the engine of creation. He described a "not-for-profit" declaration and application to the state for a tax exemption as a blatantly hypocritical gesture of voluntary servitude and poverty. Such eleemosynary status he considered not only unnatural and anti-capitalistic but also a seeking after legal privilege by tax-hustling panderers to the state. He upheld proprietary administration as the total alternative to politics and bureaucracy, describing all manner of innovative possibilities for

the delivery of public services by voluntary market means. For him, private property was the only rational and moral basis for authority in society and he was out to buttress this audacious hypothesis with scientific verification, a quest he called “Volitional Science.”

Sadly, Galambos suffered from an affliction lamented somewhat earlier in history by Frédéric Bastiat, namely an obsession to dispense with all the vulgar fallacies before dealing with the creative harmonies. With so many human stupidities and foibles at hand to contend with, he never got around to accomplishing very much of what he set out to do. He is well remembered for what he did, perhaps not for what he dreamed to do. ■

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Alvin Lowi, Jr., was professional engineer in private practice, lectured for the Free Enterprise Institute, and consulted to the Heather Foundation, and the Institute for Humane Studies.

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SPENCER HEATH MACCALLUM

## LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

AN ACCOUNT OF MY INTELLECTUAL PATH has to start before I was born—with my grandfather, Spencer Heath (1876–1963). He taught me most of what I know about thinking, and my own thinking is very much an outgrowth from his.

About 1898, attracted not by the Georgists’ attack on property in land but for their strong free-trade stance, Spencer Heath became recording secretary for the Chicago Single Tax Club and continued in close association with the movement for the next forty years. He assisted Henry Geiger in founding the Henry George School in New York City and taught there for several years in the early 1930s, until Frank Chodorov fired him for not hewing closely enough to the Georgist line. By 1934, he had concluded that George’s animus toward land was misplaced and that the institution of land ownership was essential to a functioning society. Indeed, he came to believe that the further evolution of property in land was the key to society outgrowing its subservience to the state—which he saw as social pathology.

The story of my close association with my grandfather during the last half-dozen years of his life (he died in 1963 at the age of 86) actually begins in the Depression year of 1930. He had come down from New York for a visit to Winchester, Virginia where he found his daughter, my mother, in tears because my father thought they couldn’t afford a second child (my brother had been born two years earlier). My grandfather left the room. He

returned moments later with a check for a thousand dollars, a princely sum of money in those years, and asked, “Will this help?” So, being bought and paid for, I was named after him: “Spencer Heath MacCallum.” Years later, when I became the only member of the family interested in working with him to publish his major work, *Citadel, Market and Altar*, and in preserving and carrying forward his ideas in other ways, he said it was the best investment he ever made.

A working relationship didn’t develop, however, until a chance happening in 1952, my sophomore year at Princeton. For a European literature course, I’d read Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*, an articulate nightmare expressing the paradoxical theme that no one deserves to live as a human being unless he goes through the act of destroying himself. I’d grappled with this argument for some six weeks and had become dangerously depressed when, one afternoon, “Popdaddy,” as everyone called him, drove through Princeton on a trip and stopped for a visit. I told him about Kafka, and we sat up all night in my room in Edwards Hall talking about it. By the first light of morning he had shown me, by logic I felt Kafka would not have liked but would have had to accept, an escape from the paradox.

What, briefly, was his argument? As I look back upon it, it was that we must always seek to understand things in context. We must seek the relatedness of things. Kafka dismissed the outer world of events and only looked within for ultimate truth. But all he found there was a burden of negative feeling. He disdained looking outside himself. If we, on the other hand, look outside and around us, what do we see that could account for Kafka’s choice to look only within—and for what he found there?

We are the cultural heirs, Popdaddy suggested, to two legacies that have come down to us from very ancient times in various degrees of admixture. One is of slavery, from the easy-going lands and fertile plains where productivity was great and there could be the marching and marshaling of armies. The other is of freedom and cooperation, from the more rugged and mountain lands that could not support slavery because one man’s product could only support himself and his limited family with nothing left for a ruler class. Each of these legacies has a psychological component, and in particular that of slavery can be seen as twofold—the psychology of the slave and the psychology of the master.

What is the slave psychology bred into men over many millennia? It is that a person has no worth in and of himself, but only as he can serve someone else, in whom all worth resides. And the master psychology? It is to maintain control, the status quo, to an important degree by distancing one’s self symbolically and otherwise from the slave. The master is what the slave is not. And what is that? The slave works; he deals with the physical world. So his master eschews that world as beneath him—as the mandarin grew long fingernails to show he could not possibly do manual work. He cultivates instead the inner world, creating marvelous systems of religion and philosophy. But what would be the content of these? They would have little if any practical consequence, little development of science, since that, after all, would involve coming to terms with the outer, objective world, the province of slaves. They could not avoid having an emotional content, however, and what would that be? The smaller ruling classes could not have escaped the influence of the emotional life of the great surrounding sea of population, which was slave. This burden of feeling would have come down to us from the slaves, directly and

non-verbally, and from the masters through our inherited systems of religion and philosophy.

Here was a unique perspective from which to view Kafka's rejection of the outer world and also to explain what he found within. It sufficed for my need in the moment. What Popdaddy did not go into on that occasion but would elaborate upon subsequently was that there is an alternative to such pure subjectivism. The alternative is that that we can and do transcend this legacy as we develop knowledge (*scire*—science) of the world of which we are a part and come into our creative capacities by rebuilding that environment to our bodily needs and the inner dream. Then we experience the joy and fulfillment of creation, which God is said to have enjoyed in Genesis. As we do this, we rise out of our dependent creaturehood and become creators, an image Popdaddy made much of in his treatments of religion.

Helping me through the Kafka paradox and giving me a perspective from which to deal with my own inner feelings was something my professors had never attempted and, I felt, could not have done. So I began listening to what else this gentleman might have to say. What I heard was amazing. He maintained that the only realistic way to conceive of human society was in the total absence of government as we know it—the absence, that is, of any form of legislated laws or other institutionalized coercions. He believed that people in society are fully capable of providing for every social need through the further, free development of the normative institution of private property.

I was astonished to hear such extreme ideas from a person seemingly level-headed, who had been preeminently successful in not one but three careers in engineering, law, and business. As a pioneer in early aviation, he had developed before World War I the first mass-production of airplane propellers that took the place of the man who stood at a bench and carved them out by hand, and by 1922 he had demonstrated at Boling Field the first engine powered and controlled, variable and reversible pitch propeller. Over the next two years, therefore, I listened closely and at times incredulously to every word he spoke, while interposing questions and objections, intent to know if he really was the purist in this regard that his words implied.

Prior to this, "Popdaddy" had been a vague figure in the family who was "always writing" but was unable to find a publisher. Looking back on it, anyone with his views would have had little chance of finding a publisher in the 1940s and '50s. Now, having learned what his writing was about, I proposed that when I finished at Princeton, I'd help him self-publish his book. We'd do it together, I said. Thus began a productive working relationship. After his death ten years later, I collected every scrap of his writing, much of it in longhand, and numbered and transcribed each on typewriter for a total of more than 2,000 items: what I call the "Spencer Heath Archive."

I was slow maturing and, in my teen years, was incapacitated in many ways by a severe stutter. Popdaddy found out about the National Hospital for Speech Disorders in New York City and offered me his apartment, which he only used at intervals, on Waverly Place just east of Washington Square in Greenwich Village. The apartment was within walking distance of the hospital, where I could attend daily group therapy. I accepted his offer and left Princeton for a year. It was a wonderful year, having my own apartment in the Village,

exploring the used bookstores on Fourth Avenue that I passed walking to and from the hospital, and finding there and reading, among other things, everything ever written by Sir Henry Sumner Maine. After Princeton, I came back and spent another year with Popdaddy in New York and then at his country place, Roadsend Gardens, in Elkridge, Maryland south of Baltimore.

I graduated from Princeton in art history. For the required undergraduate thesis, I wrote on Northwest Coast Indian art with a degree, then went to graduate school in anthropology at the University of Washington in order to be able to be near enough to visit and learn first-hand something of Northwest Coast Indian life and culture. Because these people had had a traditionally stateless society, echoing Popdaddy's ideas and those of Maine on the village community, my interest turned strongly toward social anthropology.

Determined to write my Master's paper on Popdaddy's notion of an altogether proprietary, non-political community, for which he would often take the hotel as a heuristic model, I decided to read everything I could about hotels and write on the hotel as a community.

I went to Berkeley for a summer to take advantage of the good libraries there. Soon after I'd gotten well into reading about hotels, I discovered the shopping center. A month later, I was reading about office buildings, and then marinas, mobile-home parks and similar phenomena, all members of the class of the relatively recent and evolving phenomenon of "multi-tenant income properties." Wanting to read everything about all of these, I extended my stay beyond the summer and through an entire winter. Returning to Seattle in the spring, I submitted my thesis. It was rejected. I devoted the summer to recasting it, and in the fall it was accepted. Several years later, following a suggestion made to F.A. Harper by Sartelle Prentice, Jr., the Institute for Humane Studies published it under Alvin Lowi's suggested title, "The Art of Community." "Art" in the title referred to the empirical art of community which I then saw developing in commercial real estate in multi-tenant income properties, paralleling the way that empirical arts like Toledo steel, dye making and the like had developed in the middle ages before we had any science or rational understanding of the matter.

At various times while at the Berkeley libraries, I would visit Baldy and Peg Harper and their family. I bought a lightweight bicycle propelled by a little Italian "Mosquito" motor and would bicycle over from Berkeley to Menlo Park. Baldy was an important mentor. We'd gotten acquainted when he was at the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). I'd accompany Popdaddy on his occasional drives up the Hudson to FEE to visit with Leonard Read, Baldy, and others on the FEE staff. Baldy had a great sense of optimism about the future of humanity and by that time had clearly adopted, as his compass setting, the concept of a "total alternative" to political government. This became the ideal goal by which he corrected and guided his mundane decisions much as North Star enables the mariner to make continuous course corrections and so come safely into Liverpool. (My wife, Emalie, puts almost the same thing a little differently: "We must entertain the ideal of no government if we are ever to realize limited government.")

Baldy said that he didn't know just how he had arrived at this philosophical position, but he thought it might have come about from John Chamberlain, who was Popdaddy's

friend, forwarding him a working draft of *Citadel, Market and Altar*. John had told Baldy that he didn't really understand it but nevertheless thought there might be something important here; perhaps Baldy could make something of it. Baldy read it through several times and about a year later found himself advocating, as an ideal toward which to strive, a society totally free of structures of institutionalized coercion.

Considering Baldy's role in my life as a mentor, it's worth digressing here to say some more about this unassuming teacher with such a down-to-earth grasp of economics and impeccable intellectual hospitality who encouraged me to a better appreciation of Austrian economics, including Hayek. Although Baldy had been the first staff member recruited by Leonard Read for FEE at the end of World War II, Baldy could never prevail upon Leonard to adopt at FEE any but the conservative policy of promoting what was already discovered and known about freedom. Leonard may have felt constrained by the exigencies of fundraising. Whatever the reason, Baldy felt there was much more to be discovered and wanted to give more encouragement at the growing edge of ideas. Without taking Leonard into his confidence, therefore, he began in the early 1950s to plan an independent institute, which would be called the "Institute for Humane Studies." But he did take Popdaddy into his confidence, and they planned much of it together. For a campus, Popdaddy offered to donate Roadsend Gardens, his 100-acre country place outside Baltimore in the direction of Washington. Baldy and his family came down one weekend and walked over the land with Popdaddy and me, but ultimately Baldy decided that the then-intellectual climate in California would be more hospitable for what he wanted to accomplish.

Baldy's dream was to create a special kind of a community of scholars. He wanted to create an environment that would be conducive to breakthroughs in social thought. The Institute would cater to young people, recognizing that breakthroughs in any field tend to be made by the young. But it would cater also to seasoned scholars from many diverse fields (law, physics, biology, not excluding even the paranormal as represented by Dr. Rhine at Duke University) who were retired but intellectually active—and who could use the Institute's tax-exempt status in pursuing their work.

The Institute would find living arrangements nearby and offer its library and other facilities including private office space, so that visitors—young people and senior scholars—could work alone so far as they liked or mixed with others in the library and in the Institute dining room, as had been done so successfully at FEE. The active or vital ingredient in Baldy's formula would be the give-and-take between seasoned scholars and enthusiastic youth. This interplay, he thought, would lead toward the breakthroughs he felt were sorely needed in contemporary thinking about society.

Returning to the thread of this account, while I was pursuing my graduate studies at the University of Washington and then at Chicago, Popdaddy had been invited to Santa Ana, California as a house guest of Frances Norton Manning, who had undertaken to actively promote intellectual contacts for him and had been very successful at it. On my visits there I became acquainted, among others, with Walter Knott, of Knott's Berry Farm, John L. Davis, president of Chapman College, and Andrew J. Galambos and two associates, Alvin Lowi, Jr. and Donald H. Allen. The last three were colleagues in the defense industry. Galambos, an astrophysicist, was entrepreneuring with Don Allen on the side in mutual

fund sales and in free-market education and was just then independently arriving at the notion of the “total alternative” (my phrase which Baldy and several others adopted). Al Lowi encouraged Galambos to found the Free Enterprise Institute (FEI), which quickly became a full-time proposition. Al was for some years “Senior Lecturer,” and Don managed the bookstore.

The main thing I learned from attending some of the basic courses at FEI was the multifaceted role that insurance could play in a free society. This was a major idea in Galambos’s teaching that had originated with one of his students, Piet Bos. Galambos’s ideas about intellectual property, on the other hand, made little sense to me. I came to believe, with Al Lowi, in the importance of giving credit for ideas, which is simply good scholarly practice, and that the time to contract about ideas is before they have been disclosed. I learned little from FEI that I hadn’t already learned in principle from Popdaddy, but Galambos had a profound effect on many people who gained their first vista of the “total alternative” through him, comparable to my awakening experience with Popdaddy. My relationship with Alvin Lowi, by contrast, has continued to grow through the years, helping stretch my intellectual grasp well beyond where it was with my grandfather and Baldy Harper. In particular, I’ve gained an appreciation from him of the meaning and implications of the scientific method. Alvin became well acquainted with Popdaddy in the short time before his death. Afterward, at the timely suggestion of Don Allen, he assisted greatly in organizing and evaluating the Spencer Heath Archives.

Soon after completing my Master’s at Seattle in 1961, I went on to the University of Chicago for a doctorate. Unaccountably, however, my work slowed down. I continued to get high marks in my class work, but often took many months to complete course assignments. Finally I dropped out, after fulfilling the residence and course requirements but short of the dissertation. For the dissertation, I had planned to do an ethnography of a shopping mall, looked at in its internal organization as a community of landlord and merchant tenants. In preparation for this, the University had given me a summer scholarship to drive the length and breadth of California visiting shopping centers and collecting case histories of dispute situations and finding how they were handled. This gave me a store of empirical data, and I selected the mall in which I wanted to do the fieldwork for my dissertation. That was not to be, however. My last accomplishment before leaving Chicago was publishing in *Modern Age* (9:1, Winter 1964–65) a paper that I still think important, “The Social Nature of Ownership.” For the summer of 1965, I was invited to consult on a project with the UCLA Economics Department with Armen Alchian and Harold Demsetz. I had difficulty fulfilling that commission.

I supposed my problem to be psychological. Was I not motivated? Why was I having serious problems tracking conversation where several people were present? The next ten years were a lost decade. I couldn’t start anything at all with the expectation of being able to finish it. Then, after all those years, the answer came. The diagnosis was severe hypoglycemia, which was largely resolved by the simple expedient of eliminating all sugar from my diet. I began to pick up the pieces of my life, but I never returned to academia.

About this time, a couple of interesting projects unfolded. The first was discovering the rigorously free-market monetary ideas of E.C. Riegel. He had been a friend of Popdaddy’s,

living in Greenwich Village, in the last stages of Parkinson's Disease when I met him. On a hunch that his papers might contain valuable ideas, knowing that Popdaddy endorsed his ideas on money, I kept in touch with the family who received his papers on his death in 1955. Ten years later I was on hand to save them from being dumpstered. Almost ten more years went by, and I showed an essay from them to Harry Browne, who in his best-selling *You Can Profit from a Monetary Crisis*, called it, "The best explanation of the free market I've seen." A flurry of requests for the essay encouraged me to systematically examine all the papers and eventually edit and self-publish two books from them, *The New Approach to Freedom* (1976) and *Flight from Inflation: The Monetary Alternative* (1978). From Riegel I came to respect the notion of an abstract unit of value whereby exchange might be facilitated by simple accountancy among traders in the market. Issue of new units would be by traders monetizing their future productivity, then redeeming them as they offered goods or services competitively in the market. Inasmuch as political governments are not traders in the market, they would have no place in such an exchange system. Should such a unit of account come to be preferred over legal tender for its constancy, political governments would no longer be able to deficit-finance. Not being traders, they would have no issue power, and having no issue power, they would have no means of watering down the money supply. This is radical thinking, but I have fostered interest in it whenever opportunity has arisen.

The other project that developed about that time was with Werner Stiefel, head of Stiefel Laboratories, a family-held multinational firm. In exchange for a small equity in the project, Werner in 1971 commissioned me to draft a master lease form for a multi-tenant income property to be constructed somewhere on the ocean outside of any political jurisdiction. Werner had been profoundly influenced by Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and wanted literally to create a new country, to be called "Atlantis." Inspired by Ayn's "Galt's Gulch," he envisioned a place to which, as conditions became untenable in the United States (signs were even then showing), people could flee as they had to the United States when conditions deteriorated in Germany in the 1930s. Werner devoted a great part of his life and many millions of dollars of his own personal assets to this project. At a critical point he was at a loss to know what form of government he could institute that wouldn't repeat the same, tired, round of tyranny of all governments in history. I made a suggestion. Among his assets at the time was a motel in Saugerties, New York. I pointed out that his motel was a community. It was a place, after all, that was divided into private and public areas, and he provided public services to the residents there. But instead of citizens, he had customers, and the provision and maintenance of community services was contractual, carried out through ordinary business means. Why not keep this entirely non-political form of community organization and transfer it to the ocean? People could own any improvements on the land, but the land itself would be leasehold only. By opting not to subdivide, he would preserve a concentrated entrepreneurial interest in the whole. The master lease form would be the social software that would generate the actual constitution of the community—which would consist of all of the leases and subleases in effect at any given time.

The lease form I worked up survived Werner's project, and over the years it has taken on a life of its own as many people have critiqued it and added valuable inputs. It has become

a prime heuristic aid in thinking through questions of community administration in the absence of legislation or taxation. Several iterations were published as a master lease form for “Orbis,” this being one among a cluster of imaginary settlements in outer space. The reason for presenting it that way was to avoid calling attention unnecessarily and prematurely to the notion of settling the oceans outside the jurisdiction of nation states.

The most recent of many innovations in the master lease form over the years has been to incorporate into it, and hence into the contractual structure of the community, a system of natural law with appropriate procedural rules, authored by the late Michael van Notten, a protégé of the Belgian natural law scholar, Frank van Dun.

The idea of incorporating a system of natural law arose after several years of consultation with the Samaron Clan of northwestern Somalia. The Samaron are a traditionally stateless people, many of whom would like to come into full participation in the modern world if they could do so without coming under the domination of a government, their own or any other. Their idea of how to accomplish this is to lease a portion of their territory with access to the sea for a private consortium (governments or government agencies need not apply) to develop and manage as a purely commercial, multi-tenant income property writ large. This is described in Appendix B of Michael van Notten’s *The Law of the Somalis: A Stable Foundation for Economic Development in the Horn of Africa*. If successful, the Samaron would then have a thriving freeport like a latter-day Hong Kong in their own back yard, from which to pick and choose among the many opportunities it would offer for jobs, education, technical training, entrepreneurial venturing, investment, and so forth. It would be their stepping stone to the modern world.

Except for these projects, however, I continued to be apart from any very serious intellectual life until the mid-1990s. First, I was taken up for eight years beginning in 1976 with a private economic development project of my own that I stumbled into involving a village of pottery artists in Mexico. Because of space limitations I can’t describe it here, but it was successful beyond anyone’s dreams. For me, it exhausted the modest inheritance that had sustained me. For the ensuing decade I had little time for anything but to work for a living. I worked as a very small businessman—and found it enjoyable.

The return to ideas came after my mother’s death in 1993. A small inheritance from her allowed me to turn my thoughts again to the phenomenon of society. In my wife, Emalie, I’m fortunate to have an outstanding in-house critic of ideas. An invitation in 1997 from David J. Theroux, of the Independent Institute, to attend a Liberty Fund Conference on “The Voluntary City” helped settle me once again into the groove of thinking and writing on social organization, and economist Daniel Klein has given constant encouragement. The first fruit of that Liberty Fund Conference was a constructive critique of the entire problem of homeowners’ associations which appeared in *Critical Review* (Winter 2004). A fresh perspective on environmental incentives appeared in the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* (Fall 2003). I’m also edited the late Michael van Notten’s *The Law of the Somalis* for posthumous publication, as well as a small, inspirational book of my grandfather’s *The Spiritual Life of Free Men*. ■

## LIBERTARIAN IN REVERSE

IT MAY BE A BIT BOLD OF ME to submit my story for Walter Block's libertarian autobiography series. I'm less distinguished than most of its contributors and I'm more fluent in the idiom of conservatism than that of libertarianism. But the latter really isn't a problem; there's little difference between a genuine American conservative and a Rothbardian libertarian. For me, there's none at all. I'll offer my story as proof.

As soon as I became politically aware, around the age of 13, I became a conservative. It was plain to see even at that age that the Left was crazy. More importantly, I simply didn't subscribe to the pieties of late twentieth-century America—didn't believe in progress, didn't take it for granted that history always turned out for the better. I was a skeptic, and I was skeptical not of religion but of the vague concepts that nowadays stand in for religion: democracy, equality, diversity, etc.

Conservatism doesn't mean much when you're 13 years old. For me, it meant reading *National Review*, listening to talk radio (I preferred G. Gordon Liddy to Rush Limbaugh), and volunteering on the occasional Republican campaign. These activities introduced me to the Beltway brand of libertarianism. It was unobjectionable, uninspiring stuff—economic conservatism with some mental muscle. But I wasn't interested in economics, so I wasn't interested in libertarianism. I knew that libertarians also wanted to legalize drugs and that most, though not all, favored abortion rights, but I didn't make the mistake of assuming that libertarians had to be libertines. Libertarianism was respectable enough, it just wasn't for me.

My opinion of libertarianism took a turn for the worse in college, where the first libertarians I met had left a good impression—they were buttoned-down types, intelligent and easygoing—but where I soon encountered libertarians of what Murray Rothbard called the “modal” variety. These were young men—and they're always male—with a fanatical gleam in their eyes, eager to buttonhole and evangelize, full of all the self-confidence that comes with unblinking dogmatism. They thought they had the answer to every important question in the world, when what they really had was a hormonal imbalance. What they said was not too unlike from what I'd heard before, but their attitude made all the difference. Like many a traditionalist conservative before me, seeing the intemperance in those eyes and hearing it in the pitch of their voices convinced me that libertarianism had to be as bad as Communism. These were Jacobins who would smash anything that stood in the way of creating their utopia.

An idea isn't wrong just because it's espoused by a few sociopaths. I knew that, but after this encounter I started to look more critically at libertarianism and at what it might

imply. I found in it a lot of -isms that alarm a conservative: utilitarianism and utopianism were instantly objectionable, while rationalism and individualism could, in the wrong hands, be turned into cudgels with which to attack everything from religion to the bourgeois family. Individual libertarian policies may or may not be sensible, and the economic theory must have been largely valid, but the underlying worldview of libertarianism looked to be diabolical.

By the time I came to think such thoughts I had long since abandoned the limp conservatism of the establishment Right. I'd discovered *Chronicles* and "paleoconservatism," and had been won over by the case for a non-interventionist foreign policy abroad and decentralized government at home. Soon thereafter I discovered Antiwar.com—I was already familiar with Justin Raimondo from his occasional articles in *Chronicles*. Raimondo and another Antiwar.com writer, Joseph Stromberg, influenced me profoundly: they taught me more about the history of the conservative movement, and in particular the pre-World War II "Old Right," than I'd learned from years within the movement itself. Names like Nock and Mencken, or even Richard Weaver and Robert Nisbet, were cited more often on Antiwar.com than they were in *National Review*. Around this same time the second edition of Robert M. Crunden's Old Right anthology, *The Superfluous Men*, was published. Reading it was like discovering some long lost family tree.

Finally, in January, 2000, I found LewRockwell.com and—well, it's a tired old cliché, but it's true—everything I thought I knew about libertarianism was wrong. Without exaggeration, that was clear the minute I set eyes on LRC. There were strongly Catholic articles, including a link to a Culture Wars piece about the suicide of Lissa Roche at Hillsdale College. Hans-Hermann Hoppe had an article laying out a libertarian argument against immigration. There was no utilitarianism and no utopianism. The site had eclectic interests, which set it apart from other libertarian forums (which tended to get stale pretty quickly). It was more conservative than any major "conservative" publication; at the same time, it was still wholly libertarian. LRC was the Old Right reborn.

From LRC I learned about the Ludwig von Mises Institute, Mises himself, and Murray Rothbard. And it was either from LRC, or from researching some of the names and ideas mentioned on the site, that I started to learn about Austrian economics and praxeology. The economics I had found so boring in college and in conservative books had always been Keynesian or neoclassical. Austrian economics made a great deal more sense. Reading up on the work of Hans-Hermann Hoppe also gave me an appreciation for extreme rationalism that I had never had before. The anarchism of Hoppe and Rothbard didn't bother me: "minarchism," the idea that the State exists to protect our rights, had never made any sense. What possible reason could there be for the State, as an institution, to limit its own power? It's like suggesting that a company would voluntarily limit its own profits. A business exists to make money and the State exists to wield power.

I came to libertarianism in reverse, starting out as a conservative with no strong feelings about libertarianism one way or another, and then actually becoming quite hostile toward it based on what I'd seen. Ayn Rand never has appealed to me, nor has CATO-style managerial minarchism or Virginia Postrel's techno-utopianism. It's safe to say that without LRC, the Mises Institute, Antiwar.com, and the rest of the Rothbard legacy, I would not

ever have become a libertarian, even if I would still believe most of the things that I do. There simply is no substitute—not among libertarians, not among conservatives, not anywhere—for what Rothbard and those who follow in his footsteps have done and are doing. ■

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TIBOR R. MACHAN

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## MY PATH OF REASON

FOR ME, BEING A LIBERTARIAN has a lot to do with being a philosopher.

It also “helps,” I guess, that I grew up under the post-war communist government of Hungary—and then under the stern totalitarian hand of my father, who reared me for several years after I escaped from Hungary at age 14. (I say “reared me” but what I mean is “ordered me around constantly, in the most disapproving and hostile manner.”)

So I am sensitive not only to the evils of totalitarianism but also to the signposts on the road that leads to it. I don’t believe my background pre-determined my viewpoint, and certainly I have met émigrés from communist states whom I feel are obtuse on political questions. I have also met many Americans just as passionate about liberty as I am but who have never had to suffer under totalitarian rule. But can I say that I would have gone on to write millions of words on the virtues of liberty had I lived my childhood in the Coney Island of the 1960s rather than the Budapest of the 1940s? I don’t know.

The question of how much one is the product of some concatenation of influences versus how much one is “self-made” has always been of interest to me. My weird childhood, with no steady guidance from without, encouraged me to make sense of things for myself. It is possible that much of what philosophy has to offer us is conducive to just this attitude, as distinct from what we glean from religion or mythology. Intellectually pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps, with a little help from others party to the apparently endless conversation, seems to be just what philosophers of all stripes do—even those who deny the validity of the process.

When I was about nine or ten years old, I had, I believe, one of my first near-philosophical thoughts, something to do with cosmology. Lying on some patch of grass one clear night, I fixed my gaze on a star and thought, “If I were on that star, gazing in the same direction in

which I am gazing now, I would see another star about as far as that one is from me now. But then if I were on that star, gazing again in the same direction, once again I would see a star about the same distance away. And so on. But that means the universe may be endless!” But I also thought, “Whatever the case, I am here on earth and will just need to make the best of it, whatever the size of the universe.” I suppose I was confused, but in a philosophical way. Another time, as I was sitting at a train station in Budapest, I mused about all the people milling about. “I wonder whether the fact that I am looking at and thinking about the people would have to be included in a very detailed biography about them.” Later I found this thought relevant to metaphysical and epistemological concerns, namely, the question whether reality is altered by one’s perception of that reality. I never thought it would have to be, at least not in most cases (and in some apparent counter-examples, it seems that perception does not “alter” reality directly but rather through some resultant action).

To the extent that I engaged in philosophical thinking as a child I found it exciting, but life proved to be a persistent distraction. So I did not really begin my philosophical education in earnest until my early 20s, when I had enough peace and quiet, as an enlisted man in the U.S. Air Force, to do so.

In 1960 I was in the United States Air Force, stationed at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, D.C. I had become interested in politics again after watching the Kennedy-Nixon debates, and I was further provoked by an article by William F. Buckley, Jr. in *Esquire*, “Why Don’t We Complain.” Buckley suggested that the reason violent protests occur in relatively free societies is that people suppress their dissatisfactions until they cannot be contained, then blow their cork. The notion that complaining is an honorable undertaking suited me. I wrote to Buckley about the article and he responded with a very friendly note. (Throughout the years I would remain on reasonably civil terms with Buckley, though very critical of his nasty treatment of Ayn Rand. In April 1982 I became one of the few libertarians he would invite on “Firing Line.” I interviewed Buckley for *Reason* magazine in 1982, right after my appearance on “Firing Line.”) After hearing from Buckley, I subscribed to his magazine, *National Review*. In it I saw an ad for Classic Books Club and signed up, acquiring fairly good editions and selections of works by Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, Montaigne, Locke, and others. All this mental ferment inspired me to pursue more ambitious educational goals than I had previously envisioned. (In 1976 I would finally publish an essay in his magazine, on the moral element in people’s support of government regulations!)

In the fall of 1960 the little Andrews theater group I had helped found put on *The Night of January 16th*, Ayn Rand’s popular play. I acted the part of a character who jumps up during the trial and confesses so as to save the accused heroine—if I recall correctly. Each night of the performance of the play we selected a group from the audience to be jurors. And then, after the verdict, we all went to a bar to debate what the verdict ought to have been. It was a fascinating exercise and I found the issues intriguing. We could never decide on the basis of the facts but had to reveal our sympathies for the moral traits of the characters.

I hadn’t by then become interested in Ayn Rand—didn’t even know she had written anything else. I was rather illiterate at the time, trying hard to get my High School Equivalency degree and prepare to go to night college. (I took a philosophy course from Peter

Diamandopoulos, a wonderful Greek professor, later the disgraced president of Adelphi University.) Next summer, however, I read a review of Rand's *For the New Intellectual* in *Esquire*, written by Gore Vidal, who panned the book for its avowed egoism and failure to champion Christian virtues. I was acquainted with two fellow airmen who had mentioned their enthusiasm for Ayn Rand's works. After I read the review, the first time I saw these two young men—Walter Allen and Howard Williams—I marched up to them and said, "Your hero was sure creamed by Gore Vidal." I think it was Walter who looked at me quizzically and asked, "Have you read any Rand?" I said, "No." "Well," Walter replied, "don't you think it would be best to read her before you decide that Vidal has the drop on her?" This, I recall, stopped me cold. It seemed to square with my sense of justice that if I make a claim about an author and think it to be worth parading before her admirers, I might as well know what I am talking about. So I borrowed *The Fountainhead* and read it.

I liked the book. In fact, it spoke to me profoundly. I had been struggling with my Roman Catholicism for some time by then, and the religion's attitude toward sex angered me. I also knew a friend who was getting a divorce, a divorce that both he and his wife thought was justified. Yet I was supposed to oppose it even though I too thought it would be best for them to divorce. I had corresponded with a friend of mine, a priest named William Novicky, later a director of Catholic education in Cleveland. When I posed my dilemma to him about the married friends, he could give me only very bland answers—for example, I was informed that "God is putting you through some difficulties." Well, of course, thanks for the news flash, "Father"; now how about a solution to them?

Now Howard Roark's attitude toward religion—a self-confident dismissal of the very idea of God—was giving me pause. When his mentor, Henry Cameron, asks Roark why he decided to be an architect, Roark replies, "I didn't know it then. But it's because I've never believed in God." In another place, Roark attempts to decline an assignment to build a temple because "I don't believe in God." Roark clearly is reverential and spiritual, but his reverence is for the world, not any heaven. I again consulted Father Novicky, who remained vague. I went to one of the abandoned runways of the base and walked all night long, pondering the issue of God's existence. At one point I looked up, with my hands clasped as if in prayer, and said, "God forgive me but I cannot believe in you." My thinking was that if God created me and gave me a mind with which to figure out the world and myself, and my mind gave me no cogent argument for His existence, then it would be an insult to God for me to believe that He existed. But no sooner had I this thought, I dropped the conditional nature of the argument and said, "My mind simply gives me no ground for believing in God. So I disbelieve in God. I am an atheist." He didn't bother to refute me, and no lightning smote me on the spot either.

Next came Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*, which I read in two days, without sleeping. I found it a good read and with great ideas, but it did take me only one encounter with John Galt—while Eddie was visiting with him below the Taggart Building—to realize that the anonymous track worker was Galt. The larger mystery of the book, that of the role of the human mind in the affairs of the world, did not unfold quite so easily for me. I skipped Galt's speech at first but cut it out and made it into a little book that I could study later. Which I did.

In fact, a couple friends and I were soon staying up night after night examining Galt's speech for logical flaws. We scrutinized the discussions of the purpose of morality, the contradiction of original sin, the nature of free will, the inescapability of the law of identity, and so forth. When finally we could not find anything drastically wrong—deploying our admittedly meager education—we started conjuring up suspicion of Rand's motives for saying what she said. We hypothesized, for example, that perhaps she had been sent by the Soviet Union to discredit capitalism by associating it with atheism. None of this “psychologist” line went anywhere, of course, and we were left with very powerful, persuasive ideas.

It turned out that NBI had some lecture series going in the Washington area and we went to some of them. I met Branden, who seemed terribly aloof and snide, though what he was saying made good enough sense. The only lecture series I attended all the way through was “Contemporary Theories of Neurosis,” which outlined competing schools of psychology. At a New York lecture I had the chance to ask Branden some questions, but these weren't exactly welcomed, which puzzled me. After all, what especially appealed to me about Objectivism was the idea of an independent mind, the individual trying to answer questions or solve problems to his own rational satisfaction. But everyone has bad days, so I never made much of this behavior. I did find it peculiar how cliquish the people around the taped lectures seemed to be. But again, I chalked it up to the hazards of going against the grain; here was a group with very unusual views, so no wonder they were such a tense bunch. I disagree that there was ever a Rand cult as such—it was more of a Rand clique. A cult needs to be much bigger—like those that surrounding the Reverend Moon or the Merer Baba. It did disturb me that so few of the people at these functions seemed to laugh comfortably. Most of the laughs were snide and derisive. But I considered how strange this bunch must feel—just as I often did—to have embraced such wild ideas that fit nowhere on the standard ideological map.

In the fall of 1962 I left the Air Force and entered college. I had read about Claremont Men's College in *National Review*—in a column by Russell Kirk—who talked about how wonderful and independent the place was. I flew there on an Air Force hop—that is, a free ride for service personnel—and contacted the admissions director, Emery Walker. I managed to gain admittance.

Before starting school I also managed to gain a meeting with Ayn Rand; I went to New York and met with her for about half an hour at her office. It was a wonderful experience. What would stick in my mind was how warm, calming, sensible and friendly Rand was. She showed none of the prickly traits I would hear about later. One thing I remember saying to her was that perhaps I liked her work because I, too, was a refugee from communism. She told me that she hoped this wasn't the case, since her ideas were meant to have universal significance, not appeal only to those who shared her personal experiences. There was no badgering or finger-wagging. She was like a sensible aunt or grandmother. I promised to send her a letter I had written to my friend the priest, concerning the struggles I had been having with religion in relation to a friend's divorce, and when I got back to Washington I sent it off to her.

Rand replied with a wonderful letter commenting on how my own exemplified her principle of the sanction of the victim—which it did. I had expressed dismay in my letter

about a book the priest had given me, Thomas Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. The theme is that the human effort to know is an insult to God—a sign of pride and lack of proper humility. I told the priest how frustrated I was by this message. After all, my every effort was to know, to learn, to educate myself . . . yet this was to be spurned as sinful and a betrayal of the Most High? How could I accept this? Needless to say, my frocked friend had no cogent answer to these quandaries. But Rand stated that she was “deeply impressed with the letter you wrote to the priest. If *The Fountainhead* has helped you to find a way out of such a terrible and tragic conflict, I am very happy to know it.”

However, not long after this promising start, there was a silly tiff between Rand and me (mostly my own fault), and I was deemed *persona non grata* with Rand and her inner circle. I would one day be on friendly terms with Branden but only after his split with Rand in 1968 paved the way. In retrospect, I am glad that I was blackballed. I might have become as dependent as so many others did. And I am glad, also, that being cut off wasn't so devastating a blow that I renounced the good ideas I found in Objectivism. In the years since, I have become one of the most prolific neo-Objectivist thinkers, probably giving more scholarly exposition to Rand's ideas than anyone else (with the exception, perhaps, of Doug Rasmussen and Doug Den Uyl). Indeed, a book I wrote in 2003 for Ashgate in the UK is titled *Objectivity, Recovering Determinate Reality in Philosophy, Science, and Everyday Life*.

It is too bad that the folks in the inner circle have not done better at promoting Objectivism themselves. When Peikoff finally came out with his long-awaited book, *The Ominous Parallels*—the joke was that just as parallel lines never meet, so this book would never get published—I wanted it reviewed in *Reason*. I no longer had much say in those matters, however, and could only get a very brief review scheduled. I asked several people with good qualifications to do the job but no one would take it on without planning to pan it. Finally I wrote the brief review myself, chiding Peikoff for missing an opportunity to produce a truly scholarly project that took alternative explanations, compared them with his own, and thus showed the superiority of his own thesis. I was disappointed—we had all hoped that this book would help to show the philosophical community that there is real substance to Objectivism. Rand's essays, even her *Objectivist Epistemology*, had been too polemical to qualify as scholarship. Yet she herself kept urging all those who found her views sound to get out there and become the “new intellectuals.”

But there is no value to “new intellectuals” who cannot talk to the old intellectuals. And there surely are some who could have been reached, had the effort only been made. Instead, Peikoff and the rest of them—except for David Kelley, who in the end also got kicked out of the official movement—kept aping Rand's style and thereby making short shrift of her substance.

I had a final word with Ayn Rand on July 4, 1976. I called her to express to her my thanks for being the most crucial contemporary thinker to stand behind and strengthen the meaning of the Bicentennial. Frank answered. I asked for Miss Rand and she came on the line. Here is our conversation verbatim, as best I can remember it:

“This is Ayn Rand. Who am I speaking to?”

“Miss Rand, I am a long-time admirer and wish to simply thank you on this day for what you have done to keep the idea of the American revolution alive.”

“Who is this?”

“My name is Tibor Machan.”

“Good bye.”

In my view there is nothing peculiar about Rand’s persona or impact, including some of their more negative aspects. Obviously, some of her prominent and not-so-prominent followers did forfeit their independence to a degree. But it should also be noted that a great many emerged easily enough from that dependency. I think that the emphasis on the cultism is little more than an *ad hominem* from people who really should not be tossing around labels in any case when it comes to the phenomenon of exaggerated personal and ideological loyalties. (It is often the most rabid factionalists who decry the rabid factionalism of others!) Almost all great intellects have generated the kind of social upheavals around them that Rand did. And most have been tempted to lord it over their students or disciples. There is nothing terribly surprising about this—given how large the egos are of such people, and how reasonable it is that they should fear being exploited.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose philosophy no one accuses of spawning a cult, once taught at Cambridge University. At the same time, it is reported, Frederick Waismann was also teaching a seminar in which Wittgenstein’s ideas were being discussed. Wittgenstein is said to have stormed into the administration offices, demanding that Waismann stop mentioning him, or else he would immediately leave Cambridge! That’s just one story—for more one might consult Paul Johnson’s *The Intellectuals* (a somewhat intemperate and over-generalizing book itself).

The internal convolutions in the philosophical movements spawned by brilliant people such as Marx, Mill, Freud, Wittgenstein, Popper, or Rand are partly a result of the fact that no one outside the immediate circle of followers cares all that much about the participants’ emotions and thoughts. Of course these figures have their idiosyncrasies—and they may be culpable for some of the ways their ideas are inappropriately appropriated. But this kind of problem, I think, is inessential. It is at any rate temporary. Sure, novel ideas and their creators are usually going to get embroiled in personal feuds, and these will reach a pitch that hardly matches the normal antagonisms of ordinary men and women. But only because many more people—namely, all those who are intensely hoping for personal enlightenment and the salvation that comes from knowing “the great one”—are privy to the intimate details. In the end, what counts most will still be who if anyone is right on the crucial questions that these innovators address. And little of the material that has emerged from discussing their triumphs and foibles instructs us about that.

Ayn Rand’s work has changed my life considerably. It helped me to see my life coherently and to identify its purpose. Especially given my awful childhood, which involved a great deal of belittlement and self-doubt, Rand’s affirmation of the value of one’s life and the virtue of living it by standards of one’s nature as a rational animal, have been very welcome to me. I doubt I could have lived as happily as I have, even with all the pitfalls, without Rand’s genius for me to draw on. I will always be grateful to her for what she has done to support the uniquely American political tradition, one that has helped me and others to stay free of tyranny. (My book, *Putting Humans First, Why We Are Nature’s Favorite*, tried to punctuate this point vis-à-vis the misguided environmentalist and animal rights movement.)

But having said all this, I do not believe that books make people—people make books, even in the sense that they make them something important to themselves. I was to discover this in a particularly wrenching way soon enough, while studying at Claremont College.

Claremont was just where I wanted to be. The intellectual hustle and bustle was exciting but also rather intimidating, since I lacked the sort of preparation for it that most of my classmates had. I was, after all, a high school flunk-out. But my motivation was greater than perhaps anyone else's. I had been on my own for some five years. And I was eager to get in the swim with the American way of life, a sort of casual self-confidence exhibited in films by the likes of Robert Mitchum, James Garner, and Gary Cooper. Americans didn't fuss much. They did what needed to be done and went on to the next task, while also taking it easy and finding joy in life. Yet, I also saw that Americans didn't have much of an explanation for why this mode of living was okay, even superior. So I not only tried to adopt the American style but also to learn why it was right. And why the opposite approach was wrong.

A tragedy taught me one lesson along these lines. One of my more intellectually vigorous classmates, David Chuchi, was experiencing serious despondency, supposedly in light of certain conclusions he had reached from his study of the skeptical reflections of René Descartes. At first he simply bemoaned the perplexities he found in the philosopher's arguments against trusting our sense and judgments. But he then went on to lament the even more radical skepticism he found in the thinking of David Hume. And this wasn't only something academic for him. Chuchi began to withdraw more and more, and even started missing meals. After a few weeks he could no longer be engaged in conversation about any of this. He would silently walk around and when we tried to inquire about his state of mind, he would not respond.

One Monday morning we heard that on the previous Saturday Chuchi had gone to a motel in Pomona, filled his room with gas, lit his lighter and blown himself up. He lived for a few days, conscious but near death, and could not survive his wounds. He apparently expressed regret for what he had done just before he died.

This event has never ceased to affect me. It taught me that philosophy can kill—and not just when imposed by force. I am convinced that Chuchi's action was in part the result of his taking skepticism seriously. He was not a light-hearted person to begin with, and when he found something persuasive that seemed to reinforce his gloom, he did not let it go. Unlike David Hume, who claimed that he could leave his skeptical reflections behind when he left his study, Chuchi took the ideas home with him. I, too, have always found the philosophical ideas I was examining to be very practically significant, not a mere academic exercise. Fortunately I never saw much appeal in skepticism, either psychologically or philosophically. Quite the opposite. I know that human beings have the capacity to know the world. Of course, to actually learn about the world often requires enormous effort.

I never doubted that I, too, shared this capacity to know and had, indeed, a definite responsibility to figure things out as best as I could. This produced a certain confidence in me, as well as a sense of freedom to enjoy myself in life, despite the pretty awful things I experienced in childhood. We are all obliged to cope with various adversities. I think I did better than most, mainly by channeling whatever bad feelings I had into doing useful and creative things. While still in college I began to do some pretty intense writing to explore the

ideas that I was making my own, and once I started I never slacked off. There would be many obstacles and many opportunities. But whatever came, I kept pushing ahead regardless.

I have no illusions about the impact of my work on the community of political philosophy and economy. Whatever its quality, the regard in which it is held is very mixed. And it is plain enough that my work isn't coming out from Oxford or Harvard or Princeton University Press, nor am I asked to write for *The New York Times Magazine*, the *New York Review of Books*, *The New Republic*, or even *The Public Interest*. (I have, however, managed to squeeze into the pages of *The American Scholar*, *Free Inquiry*, *National Review*, *The Humanist*, *Barron's*, *Economic Affairs*, and many good scholarly forums.)

The unevenness of my success is no doubt in part due to the often low regard in which the scholarly community holds libertarian and other ideas I am associated with. In part it may be due to the lack of upward mobility in academic circles. And in part to my admittedly sometimes hurried writing. Still, if I am to judge, the latter cannot be definitive; for many writers within the mainstream community manage to lope onto the front stage fairly easily, despite their occasional lapses. The bottom line, if there is one, has to do with what I champion in my works, which is the most radical idea in the history of politics: the individual is sovereign and not beholden to others in any enforceable way.

I have enjoyed the good fortune to be able to make the case for this idea on innumerable fronts, in innumerable regions of the globe, where I have encountered if not always the highest accolades, then at least a good deal of interest and respectful opposition. This response has made the journey very enjoyable, even apart from the very important fact that the causes I have championed are exceptionally worthy. ■

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ERIC MACK

## A JOURNEY IN LIBERTARIANLAND

IN A WAY, IT ALL BEGAN with Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. In my junior year of high school my friend Steve Brecher had gotten me to read Ayn Rand's novels. I don't recall how he got me to read them. He probably appealed to the natural perversity that I revealed in our first intellectual conversation. He, already an Objectivist, said, "I'm a

radical capitalist.” I said, “Then I guess I’m a reactionary socialist.” (I had some vague sense that I ought to be a socialist since I had heard that socialism was “scientific”; but, if he was going to be a radical capitalist, I was going to be a reactionary socialist.) In any case, I read Rand’s novels and was especially impressed by her moral and psychological contrast between self-oriented and other-oriented individuals. In English class, someone was complaining about the “selfishness” that Johnson exhibited in his drive to psychologically dominate the members of his circle. I found myself saying that it wasn’t selfishness at all but a type of selflessness. Steve caught my eye and nodded. Steve and I were also partners on the debate team. Each year we got lots of material from the Foundation of Economic Education on that year’s national debate topic. Those materials were my main introduction to free market economics.

This was in Queens, New York in the early sixties. So it was natural for Steve and I (and our girlfriends) to head into Manhattan for NBI lectures. I attended several of those lecture series as a high school student and when I returned to New York for summers during my undergraduate years; but I never had the misfortune of getting close to the Randian inner circle. I majored in Philosophy at Union College from the fall of ’63 to my early graduation in the spring of ’66. My best teacher there was the humanist philosopher Paul Kurtz—who I realize in retrospect was extremely tolerant of my undergraduate omniscience. My political activism reached its peak during the 1964 presidential campaign when I organized a (small!) campus political group—“Atheists for Goldwater.”

In the fall of ’66 I began Ph.D. work in Philosophy at The University of Rochester. I did a lot of work with the great Kant scholar Lewis White Beck and was dutifully planning on writing a dissertation on synthetic a priori propositions. Fortunately, I had lunch one day with the metaphysician Richard Taylor. Somehow, in conversation, I said, “It would be fun to write a dissertation on natural rights.” “So,” he asked, “why don’t you?” So, I did. The main ambition of that dissertation was to ground a theory of rights upon a Rand-like doctrine of ethical egoism. Since, in part under the Kantian influence of Beck, I took rights to be strongly deontological claims, the ambition of the dissertation required an investigation of how one could connect in one coherent system the consequentialist claims of ethical egoism with the deontological claims of rights theory. In one form or another the investigation of the relationship between consequentialist and non-consequentialist normative principles has ever since remained central to my intellectual endeavors.

While I was in graduate school, I read some letters in the fledgling *Reason* magazine about market anarchism and soon became convinced that the Randian case for limited government and against market anarchism would not hold. I also had the good fortune to meet the Objectivist philosopher George Walsh at a taped version of some NBI lectures in Rochester. In the late sixties, George (to his later regret) moved from Hobart and William Smith College to the new Eisenhower College. In the spring of ’70, he and I successfully contrived to get me a Philosophy position at Eisenhower. The contrivance consisted of my passing myself off as a Marxist.

Early during my stay at Eisenhower College, I become annoyed by the sophomoric moral relativism of various of my colleagues. Initially as a memo to them, I wrote up, “How to Derive Ethical Egoism.” I submitted it to *The Personalist*, which was then being edited

by John Hospers. With its acceptance, I had my first published article! I recall being so excited that I could not hold steady the hot cup of coffee which I bought to calm myself down. *The Personalist* also published the key chapter of my dissertation, “Egoism and Rights” and through these publications I met my good friends and fellow travelers Tibor Machan, Douglas Rasmussen, Douglas Den Uyl, Jeff Paul, Ellen Paul, and Fred Miller.

During the early seventies, I also spoke at a couple of Libertarian Scholars Conferences. At the first one, at Hunter College, I meet Murray Rothbard. Unfortunately, I was still in my new Ph.D. semi-omniscient phase. Upon being introduced, I said something like, “Glad to meet you; I can refute the following six of your important contentions.” This probably did not make too favorable an impression. A year or two later, I wrote an essay on foreign/defense policy for *Reason* magazine in which I argued for an almost completely isolationist defense policy. My conclusion depended in part on just war principles which allow one sometimes to strike defensively against an aggressor even if one’s defensive act will unintentionally kill innocent bystanders. Murray thought that this was equivalent to endorsing the spraying a crowd with a machine gun to stop a fleeing criminal. Perhaps the last time I met Murray was by far the most convivial. In the late 1970s Murray and James Buchanan both gave papers on anarchism at a meeting of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy in Washington, D.C. There was a jolly dinner afterward during which Murray had a good laugh about his commentator being moved to tears—real tears—by the “heartlessness” of Murray’s “Society without the State.” The anthology, *Anarchism*, edited by Chapman and Pennock, which grew out of that meeting, also contains my essay, “Nozick’s Anarchism.”

During the 1973–74 academic year, I contrived to be fired by Eisenhower College. Better yet, I arranged to be a Visiting Post-Doctoral Fellow at Harvard for the 1974–75 academic year. That was the year right after Bob Nozick’s publication of *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. I commuted into Cambridge one day a week from Amherst (where my wife, Mary Sirridge, was teaching in the Philosophy department) and spent a couple of hours each of those days talking to Nozick about moral and political philosophy. (Bob and I also had some nice philosophical walks through Belmont, Massachusetts during a subsequent summer.)

In Amherst, through our respective wives, I became friendly with the leftist, quasi-anarchist, quasi-Marxist, Kantian scholar, Robert Paul Wolf. I gave guest lectures on libertarianism in his political philosophy classes. One result was that, when I was back on the job market that year, I had strong letters of recommendation from the best known “right-wing” philosopher in the country and one of the best known “left-wing” philosophers.

During this period I had my first two articles accepted in *Ethics* and wrote my first of quite a number of essays for anthologies edited by Tibor Machan. I also reviewed *Anarchy, State and Utopia* for several libertarian publications and reviewed *For A New Liberty* for *The American Political Science Review*. I also wrote a review-article about David Friedman’s *The Machinery of Freedom* for *Reason*. Amazingly, until I read Friedman’s book, I had been unaware of the concept of public goods and of the special difficulties associated with their market production. It has since seemed to me that both the market anarchist and the minimal statist who abjures taxation face the same hard question, viz., whether effective rights-protecting institutions (whether they be competitive protection agencies or minimal states) can be financed non-coercively. This question overshadows the traditional debate between

the market anarchist and the minimal statist in which both parties tend to ignore the special problems of securing voluntary funding for rights-protective services.

Also, during my year at Harvard, I read another book that has had a very considerable effect on my views, the recently published first volume of Hayek's *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*. I had already read most of Hayek's *Individualism and Economic Order*, which I had found much more helpful than Mises's *Socialism*. But what most impressed me about *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* was its very suggestive extension of the idea of spontaneous order not merely to social order in general but also to such intellectual orders as law and morality. Hayek has sensitized me to a type of hyper-rationalism which often appears among academic political philosophers. More importantly, Hayek's emphasis on rules and the rationality of rule-governed conduct has reinforced my own anti-consequentialist orientation.

In August of '75, I headed down to the Big Easy, to take up a new position in the Philosophy Department at Tulane University. And I have taught at Tulane—in Philosophy and in Political Economy—ever since. Around the time of my arrival at Tulane I began my long and very rewarding relationship with the Liberty Fund. A very large proportion of what I have learned since the mid-70s, I have learned through my participation in and organization of Liberty Fund colloquia on topics in economics, history, law, philosophy, and political theory. I have edited two books for Liberty Press: Auberon Herbert's *The Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State and other Essays* and Herbert Spencer's *The Man versus the State*.

A good deal of my work over the past couple of decades has coalesced around two main themes. The first is (still) the grounding of rights theory in an individualistic conception of value. My more recent work in this area, which began with my "Moral Individualism: Agent-Relativity and Deontic Restraints" (in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Autumn 1989), may have been reignited by my encounter with *Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community* by my walkabout buddy Loren Lomasky. The second theme is the grounding of property rights and the articulation and defense of a plausible Lockean proviso. My work in this area began with my "Self-Ownership and the Right of Property" (in *The Monist*, October 1990) and "The Self-Ownership Proviso: A New and Improved Lockean Proviso" (in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, winter, 1995). My work on this second theme has in part been a response to the left (i.e., Georgist) libertarianism of Hillel Steiner and to the Marxist criticisms of libertarianism offered by G.A. Cohen. It certainly has been the use of the language of "self-ownership" by Steiner (who affirms self-ownership) and G.A. Cohen (who rejects it) that has brought me back to the self-ownership terminology that was embraced by Rothbard. Quite a number of my essays on these and related themes have appeared in the journal of the Social Philosophy and Policy Center at Bowling Green State University. The Center is the wonderful creation of Jeff Paul, Ellen Paul, and Fred Miller.

During most of the nineties, I had the rewarding experience of teaching at the summer seminars of the Institute for Humane Studies. And, in a partial and very qualified trip back to my roots, I have recently lectured regularly at The Objectivist Center's summer seminars. ■

## IN THE SPIRIT OF MURRAY ROTHBARD: AUSTRIAN, LIBERTARIAN, AND THOMIST

I FIRST READ ABOUT MURRAY ROTHBARD while surfing the Internet. As a natural-law theorist, I was looking for material that had been written on economics, especially in recent times. I typed “natural law” and “economics” in the search field. What appeared was a review of the book *The Ethics of Liberty*. According to the reviewer, this book was an attempt to build an entire economic theory on the basis of natural law. It was written by Murray Rothbard. I was, of course, quite excited. So I ran a search for Murray Rothbard, and the links led me to the (really impressive!) Mises Institute web site, with all its Real Audio lectures. Here also was advertised the Rothbard Graduate Seminar. One thing led to another, and I applied for and was invited to attend both the Mises University and the Rothbard Seminar, thanks to the generosity of the Mises Institute.

Murray Rothbard writes from the tradition of the Austrian economists. I had already been acquainted with some of the Acton President Father Robert Sirico’s writings tracing Austrian economics to the Salamancan Scholastic theologians, as well as some of Acton’s research, so the mention of Austrian economics just lit up my eyes.

Still, when I first read *The Ethics of Liberty*, I had mixed feelings. The first few chapters were great, I thought. They presented Aristotle and Aquinas as masters, but . . . in the following chapters this perspective was later abandoned in favor of enlightenment theorists. This left me a little disappointed. Of course, coming from a scholastic background, this could be attributable to my own medieval prejudice. But when it came to crafting a defense of private property based on John Locke and Rothbard’s adamant defense of abortion, it was just too much. And the fact that I was a Dominican tertiary and a Thomist, certainly did not help. My heart sank. A wild goose chase—a wrong lead. This book is erroneous, I thought. Had I been an inquisitor, I would have set it afire.

My two weeks at the Mises Institute, however, quite changed all that, but not without help. (No, they did not drug me, but they did feed me well!) There I met Oskari Juurikala, who was a Summer Fellow. Since he was an Aquinas and natural law enthusiast as well, we hit it off pretty well. As I look back I am immensely grateful to him not only for his friendship but even more for explaining to me the other side of Rothbard that had so far escaped me. He showed me other of Rothbard works, especially his *History of Economics*, and pointed out to me that Rothbard’s interest in John Locke was much in evidence, and that there was a strong connection between Rothbard’s Lockean account of property with that of a fellow Dominican Friar named John of Paris, otherwise known as Jean Quiddort O.P.

When I read that book, it struck me that not only was Rothbard the historian whom Robert Sirico had quoted for his sources, tracing Austrian economics to the Spanish Scholastics, but even more, that Rothbard was in fact trying to retrace the Lockean theory of private property to its Thomistic roots—through Jean Quiddort O.P. to Aquinas. He is none other than the Dominican Friar who had written the very famous *Corrections of the Corruptions* in reply to William De La Mare O.F.M.'s *Corruptions*. The latter work was a Franciscan challenge to the Thomistic corpus, in particular St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*.

The dispute was reflective of the antagonism between the two greatest mendicant orders at the time: the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), to which I belong, and the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans). John of Paris O.P. had gotten into trouble with the Church for his alternative to the theory of transubstantiation—a theory he explicitly declared he would be happy to retract if it could be shown to be incompatible with sound doctrine—although otherwise he was a faithful Thomist, especially in his political views. His celebrated work is *On Royal and Papal Power*, in which he tried to steer a middle ground between the Papists (who insisted that Secular Powers only derived their power through the Church) and Royalists (who argued that the Church has absolutely no claim over Secular business); it has clear Thomistic antecedents.

In appealing to the natural law, John argued that the right to property was a right of secular powers granted by natural law, and that the only jurisdiction the Church had over property was not direct but rather indirect, insofar as the persons who own the property by natural right were themselves members of the Church, and were thus bound in obedience to it. Precisely in appealing to the natural law and the natural right of secular authorities to acquire property rights prior to the Church's sanction, this offered a loose form of grounding for private property as something which man may naturally aspire to through labour.

Rothbard unfortunately did not make any citations, but a search points to the distinguished historian of medieval political theory Janet Coleman, and her works confirm, or perhaps were in fact the source of, Rothbard's claims. From a Thomistic point of view, this project was the conniving of a genius in the (Thomistic) history of economic philosophy.

Despite this I still disagree with Rothbard on some issues. Some of his views are not invincibly defensible. Still, when I heard Guido Hülsmann questioning some of Rothbard's economics at a Rothbard Conference, I knew at once that the Mises Institute was not a propagandizing association, bent on defending its predecessors come what may, but rather a company of real scholars committed to critically engaging and bringing forward a libertarian and Austrian tradition.

So I know in admitting some of my divergences from Rothbard while espousing his other insights, I will not be excommunicated. But perhaps I should further qualify myself: the Rothbard of the *Ethics* is someone I find less appealing—I much prefer some of his earlier writings, published in the journals in which he tried to grapple as a self-confessed neo-Thomist with the Kantian epistemological presuppositions in the praxeological tradition he had inherited from Ludwig von Mises. Here too, I should say, we see genius. But it was not a job that was complete; rather, there were still loose ends left for others to tie.

Still, as I was to discover, not only did Rothbard not shrink from admitting this, but was eager to have others develop the theory on his behalf. These points were made to me

by Hans-Hermann Hoppe, who was drinking when he said them. In vino, veritas. So I find no reason to doubt that testimony. Rothbard, it seemed to me, knew he was simply reworking the ground, and was waiting for future generations to complete whatever he in his own lifetime could not perfect. Hans-Hermann Hoppe, I think, has brought the tradition to greater heights, and though I am still in the midst of working through his writings, from what I have seen, the possibilities are immense. It is for us, I think, to actualize these possibilities. In this regard, recent writings on Aquinas's natural law theory by Germain Grisez and John Finnis offer great incentives for fulfilling Rothbard's own hermeneutic, and regrounding the projects he worked at for his entire philosophical and economic career.

Liberty is of course a major theme in the particular brand of Austrian thought the Mises Institute embraces, and this is clear not only from the very title of Rothbard's work, *The Ethics of Liberty*, but also in the fact that they publish a journal dedicated to liberal ideals. Liberty can mean several dozens of things, and can be a philosophically challenging concept to cash out with precision. My own sympathies are for Millian Liberalism, though I find his so-called utilitarian justifications rather wanting.

Contrary to some scholars, Mill's notion of freedom from the tyranny of the masses and from physical coercion in his deservedly famous *On Liberty* is an item which is not typical of the Victorian age, nor even of the Enlightenment, even less something which his friend and later wife Harriet Taylor impressed upon him for dubious ends; rather it is a value closely allied with human happiness and dignity that Mill, it seems to me, was attentive to. And it struck him with such affective conviction, that he was bent over in trying to fit it in with his utilitarianism—a utilitarianism for which nothing is absolute, not even freedom. I would have rather said, that Mill, like any other sound-thinking human being, was impressed with the natural law that he is intrinsically worthy as an autonomous agent, and to detract from that is to violate his value. Yet no one, I think, who has been even vaguely acquainted with Catholic (Thomistic) social thought should be too impressed with Mill's fight for liberty. He might congratulate Mill, and thank him for his critical analysis, but to go beyond that is to ignore that tradition of Thomistic, Spanish scholastic thinkers in the 16th century.

They wrote at least 200 years before Mill and defended the rights of all human beings in opposition to violent coercion. These scholastics, most of whom were Dominicans with names like Francisco de Vitoria O.P., Domingo de Soto O.P., and Bartholome de Las Cases O.P., opposed with vehemence the massacring and forced conversions of the Indians by Spanish Conquistadors.

In our own time, with perhaps some delay, the Church with the Vatican II document *Dignitatis Humanae* has reaffirmed the intrinsic dignity of the free human subject, a dignity or worth that cannot without just cause be compromised. The principle drafter of the document, John Courtney Murray S.J., in fact drew inspiration from John of Paris O.P.'s moderate theory of church and state, for his conception of the right of religious liberty, whether conceived negatively as freedom from imposed values, or positively as freedom from interference from acting according to one's religious beliefs.

As a Dominican and a Thomist, I see my own commitment to the defense of liberty simply as an outflow of my thinking, and as a natural law theorist my own effort has been

to offer a better grounding for arguments against state coercion. Walter Block, during a breakfast conversation, persistently called me evil when I gave the impression that I would support coercion of morality through the law. This did help to nudge me into action. In this respect, recent writings on Aquinas's natural law theory or indeed the Central Tradition so-called, offer much insights for how this might be done. Here I am thinking of natural law theorists like Robert P. George and John Finnis.

In committing itself to the defense of human freedom and promoting a philosophically informed economic tradition, the Mises Institute is certainly an inspiring association. I am grateful to have encountered it and only regret that it had not been earlier. I am confident that those who will encounter it in the future will benefit from it as much as I myself have, and those of good will will irresistibly be drawn to join us in continuing the good work that Rothbard and his teacher, Ludwig von Mises, began. ■

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ROBERTA ADELAIDE MODUGNO

## AN ITALIAN ROAD TO ROTHBARD

I'M FROM ITALY, a country with little room for classical liberalism and laissez-faire economics, both culturally and politically; but I grew up in a family sympathetic to classical-liberal ideas and my parents taught me to think for myself. In high school I had the good fortune to meet a non-leftist teacher of philosophy. So I was open to the culture of liberty, but the way I became a scholar of libertarianism has the character of an accident.

In 1995 I won a fellowship from the Italian CNR (National Committee for Research) to do some research on the American feminist movement of the nineteenth century. I had been invited to be a Visiting Scholar by the department of history at Princeton University. In the same year Professor Ginevra Conti Odorisio, my Ph.D. director, introduced me to Professor Dario Antiseri, director of the Methodology Center of Social Sciences of the Luiss University, in Rome, and I became a member of the Center. The Center was dedicated to the study of Karl Popper's philosophy, the Scottish Enlightenment, and the Austrian School

of economics, at that time mainly centered on Menger, Mises, and Hayek. The topic of anarcho-capitalism had not yet aroused the Center's interest. I am a scholar of the history of political thought, so I was interested in the topics of the Center both from an historical and a political standpoint. This was the time of my reading of Hayek's *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, *The Constitution of Liberty*, *The Fatal Conceit*, *The Road to Serfdom*, Mises's *Human Action*, and the works of David Hume, John Stuart Mill, and Bernard Mandeville.

Talking with friends and colleagues at the Center, just before leaving for the United States, I thought it would be of some interest to locate some of the works of the people who attended the famous Ludwig von Mises seminar at New York University. So at the end of the summer of 1995, I left for the United States. When I arrived at Princeton I had at my disposal the wonderful Firestone Library. There I conducted my research on Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Anthony, planning to publish an essay on them when I got back to Italy, an intention I in fact carried out. At the same time I was reading Karen Vaughn's *Austrian Economics in America: The Migration of an Idea*. In that book, for the first time I saw the name of Murray Rothbard, among the students listed as members of Mises's seminar. What I was reading about Rothbard in Vaughn's book was so original and new I almost couldn't believe it. I decided I had to know more. So in the Firestone Library I read Rothbard's *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* and *The Ethics of Liberty*. I was really amazed. In 1995, Rothbard's books had not yet been published in Italy; and here I found a completely different species of anarchism—individualist anarchism or anarcho-capitalism. I was fascinated. This was explosive stuff. The internal consistency of Rothbard's discourse, his personal interpretation of natural-law philosophy, and the radicalism and originality of his political philosophy captured me. Moreover I was aware that I was confronting an original systematic contemporary political project; and as an historian of political doctrine, I realized that it was the newest expression of political reflection about people living together, the "good life," and the meaning and role of the state. I wanted to get to know the author. I thought the best thing to do was to contact the economics department of New York University, where I knew that some of the Austrian heirs of Mises were working, people such as Israel Kirzner, Mario Rizzo, and Peter Boettke. I talked by phone to Mario Rizzo and he kindly invited me to the Austrian seminar. When I arrived at New York University, Professor Rizzo informed me that unfortunately Murray Rothbard had just died, in January 1995. I participated in the seminar and I had the opportunity to meet Mario Rizzo, Israel Kirzner, Peter Boettke, and several others. Unfortunately I had missed the opportunity to meet Rothbard, but coming back to Italy I decided that Rothbard's anarcho-capitalism had to be my next topic of study. I wanted to write a brief account of Rothbard's anarcho-capitalism and introduce it to the Italian public. Back in Rome I spoke of my project to Professor Antiseri and Professor Conti Odorisio. Both encouraged me to go on, and Antiseri assured me of the support of the Methodology Center for Social Sciences. So, in 1998, I published *Murray Rothbard e l'anarcho-capitalismo Americano* (Rubbettino Editore).

Meanwhile, in 1997 I was invited to the I.S.I.L. (International Society for Individual Liberty) Conference, taking place that year in Rome. There a very important meeting took place, meaningful also for my future intellectual development. I met Walter Block who suggested that I contact Lew Rockwell, the president of the Ludwig von Mises

Institute. I did so, and in 1998 I participated, for the first time, in the Austrian Scholars Conference at the Institute. There I had the opportunity to meet such people as Jeff Tucker, Ralph Raico, George Reisman, Joseph Salerno, and David Gordon. With the last of these, I began a collaborative work; and in 2001 our *Individualismo metodologico: dalla Scuola austriaca all'anarco-capitalismo* (LUISS Edizioni) was published. Visiting the Ludwig von Mises Institute I deepened my knowledge of libertarianism, acquiring more insight into this new system of thought. I began an Italian translation of some of Rothbard's writings, in order to help publicize his works in Italy. In 2000, with the permission of JoAnn Rothbard and the Ludwig von Mises Institute, I published a collection of Rothbard's articles, entitled *La libertà dei libertari* (Rubbettino Editore). I have also done the Italian translations of *Individualism and the Philosophy of Social Sciences*, published by LUISS Edizioni and of *Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty*, in the Papers of the Italian Acton Institute. ■

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JUDGE ANDREW P. NAPOLITANO

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## A JUDICIAL ODYSSEY TOWARD FREEDOM

WINSTON CHURCHILL, of whose Big Government values I have not been fond, did have a great gift for words. He once famously said, "Any man under thirty who is not a liberal has no heart, and any man over thirty who is not a conservative has no brains."

In my case, things didn't work quite that way. As an undergraduate at Princeton in the late sixties and early seventies and later as a law student at Notre Dame, I was a strong and vocal conservative, as the word was understood at the time. At the height of the anti-Vietnam War movement, I arranged a campus visit to Princeton by William F. Buckley, Jr., the leading conservative intellectual at the time. I brought in other speakers, moderated panels, orchestrated rallies, and made no secret of my political views. I even once wore a T-shirt in 1970 that proclaimed "Bomb Hanoi"! I thought Richard Nixon's militaristic, law-and-order, pro-police platforms in 1968 and 1972 were right for the country.

Fast-forward two decades, however, and you will find me as a judge invalidating police drunk-driving roadblocks in New Jersey and forbidding the cops from stopping someone

on a whim. Before my ruling, the police in New Jersey could and did stop and search any cars they wished. They didn't need any rationale; you didn't even have to be driving erratically since they just stopped cars because they had the power to do so. My published opinion, which ruled that such stops were illegal in the absence of some demonstration of illegal behavior, like weaving in and out of traffic or bolting out of a bar's parking lot, was upheld by the appellate courts. Today in New Jersey random stops by police are illegal, and any evidence acquired during them is supposed to be excluded from trial.

I am proud of that opinion. But it is one that I would have railed against as a conservative college student and law student and active Republican practicing attorney. My younger self would have said, "So what's the problem? If you're not driving under the influence, what does it matter if the police stop and search you? Think of all the drunk drivers those stops will get off the road."

It is a frequently made argument: Why not give up a little personal liberty, like the right to drive your car without being stopped by the police on a whim, in return for temporary safety, like fewer drunks on the road? If the random stops keep one drunk driver off the road and save one child's life, aren't they worth the inconvenience?

Don't be like the younger me. Don't be too quick to agree. Consider first Benjamin Franklin's famous pronouncement: "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Ouch!

Is driving a car without being pulled over by the police an "essential liberty?" Will the drunk drivers that such pull-overs find give you a "little temporary safety?" These are not trivial questions. When Franklin made his pronouncement in 1759, he certainly didn't think similar questions of the day were trivial. And that was back when there was no country, no Constitution, and no guarantees of liberty.

The Constitution says the government cannot arrest you without probable cause—specific evidence that you more likely than not committed a specific crime. And our courts have uniformly held that police can't stop you without articulable suspicion—credible reasons that can be stated to a neutral judge as to why your behavior is suspicious of criminal activity. Think about it. If the police can stop you for *any* reason, then they can stop you for the *wrong* reason, like race or appearance or religion or politics or personal vendetta, just as the SS and the KGB did to persons in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union.

So why my change in philosophy and outlook? What caused me to flip from being a law-and-order conservative to a true libertarian? The answer: My eight years on the bench.

It took a while, but over time I learned that once the police have pulled you over, they can "find" all kinds of things in your car. And in some cases, if they don't find what they want, they are not above planting it; like a little bag of cocaine placed under the passenger seat by one cop while another has you in the squad car answering questions. Not all cops, of course, do this; but it's a common enough occurrence to be worried about.

Even if the defendant is a drug dealer, with a multi-page rap sheet; even if his harm to the community is palpable and real; even if the police, the prosecutors, and the courts are all convinced beyond a reasonable of a doubt that there was a bag of cocaine somewhere in the car; if the evidence was not obtained in accordance with the Constitution; if the police

did not have a lawful basis for stopping and searching the car; if the police *broke* the law in order to *enforce* it, then the evidence of criminality must be excluded at trial. That is the law today. If the police can mow down the Constitution to nail the Devil, they can mow it down to nail *anyone*. The history of human freedom is paying careful attention to the government's procedures.

I know I've wandered from the main question regarding my profound change of philosophy, heart, and general view of the relationship between individuals and government. I'm not avoiding it, exactly, so much as sneaking up on it gradually.

According to an old joke, "a conservative is a liberal who's been mugged, and a liberal is a conservative who's been arrested"; meaning, of course, that regardless of your beliefs in the abstract, one's personal experiences tend to awaken one to reality, however unpleasant it may be.

Well, that's very much what happened to me. As a judge, I heard the police lie and lie again. I remember one case in which a driver had been pulled over and directed to walk away from the car by one cop, while his partner secretly kicked in the car's tail light. Why? To give the police a legal reason for the pull-over should it come up in court; which it did, of course. I remember another case in which a New Jersey State Trooper testified that he observed a crack in a tail light cover from a distance of six-tenths of a mile!

The first time a judge encounters behavior of this sort on the part of men and women who carry badges and guns and swear to uphold the Constitution ("I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution . . .") and swear to tell the truth (" . . . the whole truth and nothing but the truth . . .") and then do neither, something inside you just dies. To someone from my blue-collar, lower middle class, pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic, respect-for-authority background, it was simply inconceivable.

You tell yourself that maybe it's just one cop. But then it happens again and again. As you gain more experience, you find police not only lying under oath, but using forced confessions and prosecutors unlawfully withholding evidence helpful to a defendant, all in an effort to bring about convictions.

And then a cop I knew well came before me and lied. It was about a cocaine bust. I knew him so well I could tell he was lying to my face under oath when he told me the implausible reason about why he pulled over a known drug dealer and then just happened to observe neatly packaged cocaine on the front seat of this experienced drug dealer's car. My now former-friend knows better than to admit that he lied. He broke the law by lying under oath (why wasn't *he* prosecuted for perjury?), and because of that a guilty defendant walks free; but from the police officer's view, he got the junk off the street (the minor amount of cocaine he seized), and so he and his fellow police officers view this as a "win", even though they broke the law.

For eight years I was a judge of the Superior Court of New Jersey. I have tried over one hundred fifty jury trials: murders, rapes, robberies, drug possession, medical malpractice, antitrust, and personal injury. I have sentenced over one thousand people. I have addressed many thousands of motions, hearings, and divorces. I was a professor of law at Delaware Law School (now Widener Law School) and taught constitutional law and criminal procedure for one and a half years there, and I taught constitutional law and jurisprudence as an adjunct professor at Seton Hall Law School for eleven years. I have written five books on

the Constitution and have given thousands of lectures, broadcasts, and speeches on freedom. I am no longer a sitting judge or law school professor. But what I saw and studied and strained over taught me to speak with authority. I saw the beginnings—in my lifetime—of constitutional chaos.

The effect of my professional intimacy with the system was a sea change in my thinking. I can't point to any single moment of sudden and divine clarity. Instead, the acts of seeing, studying, and examining the events in my courtroom day after day eventually caused me to rethink the verities that had been literally a part of my soul since I matured into a thinking, adult human being.

The one incontrovertible lesson I learned over those hard, disillusioning years: Unless you work for it, sell to it, or receive financial assistance from it, *the government is not your friend.*

The practical realizations that the government lies, cheats, and steals, and the unpleasantness attendant upon the acceptance of that while sitting as a life-tenured judge, naturally brought about a thirst for an intellectual re-examination of my own beliefs on the origins of freedom and to take a second look at the schools of thought that have animated the titanic battles between liberty and tyranny.

As an undergraduate during a radical time period on American college campuses, 1968 to 1972, I studied under brilliant minds, but those with a decidedly Big Government and Progressive bent. At Princeton, I was always going against the grain. The grain in those days was anti-government, anti-war, anti-big business. Having come to the understanding in the 1990s that I had been on the wrong side of human freedom in the 1970s, I was determined to re-examine the intellectual sources that brought me there.

So, I re-read many of the great books that had influenced my youth, and I read for the first time some that I had missed. I re-read *The Conscience of a Conservative* by Barry Goldwater and I re-read *Orthodoxy* by G.K. Chesterton. I dove into John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Augustine. I re-read *Capitalism and Freedom* by Milton Friedman. I read essays and articles by Murray Rothbard, Ludwig von Mises, and Ayn Rand. Perhaps the book that was the capstone of reforming my approach to liberty and tyranny was F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*. I have read this masterpiece twice. I was also profoundly influenced by two other masterpieces, *The Way*, by St. Josemaria Escriva, and *A Man for All Seasons*, by Robert Bolt. I re-read the three hundred most important cases decided by the United States Supreme Court; a daunting and frustrating task. I also re-read *The Just War* by Paul Ramsey, a Protestant theologian who was more faithful to the Magisterium than most Catholic priests were in the 1970s, and who taught me just war theory at Princeton. I even read James Madison's notes and other records from the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

Then I found a place that synthesized all this so nicely—LewRockwell.com, or LRC as it is known to its fans. LRC is the most important, courageous, intellectually consistent web site in the world for those who are pro-free market, pro-natural rights, anti-state, and anti-war. It provides daily intellectual, and often humorous, sustenance to those of us who believe in the primacy of the individual, and those who truly believe that the state exists for the sole purpose of defending individual freedom.

I thank God for my intellectual odyssey. I have happily arrived at the most comfortable place for all who believe in human dignity; a place prepared by God the Father out of His love for us; a place for which I would sacrifice my life rather than live as a slave; a place which is the natural residence for all human aspirations. A place called freedom. ■

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JAN NARVESON

## THE LIBERTARIAN IDEA

MY WINDING UP IN SOMETHING of a libertarian camp was not from reading Ayn Rand. If anything, it was from having been brought up in a tiny town (in Minnesota) where everyone worked for a living, having some experience in farm and factory as a teenager, and, mostly, from my professional reading down through the years, and trying to figure things out. Especially moral and political things, interest in which may have stemmed from a Lutheran upbringing in a family that took that very seriously—and having become decidedly unserious about Lutheranism in the event.

I went to the University of Chicago as an undergraduate, back in the 50s, and there of course most of the students were flaming radicals or else utterly apolitical. I first did the University of Chicago's famous liberal education curriculum, in which we read people like Plato and Aristotle and many of the other famous philosophers of former times. I then did a year in political science, which I found not very interesting, and then in my final year moved into philosophy, which was really my first love, and have been there ever since.

While a graduate student (at Harvard), my interest in the Utilitarians solidified, and for my thesis work I immersed myself in the very difficult problem of how to reconcile Mill's very libertarian essay *On Liberty*, a very attractive and convincing work, with his likewise famous *Utilitarianism*. The latter argues that the fundamental criterion of morals is the maximization of general happiness or utility. But the former argues that we all have a basic right to be free so long as we do not, in our pursuits, harm others. This last sounded very persuasive to me, on reflection, but so did Mill's utilitarianism. The trouble is, it is really not obvious that one can always maximize general utility by respecting someone's

right to freedom. It looks as though something has to give. But in my thesis, and in my first published book, *Morality and Utility*, I did try to reconcile them. When you interfere with someone's liberty, you (insofar forth) reduce his utility—that's clear enough. But what guarantees that you reduce it more than you increase some other people's utility? Raskolnikov proposes to kill the little old pawnbroker lady, whom everybody hates and who is old and sick anyway, and thereby be able to continue his studies and do great things for the Russian people. If utilitarianism is true, why isn't he reasoning the right way, at least?

I talked myself into utilitarianism by an abstract argument that appealed, implicitly, to Mill and was formulated more precisely by Henry Sidgwick, and has been used by others as well. The argument turns moral value into a kind of universal, same for all. A unit of your utility is just as good, neither more nor less, than a unit of mine, right? And utility—happiness, pleasure, satisfaction—is what matters, right? So how can utilitarianism be wrong?

The answer came in 1974, a decade after I moved to Canada (strictly for reasons of academic employment, not at all for political ones) when I encountered the work of David Gauthier on Hobbes. Studying that carefully, and taking Hobbes seriously, I came to see that the universalization argument I had been using was wrong. The right argument says that each person's utility is his own, that only that is what he rationally pursues, and so if you and I are going to be subject to the same rules, they will have to be rules that we both agree on, which means that we both have good reason to agree on.

Soon thereafter there appeared Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, which I read with a view to reviewing. I supposed I would be writing with a view to refuting it too. But in the end, I was impressed by Nozick—and also impressed at the total absence of genuine foundations for liberty in his work. But those foundations, I saw, were to be had in the sort of work Gauthier was doing. Putting the two together, I arrived at the contractarian libertarianism that was expounded in my next book, *The Libertarian Idea* (1989). It took another 15 years to get it pretty much together, as I hope it is, but they were interesting years.

Since then I have continued to be impressed with the importance, plausibility, and interest of the libertarian idea. In the meantime, I finally began reading libertarians, and even meeting some. John Hospers, who acted as a referee on *The Libertarian Idea*, noted the complete absence of reference to Ayn Rand's work—isn't this like "Catholicism without the pope"?, he asked. But then, I don't believe in popes in political philosophy any more than in religions. And the last thing I want my political outlook to be is a religion. I want it, instead, to be a reasonable attitude toward social life. Even so, I did read Rothbard, Mises, and other luminaries, to considerable profit. And I encountered people with libertarian interests. This especially began to happen in Canada in the late 90s and the first years of the new millennium, when I met the remarkable women Karen Selick, Wendy McElroy, and Mary Lou Gutscher—if I had needed any evidence of the equality (at least) of the sexes, those three would have been ample!—as well as many others. Moreover, some of my former students have proven to be outstanding libertarians as well—Grant Brown, Alix Nalezinski, Ralph Hanke, John Simpson, among others. There's also Peter Jaworski, organizer of Youth for Liberty and a high-horsepower organizer and thinker.

Over the years I have applied the libertarian idea to all sorts of moral and political issues. (Many of my more recent essays are found in *Respecting Persons in Theory and Practice*

(2002). A generally dubious attitude toward the institution of government is pretty much a corollary of libertarianism. I followed this up to the point of coming to think, at least abstractly, that anarchism, of the capitalist variety, is the right fundamental view. People think anarchism impossible or unworkable, but I am doubtful of that. I am not doubtful that getting from where we are to there is extremely difficult, and not to be expected any time soon.

In the ensuing years, I've been impressed by the depth and breadth of much libertarian or near-libertarian writing and scholarship—David Schmidtz, Walter Block (whose classic *Defending the Undefendable* belongs on every shelf!), Anthony de Jasay, Bruce Benson, Tibor Machan, Randy Holcombe, and many others have influenced me. Many philosophers, economists, and others whom I've met at Liberty Fund conferences, the ISIL, and other places—especially the Internet—have also enlivened and enriched my understanding of these matters. And I remain hopeful that we can really clarify the libertarian idea, and make it plausible to all. ■

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 DAVID F. NOLAN
 

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## DISCOVERING THE LIBERTARIAN WITHIN

AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, I have always been a libertarian. Of course when I was a child I had never heard the word, but I was one. I had an inquisitive mind, and was always asking “why?” whenever a grown-up issued a pronouncement. If the answer made sense, I'd usually accept it. If not, I didn't.

I learned to read at the age of four, by looking at the words in books my parents read me. They were quite surprised when I started to “read back” stories like *The Little Engine That Could*. This ability provided a natural means for me to learn things for myself, and I became an avid reader.

The first “political” book I remember reading was George Orwell's *1984*, which I encountered at the age of nine or ten. My parents were both academics, and there were always lots of books around our home. I suspect I didn't really understand a lot of what Orwell was saying, but I plowed through the book anyhow.

The first author whose writings definitely helped shape my thinking, however, was Robert Heinlein. I started with his “juvenile” novels, at age eleven or so, and went on to read almost everything he wrote. I don’t recall that Heinlein ever used the word “libertarian,” but his values permeated his books and I soaked them up along with his stories.

In retrospect, it’s easy to see that Heinlein was pro-freedom, pro-enterprise, and anti-tyranny. The themes explored in his Future History Series ranged from privately funded moon rockets to the dangers of a repressive theocracy. And while I had no real interest in politics during my teen years, I was taken enough with Heinlein’s writings that I made myself a “Heinlein for President” button to wear during the 1960 election. This eccentricity was duly noted in a cartoon that appeared in my high school yearbook!

That same year, I discovered H.L. Mencken, a writer only recently deceased and still widely remembered in Maryland, where I grew up. Mencken was tailor-made for smart-ass aspiring adolescent intellectuals, given his penchant for skewering the mighty and the “booboisie” with equal vigor. Like countless other junior wordsmiths of that era I aspired to write like the Sage of Baltimore, and I was probably more successful than most.

By the time I finished high school I had no clearly-formed political philosophy. My parents and most of their friends were liberals. Most of my friends were apolitical like me, more interested in science and science fiction than in politics or history. If anyone had asked me, I probably would have identified myself as a liberal, without really having any idea of what that meant.

In the fall of 1961 I set off for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, intending to become an architect. Shortly after I arrived there, one of my new-found friends urged me to read *The Fountainhead* because “it’s about an architect.” That was my first brush with Ayn Rand, and over the next couple of years I read all of her novels and many of her essays. I was transfixed! All the ideas I had soaked up from Heinlein, Mencken, and a smorgasbord of science-fiction writers fell into place.

I began scouring the MIT library for books on politics and economics with a pro-freedom viewpoint. One of the first I encountered was F.A. Hayek’s classic treatise, *The Road to Serfdom*. I found it so enlightening that I bought a personal copy and highlighted key passages with a yellow marker. Shortly thereafter, I started reading *The Freeman* each month.

In 1963, I began hearing a lot about Barry Goldwater. The more I heard, the more excited I became. Here was a political leader talking about individualism, liberty, and the free market! An article in some popular magazine—*Life?*—revealed that both Rand and Heinlein were Goldwater supporters. With the help of like-minded friends, I organized the MIT chapter of Youth for Goldwater, which became the largest Goldwater club in New England.

After Goldwater’s defeat in 1964, I began to look for new ways to work for liberty. I rode out to Belmont, a Boston suburb, and met with Robert Welch, founder and chairman of the John Birch Society. Welch spent several hours with me, and suggested a number of books that might help me learn more about history and philosophy. These included Ludwig von Mises’s *The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality* along with works by “old Right” authors such as Frank Chodorov, Albert Jay Nock, Garet Garrett, and John T. Flynn.

I never joined the Birch Society, but did become involved with the Liberty Amendment Committee, a group formed to repeal the federal income tax and get the U.S. government

out of all activities not specifically authorized by the Constitution. The group's Chairman, a garrulous old gentleman named Willis Stone, was a natural-born libertarian, and also helped solidify my political beliefs.

As the 1960s drew to a close, I continued to read everything I could find that would expand my understanding of the pro-freedom, limited-government philosophy. It was during this period that I began using the word "libertarian" to describe my beliefs.

Two writers who influenced my thinking during those years were Karl Hess and Murray Rothbard, both self-described anarchists. And while I have never fully accepted that philosophy, I became quite fond of both men as I corresponded with each of them over the years. While they were quite different in their personalities, I found each to be a kindred spirit.

My journey of self-discovery has continued to this day. Hopefully, it will not end until my life is over. The more I learn, the more I believe that the philosophy of liberty is right for humanity. ■

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David F. Nolan is the creator of the "Nolan Chart," which has widely supplanted the old left-right model of politics and co-founder of the Libertarian Party in 1971.

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GARY NORTH

## IT ALL BEGAN WITH FRED SCHWARZ

WALTER BLOCK HAS INVITED US to provide some autobiographical background on how we came to be Misesians/Rothbardians. This is my contribution to the cause.

Jerome Tuccille wrote a book thirty years ago, *It Usually Begins With Ayn Rand*. It was a good book, especially the sections on the Galambosian, but it was wrong. Back when he wrote it, it usually began with *The Freeman*.

Today, it usually begins with LewRockwell.com.

I remember the lady who first handed me a copy of *The Freeman*. It was in 1958. She was an inveterate collector of *The Congressional Record*. She clipped it and lots of newspapers, putting the clippings into files. She was a college-era friend of my parents.

She was representative of a dedicated army of similarly inclined women in that era, whose membership in various patriotic study groups was high, comparatively speaking, in southern California. These women are dead or dying now, and with them go their files—files that could serve as primary source collections for historians of the era. I suspect that most of them

disposed of their collections years ago, cardboard box by cardboard box, when they ran out of garage space, and their nonideological husbands and children finally prevailed.

Back then, someone had already coined a phrase to describe women like her: little old lady in tennis shoes. But she wasn't that old, and she didn't wear tennis shoes. In fact, in all my days, I only saw one ideological little old lady in tennis shoes: Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who stood in front of the humanities departments' building at the University of California, Riverside, to lecture to maybe 20 students. That was over a decade after I read my first issue of *The Freeman*. By then, I was writing for *The Freeman*.

My main academic interest in 1958 was anti-Communism. In 1956, the lady had taken me to hear the anti-Communist Australian physician Fred Schwarz, when I was 14, in one of his first speaking tours in the United States. Shortly thereafter, I sent Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communism Crusade \$100 (\$650 in today's money), which were big bucks for me. I had been working in a record store after school for \$1 an hour for only a few months.

My parents were conservative Republicans. My father was in the FBI. He monitored "the swoopers"—the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyite splinter group. Once in a while, he would put on his Sherman Williams Paint (SWP) cap for effect. But he wouldn't wear it while surveilling the Trotskyites.

Sometimes, dad would be called in to monitor "the real stuff": the local Communist Party. He told me that one night, after a CP rally, the local leader of the Party, Dorothy Healey, got into her car, looked behind her at my dad's car, and waved her arm to follow. Then she pulled into traffic and drove away. He, of course, followed her. (I was disappointed that she didn't put this incident in her 1990 autobiography, *Dorothy Healey Remembers*.)

To give you some idea of how conservative dad was, when the U.S. Government suggested that employees drive with their lights on out of respect to the anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination, dad drove home that evening with his lights off, risking a ticket and a collision. Yet he was one of the four Los Angeles FBI agents who discovered evidence that identified James Earl Ray as King's assassin, for which he was happy to take credit. He did his work as a professional.

In the summer of 1958, I went to Boys State, a week-long program in state government sponsored by the American Legion—Bill Clinton attended in Arkansas a few years later—and that experience matured me more in one week than anything ever has. It was there that I gained my confidence to speak in public. I was elected to a state-level office. Ironically, the office was Superintendent of Public Instruction. That success gave me the confidence to run for student body president the next semester. I won. I did it with a comedy speech that poked fun at the system.

Another Boys State attendee that year was Dwight Chapin. He later served as Nixon's appointments secretary. He went to jail because he was the in-house contact man for Bob Segretti, of dirty tricks fame. In March, 1970, I contacted Chapin for a job. He agreed to help me get one. It did not work out.

I remember in the fall of 1958, when I was researching a 15-page, double-spaced term paper on Communism for a high school civics class, that the lady handed me my first copy of *The Freeman*. We got into a discussion about civil government. She was opposed to tax-funded education. I was amazed. She also did not trust the FBI, which she said was a national

police force, which the U.S. Constitution did not authorize. I was even more amazed. It was then that I began my odyssey from anti-Communism to free market economics.

There was another key figure in my life: Wayne Roy. He taught civics (“senior problems”) at Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach. Mr. Roy was the best social studies teacher on campus, and by far the hardest grader. I requested to get into his class, and I became his best student that year. He was a fundamentalist and a conservative. I was not yet interested in religion, but I liked his conservatism.

He actually discussed Christianity in the classroom, especially in the required marriage and family section. He later became notorious among liberal educators in Southern California after the Supreme Court decisions on religion and public education came down in the early 1960s. He refused to pay any attention to the Court. Educators from outside the school district tried to get him fired, but they were not successful.

In the spring of 1959, he explained the economics of social security. He told us that it was actuarially unsound and that it would go bankrupt before most of us died. He primed us on questions to ask the local social security PR flak who came to every school in the district every year to promote the program. In the man’s retirement year, he told Roy that his were the only classes where students ever asked him tough questions.

At the University of California, Riverside, in 1960, I was one of fewer than two dozen visible conservatives on a campus of 1,000. I was the only one involved heavily in campus politics. The campus doubled in size during my stay, but the number of conservatives didn’t.

Here is what I read. First and foremost, *National Review*. In 1961, one issue included a stapled insert: Dorothy Sayers’s 1947 essay, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” a masterpiece. I read selected essays in *The Freeman* and *Modern Age*, and faithfully read the little-known monthly booklet, *Intelligence Digest*, published in Britain by Kenneth de Courcy. I also read Russell Kirk’s *University Bookman*, which was sent free to *National Review* subscribers. That was a very influential little quarterly journal in my thinking.

I began subscribing to *New Individualist Review* with the first issue in April, 1961. That was where I first read Milton Friedman. The NIR ran an extract from *Capitalism and Freedom* in the first issue. That issue was also where I read the first libertarian critique of Hayek that I ever encountered, an essay by Ronald Hamowy, “Hayek’s Concept of Freedom: A Critique.” The NIR was edited by Ralph Raico and published by a group of students at the University of Chicago who were associated with the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists.

In that same year, I contacted F. A. Harper at the William Volker Fund. I asked him a question regarding *Human Action*. I had caught Mises in what I still think is a conceptual mistake, his discussion of the Ricardian law of association, where he used simple mathematics in an illegitimate way (*Human Action*, 1949, p. 159.) Harper replied in a letter. I still keep it in my 1949 edition of *Human Action*. He said he agreed with me on this point. He soon invited me to Burlingame to visit. He offered to pay for the flight. I took his offer. “Baldy” Harper, who was not bald, had been with the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) until his defense of zero civil government led to a break with Leonard Read. He then went to work at the Volker Fund.

The Volker Fund was the one libertarian foundation with any money in 1961. It was very low key, as its late founder, William Volker (“Mr. Anonymous”) wanted. Through its

front, the National Book Foundation, the Volker Fund gave away libertarian books, such as Böhm-Bawerk's, to college libraries. Writing book reviews for the Fund were Murray Rothbard and Rose Wilder Lane, although I did not know this at the time.

Harper was a master recruiter. He was a trained economist, a former professor at Cornell University, along with W.M. "Charlie" Curtiss. Both of them had joined FEE in its first year, 1946. One of their students was Paul Poirot, who became editor of *The Freeman*. It can be said that academic libertarianism was born at Cornell, though not nurtured there.

Harper wrote a few books, most notably, *Liberty: A Path to Its Recovery*, but his main contribution to libertarianism was his systematic recruiting of young scholars. In 1961, he was publishing the William Volker Fund series of books, most notably *Man, Economy, and State*, which he sent me in the fall of 1962. Also in the series was Israel Kirzner's Ph.D. dissertation, *The Economic Point of View* (1960), which was a rarity: a Ph.D. dissertation worth reading.

In the spring of 1962, I attended a one-week evening seminar given by Mises. It was sponsored by Andrew Joseph Galambos, one of the oddest characters in the shadows of libertarian history. He believed that all original articulated ideas possess automatic copyright, which is permanent, and no one has the right to quote someone else's ideas without paying a royalty to the originator or his heirs. Galambos was influential in shaping Harry Browne's thinking, as Browne has discussed in a 1997 essay. The seminar was held during the period when *Human Action* was out of print. Yale University Press was in the process of typesetting the monstrosity that appeared in 1963, the New Revised Edition. (Henry Hazlitt, "The Mangling of a Masterpiece," *National Review*, May 5, 1964.)

In the summer of 1962, I attended a two-week seminar sponsored by the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists—now called the Intercollegiate Studies Institute—at St. Mary's College in California. I had been on the I.S.I. mailing list for about two years. I read *The Intercollegiate Review*. During that seminar, I listened to Hans Sennholz on economics, and I slept through Francis Graham Wilson's Socratic monologues on political theory. I heard Leo Paul de Alvarez on political theory. I remember nothing about his lectures, but I'm sure they were suitably arcane. He was a Straussian. Rousas John Rushdoony lectured for two weeks on what became *This Independent Republic* (1964). I was so impressed that I married his daughter—a decade later.

What I did not recognize at the time was that there had been a change of administration at the Volker Fund. The director, Harold Luhnnow, who was Volker's nephew, had fired Harper and had brought in Ivan Bierly, another ex-FEE senior staffer, and also a Cornell Ph.D. Bierly then hired Rushdoony. He also hired the strange and erratic David Hoggan (HOEgun), a Harvard Ph.D. and a defender of Hitler's foreign policy (*The Enforced War*). When in his cups, he was a defender of Hitler's domestic policies, too. He had already written the manuscript for his anonymously published book, *The Myth of the Six Million*, published years later. There have been many strange figures in the conservative movement, but when it comes to academic types, Hoggan was the gold medalist in weird. He could provide footnotes, not all of them faked, in eight languages. There was nothing libertarian about him. The other major figure on the staff was W.T. Couch, a former *Collier's Encyclopedia* editor, and a man who rarely bathed. There was nothing libertarian about him, either. The

Volker Fund was put on hold, replaced by the short-lived Center for American Studies (CAS). A decade later, the Volker Fund's money went to the Hoover Institution.

Rushdoony hired me as a summer intern at the CAS after my graduation in June, 1963. I was paid \$500 a month to read, which was the best job I have ever had. I read books that I had wanted to read in college: *The Theory of Money and Credit*; *Socialism; Man, Economy, and State*; *America's Great Depression*; and *The Panic of 1819*. I read Wilhelm Roepke's *A Humane Economy* and *Economics of the Free Society*. I read Böhm-Bawerk's *Positive Theory of Capital*. I also read a lot of typed book reviews by Rothbard and Lane, which were in the files. I also read Cornelius Van Til's *The Defense of the Faith*. I had already decided to attend Westminster Theological Seminary that fall, to study under Van Til.

That summer, I spent every extra dollar I had to buy silver coins at the local bank. Sennholz had convinced me the previous summer that Gresham's Law would soon eliminate silver coins, because silver dollars, which had a higher silver content, were already disappearing. I sold my coins to my parents to pay for seminary. They kept the coins, selling them only after silver's price soared. Silver coins started disappearing that fall. Turnpike officials in the East Coast had to go to churches on Sunday nights to buy coins tossed into collection plates.

I lasted at seminary for one year. I could see the handwriting on the wall. It was going from right to left.

I enrolled at UCLA in the fall of 1964 to study economics. The department's war was on: the Keynesians vs. the Chicago School people, and I was caught in the crossfire. I dropped out and transferred back to the University of California, Riverside, where I enrolled in the history program. I remained there until 1971, when I joined FEE's staff. I was awarded my Ph.D. in the summer of 1972.

The main influences on me in graduate school were these: Nisbet; medievalist Jeffrey Burton Russell; Douglas Adair, a specialist in the American Revolution and the reigning expert on who wrote which essays in *The Federalist Papers*; Herbert Heaton, aged yet still teaching, one of the founders of economic history as an academic specialty; Hugh G. J. Aitken, another economic historian and later the editor of *The Journal of Economic History*; and Edwin Scott Gaustad, a specialist in American religious history. I also banged heads with Marxist economist and science fiction aficionado Howard Sherman, who was a non-ideological grader and who shared my suspicion of the usefulness of simultaneous equations in economic theory.

Nisbet was a great lecturer, but day in and day out, the best classroom lecturer I ever heard in my entire academic career was Roger Ransom, another economic historian. His book, *One Kind of Freedom*, on the economics of sharecropping in the Reconstruction era, remains a standard work. It shows that sharecropping was an economically rational response to the post-war shortage of capital in the South.

I received two fellowships: the Earhart Foundation (two years) and a Weaver Fellowship from the I.S.I. That one came the second time I applied. I think the fact that I had published a book, *Marx's Religion of Revolution* (1968), and had been publishing in *The Freeman* since early 1967 helped. I was a teaching assistant in Western Civilization for three years. This

enabled me to see just how committed students were to academic pursuits. I decided that if I could avoid college teaching, I would.

The Ph.D. glut hit right on schedule in the spring of 1969. The date of this event had been predicted for several years, and the prediction was accurate. The state's subsidy to education (increased supply of graduates), coupled with the slowdown in university hiring (tenure positions filled), created a double whammy that is still in progress a generation later. I saw that the Ph.D. was no longer a union card. It was a membership card in the reserved army of the unemployed. But, in utter defiance of the doctrine of sunk costs, I decided to complete my degree.

In 1971, I was offered a job at the James Madison College of Michigan State University, but I turned it down. I think I know why I got the job offer. I was lecturing on medical licensing, which I opposed. At the conclusion, the most liberal member of the college's faculty responded. "It sounds to me as though you are recommending that consumers should be supplied with Fords rather than Cadillacs." I don't know where my response came from. "I'm just trying to reduce demand for used Hudsons." Student laughter ended the discussion.

When George Roche left FEE in 1971 to take over as president of Hillsdale College, where he hired Lew Rockwell to launch the most effective fund-raising newsletter in history, *Imprimis*, Leonard Read offered me Roche's job at FEE. I joined the senior staff in September, 1971, as director of seminars. This entitled me to ask the secretary who ran the program, "Have you sent out cards to applicants saying, 'We have received your application?'" and be told, "We don't do it that way." But I got paid on time. I now had enough money to get married.

I could see that FEE was an appendage of Read, and he was not going to let FEE grow beyond what it already was: a place for him to schmooze and for Poirot to edit *The Freeman*. The week that I arrived in Irvington, Read informed me of his policy that FEE would receive every dime I would ever earn in my off-hours, such as fees for writing and lecturing, which were what I did best. I saw that this would hurt my career in the long run. At \$18,000 a year, I had counted on outside income to enable me to compete with stockbrokers in the local real estate market, which was merely high priced then, rather than astronomical, which it is today—the main reason why FEE has not been able to hire full-time young scholars since 1973. If Read had allowed a 50-50 split, I might have stayed, but FEE was too bureaucratic for my tastes. I began plotting my escape the week I arrived. I quit FEE sometime in March, 1973, to sell silver coins. Harry Browne was working for the same company, now known as Monex. We both conducted evening seminars. He got the big cities. I got the leftovers.

I started my newsletter, *Remnant Review*, in May of 1974. In late 1973, René Baxter, a financial newsletter writer and coin salesman, stopped me in the hall at a conference of the Committee on Monetary Research and Education, and asked me: "Why don't you start a newsletter?" I had no good answer.

If I had still been with FEE, I would not have started my newsletter. Read would have vetoed the idea, and even if he didn't, FEE would have received all of the money. Leaving FEE was one of my better decisions.

Nevertheless, I owe a great deal to FEE. Paul Poirot launched my national career by publishing almost everything I submitted to *The Freeman*. The money helped put me through grad school. His editorial policy was simple: all or nothing. He sent back a submission if he did not like it. He did not alter the author's text. He did add bold-faced headings if the author didn't, so I started adding my own. This affliction has never left me. I cannot write without headings. I even add sub-headings in my books.

In the summer of 1973, I went on staff at my father-in-law's Chalcedon Foundation. I was the second full-time employee. I made \$1,000 a month with no benefits, retirement or medical insurance. I started my newsletter less than a year later. He let me mail my first promotional piece free of charge in his newsletter. That was what launched my publishing career.

In 1974, I attended the now-famous Austrian Conference at South Royalton, Vermont, sponsored by Harper's Institute for Humane Studies. Harper had died the year before. There, a few months after Mises had died, and a few months before Hayek won the Nobel Prize, the troops assembled. The old warriors were there: Rothbard, Kirzner, Ludwig Lachmann, Hazlitt, W.H. Hutt (of "consumer sovereignty" fame), and William Peterson. Younger faces included Jack High, David Henderson, Richard Ebeling, Shirley Letwin, Karen Vaughn, Laurence Moss, Walter Block, Walter Grinder, Sudha Shenoy, Joseph Salerno, Roger Garrison, Mario Rizzo, D.T. Armentano, Don Lavoie, and Gerald O'Driscoll. Milton Friedman even showed up to deliver an evening lecture.

It was at that meeting that Walter Block and I first met. We found a common interest: our sense of outrage at R.H. Coase's famous theorem. I recall Block's succinct theoretical objection to Coase's theorem: "Coase, get your cattle off my land." That pretty well summarizes my position.

That conference was a major event in the recovery of the Austrian economics movement. Out of that conference came *The Foundations of Modern Austrian Economics* (1976). Edwin Dolan had persuaded Cornell University's economics department to allow our little group to meet there, but then they reneged, even though Dolan was on the faculty. The South Royalton School of Law was a fall-back position in every sense. We therefore can trace early academic Austrianism in America from Cornell to Cornell (almost).

I joined Ron Paul's staff in June, 1976. He had just been elected to Congress after the incumbent Democrat resigned to take a bureaucratic job. Congressman Larry McDonald had told Paul that I was available. (Seven years later, McDonald disappeared on Flight 007, which we are told crashed, leaving no bodies or debris. Some people still believe this official version. I don't.) It turned out that Paul was a subscriber to *Remnant Review*, or so I recall. I joined his staff as his research assistant. I even got a parking place. That was back when you could buy a 2,500 square foot brick home in the Washington suburbs for \$85,000.

It was an amazing staff. Bruce Bartlett was on it. He was an M.A. in history, author of *The Pearl Harbor Cover-Up*. He later went on to become Jack Kemp's staff economist. There was John Robbins, a Ph.D. in political science, a former Sennholz student, a Calvinist, and a disciple of philosopher Gordon Clark, Van Til's nemesis. We shared the same back office.

I wrote a weekly newsletter for Paul. I wrote it as every journalist writes: on the day it was due. It included a bi-weekly column, “Where Your Money Goes . . . and Goes . . . and Goes.”

When he was defeated by 268 votes out of 183,000 in November, I went looking for another job on Capitol Hill. My friend Stan Evans, who had just started the National Journalism Center—a terrific organization, by the way—had recommended me to his old friend, an incoming Congressman from Indiana, Dan Quayle. Quayle told Evans to have me contact his administrative assistant. I did. My experience with that ideologically gray sludge, stonewalling, flank-protecting character persuaded me to leave Washington. I wrote an issue of *Remnant Review*, “Confessions of a Washington Reject,” which burned whatever bridges might have remained. Then I moved to Durham, North Carolina, where I became a non-paying user of Duke University’s magnificent library.

If I had gotten that job with Quayle, I might have worked with William Kristol, who ran Quayle’s senate and vice presidential offices. I had met Kristol at a Philadelphia Society meeting in 1969, when he was 17, at which time R. Emmett Tyrrell recruited us to write for *The Alternative*, later called *The American Spectator*. Somehow, I don’t think our relationship would have worked out.

I joined the staff of Howard Ruff’s newsletter, *Ruff Times* in early 1977. I worked for Ruff until the fall of 1979. Ruff’s was the first hard money letter to gain a mass audience.

In the fall of 1979, I was appointed to the chair of free enterprise at Campbell University in North Carolina, a position that William Peterson had previously held. That semester was my one and only full-time position in academia. By that stage of my newsletter-publishing career, North Carolina’s income tax was going to cost me more than what the position paid. I moved to Texas in late December: no state income tax.

I decided at age 18 that I would try to discover the relationship between the Bible and economic theory. I was persuaded by *The Freeman* that Mises had the correct approach: market freedom. But I had become a Christian at age 17, and I was convinced in 1960 that the Bible applies to all areas of life, including economics. I wanted to know if Mises’s economics related to the Bible. My first published effort in this regard was my book, *An Introduction to Christian Economics* (1973).

In the spring of 1973, my wife persuaded me to begin writing an economic commentary on the Bible. I published my first chapter in the May, 1973 issue of my father-in-law’s newsletter, *Chalcedon Report*. I recently completed St. Paul’s first letter to Timothy. This is volume 13 in the series: Genesis, Exodus (3 volumes), Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, and I Timothy.

There are also about ten volumes of appendixes and supplements, including my story of the *coup d’état* that produced the *United States Constitution: Political Polytheism*, Part 3. These books are all on-line for free at [www.freebooks.com](http://www.freebooks.com). One volume is my hatchet job on R.H. Coase’s theorem, which I published as a book in 1991, *The Coase Theorem: An Essay in Economic Epistemology*. A short version of that book appeared as an article in the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* in 2002.

Since 1977, I have devoted ten hours a week, fifty weeks a year, to this commentary project. I plan to cease working on it at age 70 and write a treatise on Christian economics. The section on socialism I intend to call, “The Devil Made Me Do It.”

What have I learned so far? This: “Stick to your knitting.” Decide what you want to leave behind, and begin working on it as soon as you decide, systematically, week by week, until they find you lying face down on your keyboard, with a screen filled with a single letter.

On my tombstone, I shall leave behind this assessment of my career: “O deadline, where is thy sting?” ■

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Gary North is an economist and publisher who writes on topics including economics, history, and Christian theology.

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JAMES OSTROWSKI

## A POLITICAL ODYSSEY

I SUPPOSE I COULD BEST BE described as an independent, middle-class, populist, radical libertarian. How I got that way is an interesting story (you hope). I was born into a political family in one of the most highly politicized counties in the United States. My father was a New York State judge from the time I was four years old. From the age of twelve (1970) through the time I left Buffalo for law school in 1980, I was a close observer of local politics. I saw it up close and personal. By sixteen, I became personally involved as a campaign volunteer. What I saw in those early years was critical to my conversion to libertarianism later.

My first memory of national politics was the fight over the Viet Nam war. Since my parents were news junkies, I literally grew up watching American boys die in the rice paddies of Viet Nam on network news. I particularly recall the weekly body count: U.S.—214, South Vietnamese—313, North Vietnamese—765. Boy, we sure were killing a lot of the enemy, I thought. Can't be long now.

My father publicly denounced the war in 1970 and that was that. I was against the war. We supported McGovern in 1972. The war was the only issue that mattered. I grew up despising Nixon. He was the guy who said he would end the war and didn't. The next big event was Watergate. In the summer of 1974, my mother and I sat rapt while the

impeachment hearings detailed all the sleaze and corruption. (Yeah, I played football and basketball, too.)

That same year, I got involved in my first campaign other than my father's—Ramsey Clark's campaign for the United States Senate. I remember attending a fundraiser for him in Greenwich Village hosted by Chevy Chase where Harry Chapin sang. Cool stuff for a seventeen-year-old in the big city.

It's precarious to reconstruct what my political philosophy was twenty-five years ago. My main inspiration was Thomas Jefferson. I would re-read the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July. It would, however, take me several years to grasp its radical implications. It's fair to say that in those days, I was a liberal. I was voted "most liberal," Class of '75, St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute. I was anti-Viet Nam war, pro-drug legalization, pro-civil liberties. I was however, unfortunately ignorant of economics and fell prey to liberal redistributionist nostrums. I also have to confess I was pro- "gun-control." In my defense, I was a juvenile and gun control is a juvenile notion.

In the later years of the 1970s, I started developing a notion of politics based on personal experience with local politics in Buffalo. What I observed was political machines blatantly using the government to enrich themselves at the expense of the general public while a once great city was decaying. In response to this, I formulated my own simple (and unoriginal) notion of politics: government should do those things which are in the general interest, not the interest of one faction at the expense of another. I did not have at that time a firm notion of what was in the general interest; I just knew what I was seeing in Buffalo politics—use of the government for the benefit of the discrete interests of those in power—was not it.

Meanwhile, I worked on Mo Udall's campaign for president. We liberals really—I'm trying to think of another word than hate—disliked Jimmy Carter. What a phony. Was I right about him. If he didn't have so much competition, he would be up for worst president ever: cancelled my beloved Summer Olympics, started draft registration, created an artificial energy crisis, lowered the speed limit to 55. What an idiot! And need I say, Iranian Hostage Crisis, stagflation and the Mujahedeen? When it came time to vote, I cast my first presidential vote ever for the Libertarian, Roger McBride. I didn't know much about him, but I knew the Libertarians were against the war on drugs, and I didn't want to vote for one of the Commies.

In college (SUNY Buffalo), where I majored in political philosophy and the classics (an unofficial major of my own invention), I read some soft-core libertarian stuff: J.S. Mill's *On Liberty* and Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*. I liked both but was still searching. Then I saw Ayn Rand on Phil Donahue. Most of the audience despised her. That made me think, maybe it's worth checking her out. I read the *Virtue of Selfishness* and *Capitalism, the Unknown Ideal*. Since I was already an individualist and rationalist, her rationalist, individualist philosophy clicked with me immediately: (1) man is to be guided by reason; (2) the individual is the unit of value; (3) big government sucks; and (4) capitalism is cool. (That's free market, not corporate-state, capitalism.) I already knew points one to three; Rand (and Rothbard) taught me point four. I abhor, however, the authoritarian cult that developed around Ayn Rand and the philosophical straightjacket she forced her followers to wear.

Meanwhile, in college, we read Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. A fine book, but its main value was that it first introduced me to the century's greatest expositor of libertarianism, Murray Rothbard. I quickly devoured many of his books and essays and signed on to Rothbardianism, a general outlook on politics and economics I have held to since 1980. I had the privilege of inviting Murray to Brooklyn Law School in 1982, where he did a tripartite dissection of the statist Reagan administration. This was to the utter amazement of the liberal audience, who could not conjure how Rothbard could be to the "left" of Reagan on civil liberties and foreign policy, but to the "right" of him on economics.

I did not see Murray Rothbard often over the years, but I felt a special bond with him, and he had the ability to make a young libertarian feel that the bond was reciprocal. The only degree I have in economics is an MNR (Murray N. Rothbard). I had the privilege of attending Rothbard's ten-part seminar in the history of economic thought in 1984, in New York City. My notes from that seminar evidence lectures covering the wide sweep of Western and even Eastern economic, political and religious thought. Rothbard's grasp of the history of Western religions was startling.

In the early years, I had the privilege of meeting other great libertarian pioneers, including Henry Mark Holzer, my law professor, historian Ralph Raico, my fellow Buffalonian, and the incomparable Roy Childs (who died in 1992). Roy, also originally from Buffalo, got me interested again in drug policy, which I suppose is where I made my bones. (I learned years after we met that Roy had been taught to read by my cousins.) I say "again" in high school I had debated in favor of marijuana legalization. At the 1980 Cato Summer Seminar at Dartmouth, Roy spoke three times and gave perhaps the three most inspiring lectures. Roy and I had coffee at the bus station after the conference. I told him how impressed I was at the speeches by him and Rothbard, Thomas Sowell, Raico and others. Roy said to me, "You can do the same someday if you try."

During the 1980 presidential campaign, the libertarian movement began to split into two factions, the Rothbardians versus the Cato Institute faction led by Ed Crane and funded by the billionaire Koch family (The "Kochtopus"). As I see it, and saw it, the split is about whether libertarianism would be "hard-core" or watered down, grass roots or inside the beltway, decentralized or run by a few moneybags and their minions, principle versus principal. I was always a Rothbardian in spirit, even when I took a brief and disappointing detour into the Kochtopus in 1990 to try to start a national anti-drug war organization. For reasons never made entirely clear to me, the Kochtopus, after encouraging me to abandon my law practice to start Citizens Against Prohibition, abruptly dropped the project.

Off and on since 1980, I have been active in the Libertarian Party. I flirted with the libertarian-Republican movement around 1992, but decided that policy tinkering is pointless. In 1994, I decided to run for governor of New York State as a Libertarian. My life-long friend and campaign manager, Marty Mutka, and I worked long and hard to gain the nomination and I was in the driver's seat until about one month before the convention. Then, an eccentric long-time libertarian who I had mistakenly counted as a friend, recruited Howard Stern to run for Governor as a libertarian.

I thought the idea was absurd and was surprised that many party activists were intrigued by the idea. (Murray wouldn't have been surprised.) Two key activists, each of whom begged me to run and promised to support me, stabbed me in the back and supported Stern. Several very decent libertarians stuck with me, however, including Mark Axinn and Becky Akers, and the late Gail Bova. I refused to quit and fought hard. As reported in *The New Yorker*, I even offered to meet a pro-Stern heckler in the parking lot after the convention. (He never showed.) The myth is that Stern rolled over us at the convention. The reality was that we came within about thirty or so votes of depriving him of a first ballot victory. The national media covered the convention but the best account was by Murray Rothbard writing in the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*. Murray was a great journalist on top of everything else.

What struck me the most about the bitter experience of 1994 was how little respect many New York libertarians had for traditional non-political values like loyalty and friendship. If I gave my word of honor that I would support someone for office, then, in the old Irish neighborhood I come from (South Buffalo), come hell or high water, my word is my solemn oath, and may I rot in hell if I betray that oath. Lest I be accused of obsolete romanticism, I point out that, having scorned such old-fashioned values as loyalty, honor, friendship, and philosophical principle, the NYLP has enjoyed spectacular electoral failure since 1994. A = A, I guess.

Currently, I am affiliated with the Ludwig von Mises Institute as an adjunct scholar and contributor to Mises.org and LewRockwell.com as a columnist. Lew Rockwell, Jeff Tucker, and the crew in and around the Mises Institute are the finest people, personally and philosophically, in the libertarian movement today. Unlike many other libertarians I have known, they believe in the ancient and eternal verities.

The Mises team is the most productive free-market policy group in existence. They do far more with fewer resources than other think tanks possess. And they do it without ever selling their souls or any part thereof. Years ago, when Jeff Tucker first approached me to write for the *Free Market*, I asked Roy Childs what he knew about the upstart think tank in Alabama. Even though Roy had broken with Rothbard and was aligned with the Cato camp at the time, he encouraged me to work with the Mises Institute. "They're okay," he said, "They're hard core." Boy are they ever! When others cowered after 9/11, they fought for their principles more boldly than ever.

It has been twenty-three years since I abandoned reform Democrat/liberal politics and joined the libertarian movement. It has been fascinating, frustrating, thrilling, maddening, and more. I have met some of the finest men and women of our time, and a few scoundrels, too. There have been many defeats and only a few victories, but we have not yet begun to fight! "Once more into the breach, dear friends . . ." ■

AGAINST THE GRAIN IN  
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

WE ALL FOLLOW DIFFERENT PATHS in forming our views about political economy and the appropriate role of the state. However, my personal odyssey also is different from others. Walter asked to contribute to this collection because of my economic specialty: agricultural economics.

I was born and reared on a small farm in Gaston County, North Carolina, which influenced my choice of college and major. I graduated with a degree in agricultural education from North Carolina State College (as it was then named) in 1954. The only economics course I took as an undergraduate was a highly descriptive one that had no influence on my way of thinking, either about economic issues generally or the appropriate role of the state.

Following a two-year stint of military service, I applied to graduate school at N.C. State University and soon decided to specialize in agricultural economics. There I was introduced to neoclassical economics and began to study this subject seriously. Fortunately, I was in a department where several economics professors were products of the University of Chicago and critical of government intervention in U.S. agriculture. While I obtained a good foundation in microeconomics in my graduate, I gained no understanding of the market as an entrepreneurial process.

Reared in a conservative environment and suspicious of big government, I was always a critic of government farm programs. The positivist neoclassical economics in my master's program provided an efficiency justification for my views about government farm programs; but I acquired no framework for thinking about the appropriate role of government in agriculture—or, more generally, the role of the state in a free society. After working for a couple of years as a research assistant in the Department of Agricultural Economics at N.C. State, I enrolled in the Ph.D. program at Michigan State University, obtaining the Ph.D. Degree in agricultural economics in 1963. At MSU the influence of the Chicago School was much less pronounced and attitudes more favorable toward government intervention in agriculture. In my MSU graduate work, I was surprised that professors in the Economics Department were much more critical of farm programs than professors in the Department of Agricultural Economics. The explanation became clear years later when I was exploring the relationship between the source of financial support for academic research and freedom of inquiry in agricultural economics. The funding arrangement for teaching and research in the USDA—Land Grant University complex tends to make agricultural economists

(when contrasted with economists generally) much less critical of government intervention in agriculture.

I suspect that my exposure to Austrian economics came later in life than it does for many, if not most, economists today. My introduction to, and appreciation of, the ideas of Hayek, Mises, and other Austrians did not occur until I was finished with graduate school. It is my impression that most current economics graduate students have at least been exposed to Austrianism while in graduate school—even if the introduction was only to show how unrealistic such ideas are. The increased familiarity with—though not necessarily greater understanding of—Austrian economics by economists upon the completion of their graduate work may be one measure of the increased impact that these ideas now have within the profession.

My graduate and early professional work—in agricultural production economics and marketing—was quite conventional at that time for economists majoring in agricultural economics. In most land-grant universities, agricultural economists are in a separate department from other economists. At the Ph.D. level of graduate studies, I took courses in agricultural economics, including agricultural policy, agricultural production economics, and agricultural marketing, in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Micro, macro, international trade, other theory and applied non-agricultural courses, such as industrial organization, were taken in the Department of Economics. I do not recall the ideas of Hayek or Mises being discussed—or their names being mentioned (although it is quite possible that they were)—during my graduate work, even in the history of economic thought courses.

My first exposure to Austrian economics that I can recall—and its relationship to the Chicago approach to neoclassical theory—occurred shortly after completion of graduate school in an article by Israel Kirzner that was published in *The Intercollegiate Review*. Writing in the mid-1960s, Kirzner's focus was on the minority of economists who defend the efficiency of the “unhampered market economy” and stress that “measures put into effect by governments must lead to consequences worse than the evils that they seek to avoid.” Kirzner pointed out that most of the economists who emphasized efficiency and other advantages of the free market were associated either with the “Chicago School” or with “. . . an expanding, well-articulated influence that clearly traced back to the Austrian subjectivist school.” Kirzner held that the influence of the latter school was “almost synonymous with Ludwig von Mises.”

Kirzner devoted most of the article to showing how the Austrian subjectivist school differed from the Chicago School. He stressed the differences between Austrian and Chicago theories concerning the role of equilibrium and entrepreneurship, the role of empirical investigation, and the concept of monopoly. I was well aware of the work of Friedman, Knight, Stigler, and other prominent members of the Chicago School, but knew nothing about the “Austrian School” of economics prior to that time. Moreover, the distinctions between the schools emphasized by Kirzner had little immediate impact on my views about the appropriate approach in economic analysis.

Although I also read Hayek's “Use of Knowledge in Society” around this time in my intellectual odyssey, I failed to grasp the implications of the article for government

regulation of economic activity. Consequently, the course I taught in price theory in the Department of Economics and Business at N.C. State University, as it was then organized, strongly reflected the Chicago approach to economics and much of my research involved various applications of constrained optimization techniques.

My view of economics and of economic research began to change, however, following a sabbatical in the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago during the 1970–71 academic year. There I became aware of work by Buchanan, Tullock, Stigler, and other public choice economists who emphasized the implications of the separation of power and responsibility in the political process for government regulation. This work provided a new insight for me, stressing that public officials generally have less incentive than private entrepreneurs do to economize because government decision-makers bear little of the cost and reap a much smaller part of the benefits of actions taken.

In the early 1970s following my sabbatical, I re-read Hayek's "The Use of Knowledge in Society" and his book *The Constitution of Liberty*. I also began to read works of other Austrian economists, including books by Mises, Kirzner, and Rothbard. It was most notably, James Buchanan's book *Cost and Choice*, however, that emphasized most strongly for me the implications of the subjective nature of cost as it influences individual choice—and the significance of the subjectivist approach in economics generally. My appreciation and understanding of Austrian ideas were increased following a week-long seminar in 1976 at the Foundation for Economic Education. Leonard Read, Henry Hazlitt, Ben Rogge, Hans Sennholz, Edmund Opitz, and Israel Kirzner were among those making presentations. Kirzner's book *Competition and Entrepreneurship*, which I had read shortly before attending the seminar, helped me to understand the market as a process and to appreciate the role of the entrepreneur in the market process—as did his later books on entrepreneurship. I gradually began to appreciate the subjective nature of knowledge as it influences individual decisions and to appreciate the implications for government regulation. I became convinced that even if government agencies were run by selfless public servants totally dedicated to serving the public weal, they would be unable to do so because they cannot obtain the relevant information to do so.

I then began to use various Austrian and public choice concepts to analyze government regulation in agriculture and other areas. In doing so, two key ideas—the importance of narrowly focused benefits and widely dispersed costs and the separation of power and responsibility—helped explain much of what might appear to be irrational behavior of voters, legislators, and bureaucrats.

Austrian insights concerning the subjective nature of cost and the separation of power and knowledge in the political process proved to be especially helpful in analyzing government regulation, especially marginal cost pricing and land use planning. Buchanan's *Cost and Choice*, and articles by Hayek, G.F. Thirlby, and Jack Wiseman in *L.S.E. Essays on Cost* (edited by James Buchanan and G.F. Thirlby) convinced me that marginal cost pricing is not an objective procedure that can be monitored by an external authority. This insight played a key role in shaping my thinking about government regulation in agriculture and other areas. Government regulators generally cannot do what they purport to do—even when they have the best of intentions. Both the topics addressed and the approach used in

my research and teaching were as a result quite different from those of other agricultural policy economists.

Rich Wilcke, whom I did not know, read my article, “The Right to Food,” in *The Freeman* and contacted me in 1977 or 1978. He had plans to form an Institute for the Study of Market Agriculture (ISMA)—as an institution independent of the existing agricultural economics establishment—which would analyze agricultural policy from a free market perspective. He asked me to participate in ISMA, even though I was employed in the Land Grant University–USDA complex that is responsible for the development, administration, and analysis of the maze of regulations affecting the production and marketing of agricultural products in the United States. Before he could launch his proposed Institute, however, Rich became the president of a new business organization: the Council for a Competitive Economy. The Council’s purpose was similar to that of Rich’s proposed free market Institute in agriculture, but with a much broader scope: its purpose was to promote and extend market, rather than political, forces throughout the economy.

The Council held The National Conference on Economic Freedom in 1981. Discussion panels were held in a number of areas, including agriculture, health care, energy & resources, transportation, finance, and capital formation, productivity & taxes. Rich invited me to participate as a member of a panel on agriculture—to explain why economic freedom in this field is possible from a theoretical standpoint.

One can never predict what the outcome of participating in such events might be. Several years after the economic freedom conference, I received a call from John Fund, then an editorial page editor for the *Wall Street Journal*. John, as a college student, had heard my presentation on “Regulation versus the Market in U. S. Agriculture” at this Economic Freedom Conference. He proposed an idea for an op-ed piece for his newspaper on how government programs in agriculture are similar in vigor and persistence to the kudzu plant. The *Wall Street Journal* published the piece, “Kudzu: The Government Gift That Keeps on Growing,” four years after John heard my presentation. Despite the fact that our collaboration in his ISMA dream was short lived, Rich has been a source of encouragement to me over the years in “going against the grain in agricultural economics.”

Lawrence Reed invited me to participate in a “Freedom in Third Century in America” seminar at Northwood Institute in Midland, Michigan in June 1982. Supply-side economics, much in discussion at that time in the first Reagan administration, was the focus of my presentation. Larry had me billed on the program as an author of articles on free markets and Austrian economics. This was, I think, the first time that I had been formally identified with the discipline of Austrian economics. Larry’s designation was based on his assessment of articles that I had published in various market-oriented publications, including the *The Freeman*, *The Intercollegiate Review*, and *Reason* magazine. Larry, a dynamic speaker and energetic proponent of the free market, later formed The Mackinac Center for Public Policy and is currently president of the Foundation for Economic Education.

Israel Kirzner’s encouragement (and his work on the entrepreneurial market process) facilitated my efforts in Austrian economics. In 1981, Israel and his colleagues at New York University organized a conference to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Ludwig von Mises and invited me to participate as a discussant of Gerald O’Driscoll’s paper

on monopoly theory. Murray Rothbard, James Buchanan, Leland Yeager, Brian Loasby, and a number of younger economists—including Karen Vaughn, Richard Langlois, Lawrence White, Roger Garrison, Don Lavoie, Gerald O’Driscoll, Jr., and Joseph Salerno—explored various Austrian insights. This was my first encounter with many of the participants, including Murray Rothbard. He impressed me with his approachability and easy-going nature.

A couple of years later, in 1983, I applied and was accepted as a participant in a Liberty Fund research seminar in New York organized by Mario Rizzo. Many of the participants were returnees from the earlier conference commemorating Mises’s birth. My paper on “rent seeking” was subjected to a lot of critical analysis by Israel Kirzner, Charles Baird, Gerry O’Driscoll, and other attendees. Following the conference, I submitted the paper to Murray Rothbard, editor of the *Journal of Austrian Economics*, then in its formative stages. Murray liked the paper but asked me to “sharpen the analysis a bit.” His letter to me contained three single-spaced pages of comments (including a lot of typos and strikeouts—a standard feature of his letters) that were very much on target.

Following the formation of the Ludwig von Mises Institute, I received a letter from Murray in March 1983 inviting me to be a member of the Board of Advisors of a new Austrian economics journal—*The Journal of Post-Misesian Economics*. However, the name of the journal was later changed to *The Journal of Austrian Economics* before the first volume appeared. Murray then published my rent-seeking paper in the initial volume of the *JAE*—which as he indicated was begun as a yearbook (“... so as not to run ahead of our limited resources”).

John Baden, at that time Director of the Political Economy Research Center (PERC) in Bozeman, Montana, invited me to prepare a paper for a conference in late 1981 on “The Vanishing Farmland Crisis.” My paper, “Lessons from the Economic Calculation Debate,” explored the implications of the calculation debate for attempts to preserve agricultural land. Unfortunately, the conference conflicted with our final exam period, and I was not able to attend to present the paper and to interact with the other participants—including Julian Simon, Robert H. Nelson, Del Gardner, and Clifton Luttrell.

Attendance at other PERC conferences enabled me to meet and interact with a number of individuals who were then or later became prominent in libertarian and Austrian circles. Terry Anderson, Jim Bennett, Bruce Benson, Dwight Lee, William C. Mitchell, William Niskanen, Randy Simmons, Fred Singer, Fred Smith, Vernon Smith, Jane Shaw, John Sommer, Rick Stroup, Karen Vaughn, and Bruce Yandle were among the participants. The Political Economy Research Center’s “New Resource Economics,” as it was then called, emphasized the importance of property rights and used insights from Austrian economics and public choice theory in coping with “market failure” problems in the use of natural resources. The approach and insights of the New Resource Economics (which later evolved into “Free Market Environmentalism”) proved to be quite useful to me in the analysis of public policy issues in U.S. agriculture, especially in the area of conservation of natural resources.

In 1987, Jim Gwartney invited me to become a member of the Advisory Board for a newly formed James Madison Institute for Public Policy Studies at Tallahassee, Florida. This provided an opportunity to associate with Jim, Randy Holcombe, and Bruce Benson.

However, I resigned from the Research Advisory Council to become associated with the newly-formed John Locke Foundation, a Raleigh based public policy think tank launched

in 1990, whose aim was to apply principles of limited government, individual liberty, and the free market to North Carolina issues. I was invited to serve on the Foundation's Board of Academic Advisors and later served on the Economic Policy Board after Roy Cordato was appointed Vice President for Research and Resident Scholar of the John Locke Foundation.

Walter Block, who at the time was senior economist at the Fraser Institute in Vancouver, Canada, contacted me in 1990. Walter, whom I was quite familiar with but had never met, was asked to edit a special issue of *Cultural Dynamics* on the potential of Misesian praxeology for the study of cultural evolution and asked me to contribute a paper to it. The papers, including my, "*Human Action and the Role of the Economist in the Public Policy Process*," were published in a special volume of *Cultural Dynamics* (Vol. 5, 1992). Walter was a source of encouragement in that project as well as others in which we collaborated, including a special issue of *Cultural Dynamics* (Vol. 8, November 1995) that he edited on "Judeo-Christian Perspectives on Economic Freedom."

During the 1980s, I taught a course in U.S. agricultural policy at N.C. State University and developed a manuscript analyzing the operation and effects of government programs in U.S. agriculture that incorporated various Austrian insights. The analysis included not only well-known production controls and price supports, but other programs that subsidized directly or indirectly the production and marketing of farm products, including credit, crop insurance, exports, food stamps, conservation, and agricultural research.

The analysis also highlighted the political process that generated and administered the programs. The effects of farm programs were shown to be counterproductive from the standpoint of many, if not most, people paying the tab. In 1986, I was invited to participate in a summer seminar at the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). Greg Rehmke, Director of Seminars at FEE discovered that I had written a manuscript on U.S. agricultural policy and wanted to make it available for student use in a national high school debate program. The manuscript was edited and published by FEE in 1986. I received a Freedoms Foundation Leavey Award for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education in 1989 based largely on this manuscript.

The agricultural policy manuscript later was expanded and published (with the assistance of David Theroux and under the auspices of the Independent Institute) by Holmes and Meier in 1990 as *Agriculture and the State: Market Processes and Bureaucracy*. The contents were significantly different—reflecting both a public choice and Austrian slant—from existing textbooks on agricultural policy. Bruce Gardner, a nationally prominent and market-oriented agricultural economist, wrote the Foreword indicating that the book owed "more to Friedrich Hayek than to any agricultural economist."

In 1987, Roger Meiners invited me to participate in an interdisciplinary conference in Hamilton, Bermuda. The focus was on the consequences of government sponsorship of higher education for intellectual freedom. My assignment was to explore the implications of the method of funding research in agricultural economics for intellectual freedom. Peter Aranson, W.W. Bartley, Leonard Liggio, Fred McChesney, John Sommer, Gordon Tullock, and E.G. West were among the participants. My contribution, "Source of Funding and Freedom of Inquiry in Agricultural Economics," was published along with the other papers in a book.

In preparing the paper, I wrote to Professor T.W. Schultz (later Nobel Laureate in economics) at the University of Chicago, explaining the nature of the paper I was working on, and requested his papers pertinent to the topic. Professor Schultz shared the letter with a University colleague, Professor Edward Shils, then on the Committee on Social Thought and editor of *Minerva*, an interdisciplinary journal published in the United Kingdom. Professor Shils indicated that the topic was “of utmost interest” to him as editor of *Minerva* and requested that I send him a preliminary draft of my conference paper to receive his “. . . comments on editorial and substantive matters before the final version is completed.” Following his review, Professor Shils indicated that he would like to publish the paper subject to a number of stylistic changes and amplification of certain parts of the paper. The suggested changes were spelled out in six single-spaced typed pages! Following several follow-up exchanges, the paper (“Financial Support and Freedom of Inquiry in Agricultural Economics”) was published in the spring 1988 issue of *Minerva*.

In 1992, in an invited address to the New Zealand Association of Economists, I suggested that there are ample opportunities for economists to contribute to public policy because of information and incentive problems that are endemic in the political process. I contrasted this position with George Stigler’s argument that the political process is efficient. Daniel Klein later wrote an article in the *Eastern Economic Journal* (spring 2001) also disputing Stigler’s thesis that economists’ persuasive power to improve public policy is negligible. After reading Dan’s paper, it was apparent that our ideas on this topic were similar, and I sent him a copy of my own paper.

Shortly after, Dan arranged a session at the Southern Economics Association meetings that focused on the extent to which economists who do research on policy issues express judgment favoring reform in the direction of economic liberalization. The topics covered included licensing, rail transit, taxi deregulation, minimum wages and/or unions, and postal services, and agricultural economics. Coincidentally, Dan was in the process of initiating a new on-line journal—*Economic Journal Watch*—designed to serve as a forum for discourse about economic research and the economics profession.

My *Economic Journal Watch* piece “Agricultural Economists and the State” is consistent with Rich Wilcke’s thesis that agricultural economists have tended to support government intervention in U.S. agriculture—a problem that was to be addressed by his ISMA dream, some 25 years earlier. The article supports the thesis that the mode of funding agricultural policy research in the Land Grant University–USDA complex makes it less likely that agricultural economists will “go against the grain” to support efforts to liberalize U.S. farm policy. My efforts to do so have relied to a considerable extent on insights from Austrian economics—insights that were acquired, as described above, independently of my formal graduate work in economics. These ideas enabled me to take a fresh approach in the analysis of U.S. farm policy and other government programs. This approach also enabled me to meet and interact with a distinguished group of individuals that would not have been possible had I followed the approach taken by most other agricultural economists. ■

## STANDING FOR SOMETHING

IN FEBRUARY 2002, Linda Johnston interviewed Ron Paul for a chapter in a book she was preparing on the importance of the development of character and values and how they helped shape ones perspective on life. The interview is verbatim and can be found on [lewrockwell.com](http://lewrockwell.com).

I never had much interest in politics. My interest is in policy, economics and foreign policy. I was looking for a forum to ventilate and politics has allowed me to do that. I never thought anyone would listen. My goal was not to be in politics or be elected but to present a case for what I thought was important. My wife warned me that it was dangerous because I could end up getting elected. I told her that would never happen! She was right. I came to Congress, but on my terms.

I was raised in Pittsburgh. I don't recall anything dramatic in my childhood. I am from a family of five boys. We had supportive parents but they didn't over-indulge us. They made sure we knew what the work ethic was all about. The greatest influence on the development of character is from your family and the way a person has been brought up. I was influenced over the years not by any one particular event.

I went through regular public education and then Gettysburg College. Overall, my education was uneventful. The public school system and also college made it clear to me that the way things were was not the way things should be. I had instincts toward the idea of a very limited government even then.

Early exposure to war and several specific incidents dealing with the issue of war left a huge impact on me. I heard about people going and not coming back. I had friends and relatives dying in various wars; World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. I asked myself, did they really serve a just cause? The families so often have to say their loved one was serving their country and put it in noble terms. I was never convinced of that. What else can you do? The alternative is that you have to admit that your government wasted someone's life. To me that is so tragic. I became even more determined to see that some of these terrible things that are so unnecessary wouldn't happen. We drift into these conflicts and they could be prevented. I couldn't figure out why our country was so stupid to get us involved in some of these wars that I didn't think we should be involved in. Then it dawned on me that the government was not really following the rules. Korea and Viet Nam weren't even declared wars. That is an awful lot of violence that was done without real proper authority to do it. This all has had a lot of influence on me and helped formulate my views.

I have no idea why some people react to war and violence one way and some the other way. I don't have anything special to make me look at it this way. It just seemed natural to be opposed to violence. That was one of the reasons that I went into medicine. Throughout the 40s, 50s, and 60s, it was known that if you were male, when you became eighteen you were going to have to go off someplace. So many went off and didn't come back. I knew my personal make-up was such that not only did I not endorse these programs but it would have been hard for me to pick up a rifle and shoot people. These conflicts were not what I considered to be real self-defense. That helped motivate me to go into medicine instead. If I was going to have to be trapped into war, I would rather help people who were injured than trying to find someone I could shoot.

In medical school I was still fascinated with ideas. I got interested in sorting out some of these things I had always felt and thought. I wanted to find out what the principles were. I remember having the book *Dr. Zhivago* sent to me from my mother. It had come out in 1957. One person who stimulated me most to put the whole philosophy together was Leonard Read who founded The Foundation for Economic Education. He was a very lone wolf after World War II. Everything had become big government and internationalist. He wrote a lot of articles himself and revived some classic articles that were forgotten like Frédéric Bastiat's *The Law*. Henry Hazlitt was associated with him and Mises as well. Mises and the Austrian economists influenced me the most on policy. He was also close to Hayek who wrote the *Road to Serfdom*. Then I read Ayn Rand's books. They all had a strong influence on me.

Early on I thought I was the only one to think this way. I had a natural instinct for this view and then I discovered other people who had done a lot of serious writing and explaining on how government and society works. After studying other peoples' thoughts on these topics, I found out there was a hard-core position that could be defended morally and constitutionally. I was not by myself! I thought I would just talk about politics and economics, but I ended up doing more than I ever expected.

For those who think this way, it just seems that we are alone, but it is just that the establishment has totally rejected these views. Whether it is the political establishment, or the media establishment, or the university system, they are saying how things are going to be, how we should be. I think that is not the way it is supposed to be.

It has always been part of my nature not to want to engage in violence and that led me to libertarian philosophy and my views. I hold strongly to the view that libertarians commit to. You should never use force to impose your will on other people. You should never use the government to do it either. That is a sound principle. You would not have to be a pacifist. If everyone decided to follow these rules and never to use force, it would be a pretty peaceful and good world. It is good advice to follow. I don't know why I hold those views. I think some of us are born that way. Some of us just like to be left alone.

I finished my two-year residency training of internal medicine after medical school. Then I went into the Air Force. When it comes up in the district, I make a joke about how I got into the Air Force. I always say that I volunteered and served five years. Then I laugh about it. The real story is when I was a medical resident two years out of medical school I got a notice saying that I was hereby drafted to go into the army as a buck private—unless

I volunteered. If I volunteered, I could practice medicine and be a captain. I capitulated rather easily and became a volunteer.

I stayed a little longer than I had to because it wasn't too bad. It was a break from the tedious task of college, medical school, and residency. I stayed in the reserves as well. I tolerated it well because the physicians were treated differently than other people. I was interested in flying so I became a flight surgeon and got to fly. I took care of pilots and flying personnel because they have special problems. Whether they were enlisted or officers, all flying staff came through the flight surgeon's office, my office.

After the military service, I went into an OB-GYN residency at the University of Pittsburgh. My personal feeling was that delivering babies would be fun, and it was. I finished my residency and opened up medical practice 1968 in Texas. That was great and very challenging. I did exactly as I wanted to do. I was very busy in a growing county, a suburb of Houston. I was the only obstetrician there. The first day in the office I had 35 patients! I had a huge practice and loved it.

I like practicing medicine. I like delivering babies and doing surgery. I really like the independence. When I went to Texas and started a practice, doctors had a lot more responsibility and I was expected to do a lot more than doctors today. For example, we didn't have an anesthesiologist or urologist. We did all of that ourselves. Now everything is more specialized and you are not allowed to do that, mostly for legal reasons.

I took a career right angle to get my beliefs expressed. I have been here in Congress on two occasions. The first was 1976–1984. In the 1970s I was more involved in medicine than now. I would see patients on the weekends and do some surgery. After seven years in Congress, I went back to medical practice. I have been back here since 1996. It is not as easy to keep involved with medicine now because medicine is different. I have stayed interested and when in my district I go to a medical center one day a week and work with residents and interns. I don't actually deliver babies or do surgery any more. The transition out of medicine was easy and I didn't notice it was a problem. I just did what I was supposed to do.

What helped motivate me to run for Congress were some of the stupidities in economics I saw and our involvement in armed conflicts that could be prevented. When it comes to monetary policy the underlying issue was the idea of personal liberty. The government was getting too big. People became dependent on government instead of being responsible for themselves.

Here in Washington, D.C. people are totally confused. They think the force of government is always legitimate. They think that whatever government does is legitimate. I think they are wrong. It is not legitimate even under our Constitution. I am out of the mainstream in Washington because they all think that way. My position here is considered odd-ball. Yet, I can't quite comprehend the others who are so willing to use guns, force, and violence to tell everyone what to do and how to live their lives. They are going around the world dropping bombs. To me, that is so bizarre. Very few here agree with me. They don't have any idea what I am trying to do. Whenever people write about me and what I am doing, the terms they use are always "out of it" and "totally ineffective." I think there are other

ways to be effective, like trying to influence people in their thoughts and in what they believe.

People in my district and those who know a little bit about a constitutionally limited government, however, are very, very supportive. Those interested in individual responsibility are also very pleased, more so than I ever dreamed they would be. Up here in Washington they are all so conditioned just to getting reelected that they don't care about the rule of law, being precise, and only doing those things that they are allowed to do by the Constitution. They just think I overdo it. That leads me to vote by myself many times.

They see that as an absolutely ineffective use of my vote because then I can't trade my votes. This is how it works up here. You don't vote on a principle; you trade votes. You say to another, "You need my vote on that issue and I could do that for you. What can you do for me? What can you do for my district?" That is the way the system works.

Character means that you should assume responsibility for yourself. You have no right to another person's life. We have gone a long way away from that idea. In my Challenge for America speech I quoted Thomas Jefferson, "Material abundance without character is the path to destruction." Today we have the material abundance, and we lack character. Those in government have no character because they are willing to use theft and force without even thinking about it. The founders were very keen on this idea of the character and limiting government's power to use force. They did not believe a free society would work unless people did have character and assume responsibility for themselves. If people are going to use government for the benefit of special interests, it won't work. That is why I think it is failing.

I think the population in the country lacks character out of ignorance. They don't know anything differently. They think what is, is what was supposed to happen. They think the government is supposed to take care of them. Give me a house if I need it. Give me food stamps if I need them. Give me medical care if I need it. They are not deliberately evil. They have lost their way, lost their concern and lost their character.

It is felt that if someone needs something, they can get help from government. They never ask the question who in thunder is the government! They assume that government has that money to give. They separate the government from where the source of the wealth comes from and that, of course, is the people who do things, and produce things. The government is nothing more than some group that is stealing from the producers. They are willing to use government to steal and think it is proper.

I think we are in the midst of some serious problems both domestically and internationally. This is first time in our history since 1812 that we have been attacked on our mainland. The only explanation given of why they are coming and doing this to us is that they are jealous of us and don't like us to be free. That is so simplistic. There is a lot more to it than that. Today it is considered very unpatriotic if you think we had some responsibility for the predicament that we are in. Everyone else is to blame and therefore it is justification to do anything and everything we want.

My biggest concern is that the president will take it upon himself to assume that he has the authority to literally fight war endlessly even though the resolution that was passed said that he only had the authority to use force to find those who committed these acts.

That is a lot different. Already going into the Philippines is an indication that he is going to take advantage of this situation. There are many in the administration that would like to have a major conflict with Iraq and change that government. I see those moves as very dangerous. There is a good minority group of people in this country that are very much aware and concerned about this. Unfortunately we are in the minority.

I have resisted these moves. There are many members of Congress who have gone along with it not because they believed in it but because they were afraid to go home to their districts without having voted to do something. Every place I go and talk, especially on the radio shows, the people I talk to and those in my district are very pleased that I make an effort to try to restrain government power.

I was talking to two conservative Republicans over the weekend. I brought up the issue of the Patriot Act. They both agreed that it was the worst vote they ever cast and that it would come back to haunt this country. Privately, they were both sorry they did it. They had been listening to the patriotic fervor and got carried up in the moment and went along too easily. They did not want to listen to criticism or someone who would challenge their patriotism. They were not doing something because it was right or wrong. They were thinking about how to act to anticipate the greatest number of supporters. If we had enough momentum here or in the educational institutions or the media or with our people, these guys would do better. They are supposed to be leaders yet in Congress most of them are being pushed here and there. That is the way it always works. The prevailing philosophy of the country creates the leaders and pushes them in certain directions. When attitudes change enough you can get rid of them.

That is what happened in the Soviet system. Finally it was recognized that it wasn't working. They had tried it and it was a total failure. The result was a non-violent revolution. It collapsed because the ideas collapsed. That could happen here. Welfare is not functional in the long term. It will collapse on itself. Although that is good there is also a danger because you might end up with something more authoritarian to replace it. With the Soviets, at least that system broke up. The world is better off without it.

People accept what we are doing because there is a mass psychology of patriotism and people misplace it. It is fine to be patriotic and believe in the American ideal and freedom. This patriotic zeal that says we all have to be together and do anything and everything because we have been attacked by terrorists is a false patriotism.

Samuel Johnson said, "Patriotism is the refuge of a scoundrel," and that is so often the case. People will hide behind patriotism when they want to do some of the worst things. The masses and greatest number of people get carried up in this. The support for war comes not so much from the people but what they hear from the leaders and propaganda on television.

I saw this during the time we were preparing for the Persian Gulf War. The immediate reaction of the people was proper. They wondered why do we have to go there. In the three or four months of preparations all the major networks kept pumping them up about the need for war. The people responded to this mass psychological conditioning by becoming in favor of it.

Those in leadership in the government in combination with our corporate leaders know this. When they want something they know they have to get the people behind them by rallying the people to accept the idea. They have some very special plans. For example, they might want to be in Colombia to protect oil wells. They say they are doing it to stop drugs and the people agree to that. The government always claims to have a good cause. I think those who would do harm to us deliberately are willing to use the tools of propaganda. With television, what they can do is a lot easier today than a few hundred years ago.

This was certainly the case for getting us involved in World War II. Eighty percent of the people were “America First” and didn’t want any part of Europe or its troubles. Once we were attacked, you couldn’t even debate why we were attacked. You can’t ask if we provoked the attack on Pearl Harbor or did we know it was coming and avoid doing anything about it. Once it happens, any opposition is absolutely neutralized. That is my instantaneous thought on 9/11; for those of us who believe government should be limited, we have just been set back a great deal.

No matter how much we are responsible for this, no one will ever listen. There are a few of us, a very few people who understand. There are others leaning this way but not vocalizing it. They listen to the same propaganda and are so easily intimidated. They are worried that their people at home in their districts will reject them. They don’t want to go through the effort of explaining and teaching their constituency what is going on. So they go along with it all.

There are flaws in our foreign policy. We invite these hostilities. I feel we should not be doing so much overseas. We should ask ourselves why we have troops stationed in Saudi Arabia. Why did we embargo Iraq and bomb them incessantly? Why do we have troops in 144 countries? Why do we use military might to protect oil and commercial interests around the world? All of that leads to conflicts. There will be a lot more resentment to us than anyone realizes. All this token support that we get from other countries recently is really saying, “Please don’t bomb me tomorrow! We will say what you want us to say!”

As a doctor, I was never involved with the Medicare program, even from the very beginning. I don’t like interference in the doctor-patient relationship. The last thing I wanted was the government involved in medical decisions. In the early days of Medicare, before cut backs and increased government control, they promised no government intervention in medical decisions. But even then, I did not get involved because I thought the whole idea was a bad omen. As bad as the insurance system is, I thought Medicare was a worse idea. I could work with a patient and collect from the insurance company. Then I drew the line. I would not and have never taken money from the government for medical services. That was it. That hurts your practice, especially now if you are a practicing OB-GYN. It is so easy to get on Medicaid now. A pregnant woman who is working and her husband is working also can get on Medicaid. Now if you don’t take the Medicaid patients you don’t have as much practice.

To me, there was no doubt about it, Medicare was a bad omen. I had heard stories about socialized medicine in England. There were more private obstetric doctors in England under socialized medicine because it was a personal part of medicine that people would hang on to. Maybe that knowledge slightly influenced me. Later on, I was always

disappointed because it seemed that Americans didn't care. If they could get a better deal by changing their doctor or going to an HMO, they would. They didn't care. They would go where the least charge was, regardless of anything else.

In 1977, a few of us made a tour of ten cities round the country for *Private Practice Magazine* trying to warn people about socialized medicine. We had doctors from Canada, Australia, and England. These were doctors who had gone through it, and they were really supposed to wake up the public to the danger of government medicine. I remember one doctor from Australia told a story about medical care which had become so impersonalized that the doctor no longer checked the patient. He had a window and the patient would drive up in his car and tell what the symptoms were through the window. The doctor would write a prescription and hand it out. I believe that is what it would come to.

Someone asked him once that if it is so bad, how did it happen? Why did doctors go along? He said that when the question was asked to someone in the British government about how were they going to get the doctors to accept this, the Government official replied, "We will stuff their mouths with money." And they did. They literally stuffed our mouths with money and we gave in. Now they are in so deep they can't get out. Some don't really care.

At the beginning of Medicare, it was lovely. If you joined the system you got paid for everything. You got paid for things you didn't get paid for in the past. Hospitals got paid and you didn't have to do ward work for free. You got paid for charity hospital work. Doctors got more money at the beginning. An ophthalmologist doctor was paid \$2,000 for a cataract surgery. He loved it. Now, several decades later, it is down to \$600, in spite of inflation.

As the financial problems of Medicare got worse, the government came up with this HMO policy that was supposed to help Medicare, but it has only made more problems. You can't close it down. It won't happen politically. The country will be bankrupt first before Medicare disappears. The only answer under today's conditions is to promote medical savings accounts and give a tax credit. People could get \$3,000 off their taxes if they assume responsibility for their own medical care. I don't know if people are using them yet. When people get sick and tired of it enough they will get out of the system and pay their own bills and buy their own insurance. That would be the best possible answer to move away from government control of medicine.

How did we get from the self-reliance to the self-entitled? It did not just happen on a dime. Immediately after the Constitution was written, it was recognized that there were flaws in it. There was a tendency to go in that direction. There also have been a few major events in our country that made it worse. The Civil War was one. The idea that you could be independent of a strong national government was given up a lot during the Civil War periods, if it survived at all. After that war, there was a sharp uptake with the federal government. The problem was there was a great confusion between liberty and slavery. Those defending liberty were also in the camp where there were slaves. Lysander Spooner had the correct viewpoint. He was anti-slave but pro-south and the right to secede. The twentieth century was also bad news. We had major wars and in times of war, just like the war now against terrorism, the government uses it as an excuse to expand substantially.

The depression had a tremendous impact on our country. There was a willingness to bring in the welfare state based on bad ideas. During the depression the government kept saying that the real reason it happened was because of the stupid people who believed in sound money and in free enterprise. Freedom had failed. That is absolutely false! We had a depression because we had government intervention that created the whole mess. The government supported by academicians insisted that we had to have this “third way,” and called it “putting a human face on capitalism.” They wanted to curb freedom, but not as far as communism or socialism. They believed that you could have some regulation and some taxation and some special interests and still protect liberty.

They did not realize that there is always a steady and inextricable growth of government if you don't draw your lines sharply. People cannot grant power and authority to government other than the rights they themselves have in a natural way. For example, I don't have the right to take anything from you so I can't transfer that power to the president. We do have a natural right to defend ourselves and protect our liberties. We can transfer that power to a government, which then can form a police force and an army. We can't transfer anything else. Yet government now has everything else. That is where it fell apart, especially in the twentieth century. We are now suffering the consequences.

We need to go back to the fundamentals and decide what we really believe in and what the role of government ought to be. That is what the founders did at the time of the revolution. They decided what had to be done and they knew enough about history that they were able to fight the revolution based on those ideas. Fortunately for us they came up with a pretty good document.

Unfortunately, the country is moving in the wrong direction. The government is getting bigger and getting more involved in the economy and our lives. We are spreading ourselves around the world even more. The crises we have now with the terrorists' attack has given us the chance to reassess this. Instead, again we are using it to do the things that we should not be doing. The government is making further intrusion in personal liberty and a further expansion of military power around the world.

To turn that tide and get us disentangled we would have to have a different type of Congress. Unfortunately, we don't have a different type of Congress so it will continue. The next group in will be influenced by the same people who think it is our oil over there and we have to keep a navy in the Persian Gulf and so forth. I don't think in the next generation that Congress will become wise enough and brave enough to do the right thing. We could just deny them funds and then it would be all over! That may happen anyway. It could be during that next generation that we will go broke and not be able to afford it. That is the way it will most likely happen. The government is only going to be held back when the people tell them they won't put up with them any more.

Technically we are broke now but our credit is still good. A lot of people are broke and lots of companies are broke but they keep going. Enron was broke but they functioned rather well until September 2001. They said they were making a lot of money but it was all fictitious. There were not any real assets. That is the way the country is. There is a false confidence in our economic system, our dollar, and our military might. The economy perks along, although slower. We can borrow and tax. We have a strong currency because there

is a lot of trust in it. If people decided that there is something seriously wrong and panicked, they would dump our dollars. That would give us a huge inflation and no matter how much we taxed, we would never keep up with taking care of all of the people on welfare, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and subsidies. There is no way that just printing money would save us if the confidence in our dollar is lost. Now we are moving into a new era. Our homeland has been attacked and that means that we are more vulnerable. If our dollar gets attacked there will be major changes. I would not be surprised if those changes come in the next ten years.

Individuals have to live within their means. You and I are limited by the market, and limited much faster. For example, banks stop loaning to us or we lose our job or something like that. The government doesn't live within its means because it has two tools we don't have. They can print money and they have guns to collect money. If we did either of those we would go to jail. The government gets away with running huge deficits for a lot longer but the economic principles are the same. When it finally hurts and there is a correction they cause a lot more harm. What you do to yourself is only hurting yourself. When governments mess up and suddenly it doesn't work, that is really dangerous. We have people dependent and conditioned to think they are entitled to the benefits from the government. When the government can no longer take care of everyone getting benefits, many are really hurt. They will demand it and there will be riots, screaming and gnashing of teeth because the politicians have not taken care of them.

In an effort to curb welfare dependence, they are trying to link more job placement and marriage requirements to the welfare system. You might be able to find people here and there that claim these measures are effective. I think they are dangerous because that is social engineering by giving and withholding. You are saying, "Do as we say and then we give it to you." When our government comes in and has these conditions, they are saying that welfare is there if you believe and act in a certain way. That is bad because it shows that they can give or withhold depending on what you do. Even if I agree with the ideas like employment and marriage, this is all based on the person doing what they tell him to do. You should never be tempted because the conditions being set up sound so nice. Sure it sounds good that people should go to church every week and maybe they would be better people. It might later become some evil monster that might make the conditions something that I really detest. That is even more mischief than before. Force is not the way to change people.

Recently, I heard a government ad on radio. A young man comes in an office and wants a job. They ask him if he has registered for the draft. When he says he has not, they close the door on him. Next he goes to a bank to ask for a loan and they tell him, no, you haven't registered for the draft. This is the notion that if you do what we tell you, then you can get ahead in the world and you will be taken care of. This reminded me of a story told to me by someone who came from the Soviet system. I assumed that if you spoke out or had an unapproved meeting that you immediately would go to prison. He said that is not the way it worked. Certainly, at one time there were purges and prisons. In these later years everyone was controlled through economics. If you challenged the government, they would not come

and arrest you. Instead, you would lose your job and apartment and become destitute. They punished you through economic means.

Now we are criminalizing certain thoughts. For example, if we think the motive is hate, we have designated hate crimes. The danger is that the government assumes they know what you are thinking and can understand peoples' motivations. They are determining that some peoples' lives are worth more than others. Consider the killing of a heterosexual in contrast to a homosexual. The penalty is greater for those who killed the homosexual because the motive is assumed to be hate. Instead of saying that it is a horrible crime to kill anyone, they are saying it is a worse crime than killing a heterosexual; that the heterosexual's life is worth less. It also introduces an arbitrariness that is horrible. These are "thought crimes" and that to me is a dangerous trend. ■

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 NANDO PELUSI

## DOWN ON ALL FOURS WITH ROTHBARD

IN MY FIRST MEETING with Murray, Michael Edelstein (pal of Walter Block) and I stopped by his office, where Michael discussed a nagging backache. Murray loudly proclaimed a wonderful exercise described by an ancient fakir. He promptly got down on all fours, and lifted his leg as a dog might. The door was ajar, and I saw several students peek in and scurry off. After our introductions, Murray signed a copy of a tract on monetary policy for me, giving a warm smile and asked about my interests. Then, we attended his brilliant class on socialism and unintended consequences. I was riveted, but noticed minimal responses from the students.

I was new to libertarian philosophy. As a proud young pinko in the early 80s weaned on "progressive" ideas from the *New York Times*, philosophy classes at the New School in New York City, the School of Visual Arts, Beat poets, and the *Village Voice*, and determined to dedicate my life to art and rock 'n' roll, I found myself amidst no shortage of like-minded types.

Michael and I hit it off debating gun control, socialism, taxation, the proper role of government, etc. He patiently and lucidly dismantled every objection I offered to libertarian thinking, especially the non-aggression principle. To my further dismay, he showed how libertarian approaches were generally better solutions to practical problems as well, such as supplying medical options to people of very restricted means.

After I shook off my somnambulistic adherence to the ideology I inherited from my “education,” he introduced me to Walter Block and Murray Rothbard. The first book I read on libertarian philosophy was Walter’s *Defending the Undefendable*, a giddy joyride in logic and principle. These erudite thinkers took an interest in a pinko with lots of questions, and encouraged me to pursue my studies for a Ph.D. in psychology.

After reading and rethinking many premises I held about society, morality, and plain old justice, such as the right of a third party to forcibly intervene between consenting adults, the discussions with Murray, Michael, and Walter caused me to be somewhat of an anomaly among psychologists and colleagues (a mostly socialist lot). For this, I thank them.

As with Albert Ellis, a psychology mentor, Rothbard, Block, and Edelstein have challenged my dogmas forthrightly, and I consider them mentors too. OK, mentors from Hell, but still.

For Murray’s 60th birthday party presented by the Mises Institute at the Waldorf, I played the part of the young Murray in his play, “Mozart was a Red.” This was Murray’s satirical take on Ayn Rand’s Objectivists, a group he once attended. I played him as a genial Everyman surrounded by rigid dogmatists who lambasted him for asking innocent, but penetrating questions. It got great laughs, and Murray took this surprise rendition of his dormant play with great humor.

I later did a stand-up routine that roasted him with my imitation, recounting some of the experiences I had with him, such as the ancient fakir incident. He took all this attention graciously, and shook my hand as I passed him by. Years later, I attended a lecture given by Bill Bradford, editor of *Liberty*, and in the middle of it, he paused, pointed me out and shouted, “You’re Murray Rothbard! You’re great!” The audience was left to wonder.

So how did Murray handle the unengaged students? At a Chinese restaurant on the Upper West Side with Murray and a few of his acolytes, I asked him how he stayed so cheerful and humorous despite the minimal classroom response. He laughed and said, “I lay it out as I see it and I figure that if they get it, great. If they don’t? Ha! The heck with ’em!” ■

## WHAT LIBERTY HAS MEANT TO ME

I WAS BORN IN CHIPPEWA TOWNSHIP, outside a little Western Pennsylvania town called Beaver Falls on September 29, 1953. That's where I grew up and lived for the first 24 years of my life, until I moved to Michigan to start teaching at Northwood University in 1977.

I went to two Pennsylvania colleges for my B.A. and M.A. degrees: Grove City College and Slippery Rock State University. Western Pennsylvania was home to the Whiskey Rebellion, and I think my English and Scotch-Irish ancestors who were a part of that must have passed on some authority-questioning genes to me. I've never regretted not going on to "earn" a Ph.D. in the traditional sense, though in 1994 I was both stunned and honored to accept an honorary doctorate in Public Administration (I guess that makes me a Doctor of Bureaucracy) from Central Michigan University.

During the seven years I taught at Northwood University, I designed a unique four-year dual major in Economics and Business Management, founded an annual "Freedom Seminar" that is celebrating it's still thriving, and won the "Faculty Excellence Award" from Northwood students five times. In 1983, when Leonard Read of the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) passed away, I was chosen by a search committee of the FEE board to succeed him. Leonard was a big influence on me both as an author and a friend. I wrote my first of more than a hundred articles for FEE's journal, *The Freeman* (changed to *Ideas on Liberty*) in 1977 and I regard it as a singular honor to have served from 1994–2002 as a member of FEE's board and as its chair for three of those years. Leonard's persona—his optimism and his gentle persuasiveness in particular—left a very large and permanent imprint on me.

But instead of assuming the FEE position back in 1983, I went in a different direction: I went to Idaho to direct a small think tank and simultaneously began a part-time career as a freelance journalist that would eventually take me to dozens of countries. Some of my most memorable experiences have been behind the Iron Curtain, covering anti-communist and libertarian movements in the late 1980s. I was arrested in Nicaragua and Poland and in the case of the latter, I was also strip-searched, interrogated, and expelled by the communist regime—a badge of honor I'm proud of to this day.

Since at least 1900, as far as I can tell, no one on either my father's side or my mother's side of the family ever had much interest and even less involvement in political, economic, or current affairs. But my father imparted some basic, no-nonsense, anti-authoritarian and pro-freedom instincts that I nurtured in the late 1960s and which really blossomed in 1968.

One of my first encounters with government was when I was in the third grade and my father wanted to take me to Florida for a week in January to visit relatives. The public-school officials protested. They called my dad and said he couldn't take me out of school just for a vacation. He told them in no uncertain terms that I was his kid, not theirs, and while he was taking me to a warm place, they could pack their bags and go someplace a lot hotter.

My father's instincts planted the seeds, but my mother took my sister and me to see *The Sound of Music* in 1965, and that proved to be a powerful catalyst. I was only 12 and I didn't want to go, but the movie really had an effect on me. State oppression vs. people who just wanted to be left alone—that's the way I saw it. It prompted me to do a lot of reading on pre-World War II history, especially the Nazi takeovers of Austria and Czechoslovakia.

When the "Prague Spring" blossomed in early 1968, I was glued to the TV set and the newspapers. When Warsaw Pact troops crossed the border in August, I was angry and wanted to do something. Within days, I saw a newspaper story about a group called Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) who were organizing an anti-Soviet demonstration in downtown Pittsburgh. I went to it, helped burn a Soviet flag in Mellon Square, and joined YAF. In those days, YAF sent all new members copies of books like Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*, Bastiat's *The Law*, and Weaver's *The Mainspring of Human Progress*. I devoured them, gained an appreciation for economics, and my life was forever altered as a result.

I don't know how many people in our movement can trace their intellectual beginnings to a movie, and maybe it sounds corny to some, but that's what happened with me.

Though I was experiencing the inner rumblings of a freedom philosophy before 1968, because of the subtle influences of my father and the more tangible impact of that movie and my reading, it all came together for me in that tumultuous year. I date my formal start in this whole movement from 1968, so I guess that means I've been at it since high school. In August of 2003, I commemorated the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia by meeting with Czech president Vaclav Klaus in Prague.

Dr. Hans Sennholz, one of four scholars to earn a Ph.D. under Ludwig von Mises, was my teacher at Grove City College and I can hardly talk about formative intellectual years without citing his profound influence. His eloquence and passion for liberty were huge inspirations. I learned of him in 1971, as a senior in high school, when I attended a YAF convention in New Jersey at which he spoke.

Largely because of the influences of people like Leonard Read and Hans Sennholz, I have ever since been absorbed with and motivated by the philosophy of liberty. Since 1968, it has been the single most powerful focus of my life and, I suspect, that's the way it will always be. There is no earthly cause more noble. In my belief, more of the good things about life depend on it than on any other single thing. Without it, life has little meaning.

On a less lofty note, I am passionate about animals—animals, mind you, not animal "rights"—of almost all kinds, dogs in particular. I'm passionate about history—in fact, virtually all my pleasure reading is in British, American, ancient Roman, military, or Christian history. I devour biographies of great men and women who have appreciated and advanced liberty, or who persevered in the face of great odds—like Gladstone, Wilberforce, and Livingstone in Britain, for example. I'm passionate about foreign travel, seeing the

world, and getting to know foreign peoples and cultures. And I love writing, public speaking, tennis, hiking, skydiving, and even weight-lifting which, unfortunately, I didn't really get into in a big way until the age of 48. I especially love fly fishing because it's totally absorbing and the very activity itself makes me think of liberty. I figure when I hook 'em, I'm giving the fish a taste of what socialism is all about. Then when I throw 'em back, hopefully they've learned something about steering clear of that seductive free lunch.

I am often asked to describe my political philosophy. I cringe at labels because too often they conjure up misimpressions, stereotypes, and simplistic conclusions. I'd rather talk about ideas. But if you have to attach a label to my political philosophy, I suppose "classical liberal" would do just fine. I believe in limited, minimal government, though I don't pick fights with my anarcho-capitalist friends. More power to 'em. I have enough faith in freedom that I respect those who argue that given certain conditions and an enlightened climate of opinion, there's not an aspect of life that civil society can't handle better than politics and politicians.

I regard myself as a patriot and patriotic, but maybe with a twist that isn't always a part of conventional patriotism these days. You can read what I mean about that in my essay entitled, "The True Meaning of Patriotism."

Many people who believe in liberty didn't start out that way, and may even have been socialists at one time. In fact, one of the signs of maturation, of shedding infantile and anti-social behavior and becoming a thinking, civilized adult is learning the superiority of voluntarism and the free and civil society over political coercion and redistribution. Well, I was never a statist of any kind. From my earliest awareness of political philosophies and social systems, I understood that the only thing socialism has ever really done for poor people is give them lots of company.

When I'm asked who my favorite people in history are, I can go on for hours but I'll just mention a few here. Grover Cleveland is my personal favorite among U.S. presidents, and a hero to me. He vetoed more bills than all the previous 21 presidents combined, and was a rock of honesty and integrity. He was staunchly for free trade, sound money, limited government, balanced budgets, and free enterprise. I had the privilege of spending an evening with his son Francis in August 1995, just two months before he passed away at the age of 92. He was the oldest living child of an American president at that time. A year later, I spent an afternoon with John Coolidge, son of another president I admire.

William Ewert Gladstone, four times British Prime Minister, is a hero to me because unlike most politicians, he only got better with age and tenure in office. He started out a statist and protectionist, came to appreciate liberty, and did more to liberate the spirit of enterprise in Britain than any other PM in the country's history.

While I have my favorite politicians, they are still eclipsed in my mind by the nonpolitical people who invent, create, and build—and who improve the lot of us all in the process. Risk-taking entrepreneurs who do it all in the marketplace without resort to favors from government are all heroes to me, and America has produced them by the boatloads.

I myself ran for office once, in 1982. I was the Republican nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives in my district here in Michigan, running against an incumbent Democrat. Though I lost, I made a lot of friends and pretty much killed off whatever political

ambitions may have been stirring within. I learned firsthand that politics is not for me. If you want to know why, see my essay entitled, “Don’t Expect Much From Politics.”

I deal with heroes every day of the week as a part of my job. They included my hard-working staff during my tenure at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. I could name them all but I’ll cite just one here for reasons of space—senior vice president Joe Overton. There’s no more talented or dedicated genius in our movement than Joe, and probably not a single organization of our kind that wouldn’t love to hire him away. He’s not an attention-seeker, but people who know him understand that we all owe him a great debt for his leadership and innovative ideas for advancing liberty. He was my right-hand man and best friend for almost 20 years and I was privileged to be Best Man at his wedding. I cannot imagine our success at the Mackinac Center without him. I also was ably assisted by many others, such as assistant Kendra Shrode and the indomitable executive vice president, Joe Lehman. You can read about these people at [www.mackinac.org](http://www.mackinac.org).

My heroes also include the leaders within our sister think tanks in state after state. Many of them work at a big missionary discount because they believe in liberty. I wish I could cite them all, but I’ll name just a few: Darcy Olson at the Goldwater Institute in Arizona, Bob Williams at the Evergreen Freedom Foundation, Alex Chafuen and Jo Kwong at the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, Bridgett Wagner at the Heritage Foundation, Chip Mellor at the Institute for Justice, Chris Derry at the Bluegrass Institute in Kentucky, and Tracie Sharp at the State Policy Network are all good examples. So is Peter Holle, who heads up the Pioneer Centre for Public Policy up in Winnipeg, Canada, and Linda Whetstone who helps free market groups all over the world from her home in England. My good friend James Shikwati of Kenya, who has started East Africa’s first free market think tank, is another. (Let me put a plug in for him by referring to his website, at [www.irenkenya.org](http://www.irenkenya.org).)

I’ve met hundreds of fascinating people over the years but the activists in the Polish freedom underground in the late 1980s will always be among the most interesting to me because of their perseverance in the face of the Soviet empire. I remember visiting with a couple in 1986, Zbigniew and Sofia Romaszewski, who had just gotten out of prison for running an underground radio. They were active once again on behalf of freedom because it meant everything to them. I asked them many questions including, “When you were broadcasting, how did you know if people were listening?” I’ve recounted Sophia’s reply hundreds of times to audiences all over the country, and my eyes still well up every time I think of it. She said, “We could only broadcast a few minutes at a time and then had to go off the air to avoid detection, but one night we asked people to blink their lights if they were listening and were supportive of freedom for Poland. We then went to the window and for hours, all of Warsaw was blinking!”

It’s largely because of people like Zbigniew and Sofia that millions once behind the Iron Curtain are free today.

I’ve met Margaret Thatcher several times and had breakfast with President Reagan in the White House. I admire them both very much.

I once interviewed the Finance Minister of Haiti in the year after Duvalier was ousted. His name was Leslie Delatour and he was accomplishing amazing things—privatizing and freeing up the economy. Too bad he was gone in a year, replaced by another batch of statist demagogues.

I was a good friend of Dr. Haing Ngor, Academy Award-winning actor from *The Killing Fields*. In 1989, I accompanied him on his first trip back to his native Cambodia since his escape from the Khmer Rouge a decade before. Now there's a guy who knew what freedom was and how costly it is to lose it. The supreme tragedy of his life was that after going through an unbelievable hell under a communist dictatorship, he was later killed by common street thugs in downtown Los Angeles.

Foreign travel has been a large part of my life since my first visit to the old Soviet Union in March 1985. I've visited more than 59 countries on six continents, many of them several times. When I was doing anti-communist work in the 1980s and early '90s, I went to the Soviet Union five times, China three times, Nicaragua five times, Poland twice, and even Cambodia. After I befriended the leader of the rebel opposition in Marxist Mozambique in 1991, a colleague and I made an incredible, surreptitious trip to that country and lived with the rebels at their bush headquarters in the midst of a devastating civil war. That was unlike just about any other trip I've ever made anywhere.

I've studied hyperinflation in Bolivia (1985), voodoo in Haiti (1987), and underground movements in the old East bloc. There are few places in the world that I don't want to go to some day. Foreign travel is an enriching experience but after awhile, it's a killer trying to keep up correspondence with friends you've made all over the place.

What have I learned from all that travel? I've learned that the planned economy—socialism in all its preposterous and destructive manifestations—is a cruel joke that never works. Socialists have said that you have to break a few eggs to make an omelet, but as I've written in a number of places, socialists never make omelets. They only break eggs. You can read about that in an essay I wrote entitled, "Where Are The Omelets?"

I've learned that the prism of individualism is the only way to see the world. Stereotyping a people or a nation is always a false, ignorant, and dangerous way to view them.

I've learned that individuals are often phenomenally enterprising in the face of enormous, artificial, politically-erected roadblocks. I saw so much in the way of black markets and private enterprise in places where such things were repressed that I've come to regard much of what government does in the way of pushing people around to be utterly futile. If it's a peaceful activity with no real victims, leave it alone.

And I've learned that the two main obstacles that pull people apart and provoke hatred and conflict are: (1) stupid, brainless, know-it-all ideologies of power and control, and (2) the incompetent, venal governments that make those ideologies into policy.

I worked for 20 years at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. I was its president from the time it opened its doors in January of 1988 until 2008. I'm enormously proud of what was built. Within half a dozen years, the Mackinac Center became the largest and one of the most prolific and effective of some 40 state-based free market institutes.

In 2008 I did become president of the Foundation for Economic Education after turning the position down in 1983.

The case for liberty is intellectually airtight. What we're really battling to overcome is ignorance and corruption. We're winning the battle, slowly but surely. Think about the people who have undergone philosophical transitions in recent years. I know of lots of former statist, interventionist, coercion-worshippers—whatever you want to call

them—who used to put all their faith in the state but have wised up. I know of almost no former free market advocates who have come to the view that central planning is the way to go. The drift is almost entirely in our direction.

Pessimism, moreover, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. You don't work as hard for anything if you don't think it will prevail, which only assures its defeat. I never feel as though I have to win over every hard-core statist. If they are incorrigible, I just smile and tell them that they're on the losing side and it's only a matter of time before they jump ship. Just explain to them that liberty will ultimately prevail and there's no point in believing otherwise.

That doesn't mean, however, that those of us who believe in liberty can just sit back and let history take its course. We must devote maximum time and energy on its behalf. What a person can do in this regard comes under two headings: (1) Introspection and Improvement and (2) Outreach.

Each person needs to start by honestly assessing his own personal set of skills, talents, resources, and knowledge base. Get your own life in order, be a burden to no one, seek nothing from others through the political process except that they leave you alone, be a model in everything you do that will lead and inspire others by example. Take charge of your life, accept all your responsibilities at home and elsewhere without hesitation. And get your mental attitude in shape—by which I mean things like have a healthy sense of humor, a good feel for both your strengths and weaknesses, a bubbly optimism. Be a good citizen who respects the lives and property of others. You can't expect to be free if you support making others less free. Make your life a nonstop learning journey—read and become as informed about freedom in all its aspects as you can possibly be.

Take care of that and then you're in good shape to engage in Outreach. It starts by recognizing that liberty depends on its believers becoming teachers of liberty. Once you've assessed what you do best—whether it be writing, speaking, encouraging others in one-on-one, intimate settings, or just writing checks and providing advice to others who do these things on behalf of liberty, then get off your duff and do it.

The single greatest threat to liberty is ignorance. Most people who don't support liberty have not come to that view because they've read the literature extensively and decided against it. They've just never been exposed to a coherent, persuasive case for it. They're certainly not getting it from the government schools or the establishment media. Education is still the number one challenge we liberty advocates face. We simply must reach more people, and develop more clever and attractive appeals.

In a policy sense, the greatest threats to liberty are these: the government school monopoly, blind support of the state in every "emergency" (in the wake of 9/11, we're seeing growing encroachments on liberty with little to show for it), and a large segment of the population that would rather vote for a living than work for one, and that includes lots of corporations as well as university professors and ordinary welfare recipients.

There's only one thing to do about it: educate, educate, educate. And don't take no for an answer. William Wilberforce worked for 46 years to get Britain to abolish slavery and lost dozens of votes along the way. It never deterred him. He just learned to get better and better at making his case.

How we make our case is almost as important as the case itself. Rarely is it appropriate to come across in a hostile, confrontational, or condescending manner. It's never fitting to be arrogant, shrill, or self-righteous. We should convey these ideas in the most judicious, inviting, helpful, and persuasive fashion possible. We should be magnets for every open-minded person willing to learn. We can have all the facts and passion in the world but if we lack people skills, we'll just be talking to ourselves.

I'll close this autobiography with a few of my favorite quotes, and why each is important to me:

"Government is not reason. It is not eloquence. It is force. Like fire, it can be either a dangerous servant or a fearful master." ~ George Washington. I like that one because it makes it plain that even the smallest and best of governments that are genuine servants of the people are still dangerous.

"He's honest, but you've got to watch him." ~ Groucho Marx referring to his brother Harpo. I like this one because it's got part of the same message as the Washington quote above, except it's more succinct. Again, even the most honest of governments you've got to keep your eye on every waking moment. I'm a long-time Groucho Marxist.

"Ideas are more powerful than all the armies of the world. Nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come." ~ Victor Hugo, paraphrased. This is another reason why I'm an optimist. We are creatures of free will and we can learn from our mistakes. We can change the course of history by changing the ideas that drive it.

"It is not for honor or glory or wealth that we fight, but for freedom alone, which no good man gives up except with his life." ~ From the Declaration of Arbroath, issued by Scots in 1320 as they sought to expel English invaders. That about sums it up, doesn't it?

"All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." ~ Edmund Burke. I don't think I need to say anything more about that one. ■

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Lawrence W. Reed was named president of the Foundation for Economic Education in 2008.

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GEORGE REISMAN

## A STUDENT OF MISES AND RAND

WALTER BLOCK HAS KINDLY INVITED ME to contribute an autobiographical essay featuring the early development of my ideas on politics and economics. What follows is an adaptation of portions of the Preface to my book, *Capitalism: A Treatise on Economics*, which describes the influences Professor Block has in mind.

I have had practically a lifetime of concern for the protection of property rights and for the right of individuals personally and selfishly to enjoy all the prosperity they can peacefully achieve.

I remember identifying as a boy of no more than ten or eleven years of age that what the tenants and city government of New York, which is where I then lived, were doing with the property of the landlords of that city, by means of rent control, was exactly the same in principle as what schoolyard bullies often did with my baseball or football—namely, seize it against the will of its owner and arbitrarily use it for their own pleasure, without a thought for the rights of the owner, mine or the landlords’.

From that early age, I was very much aware of a widespread contempt and hostility toward property rights and property owners—a contempt and hostility manifested in such comments as the one I heard a little later from a junior high school teacher that she did not care about the fact that there were people paying 90 percent of their incomes in taxes (which was then the maximum federal surtax rate), “because they still had a lot left.” When I encountered the same attitude of contemptuous philosophic indifference to the violation of property rights in one of my own close relatives, I came to the conclusion that property rights were very much in need of defense, and that I must write a book on their behalf. I actually set out to write such a book at the time, and succeeded in putting together about one or two paragraphs.

It was clear to me that such contemptuous attitudes and the violations of property rights that they supported were contrary to everything that the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States stood for, which above all was the right of the individual to the pursuit of his own happiness, which included his material prosperity and enjoyment of same. Indeed, my first serious professional ambition, which I held around the age of twelve, was to become a Constitutional lawyer, so that I might best defend that right.

Until the age of eleven or twelve, I took for granted that practically every American recognized the value of his country because he loved its freedom and supported the principles on which the United States was based. Based on my reading of editorials and columnists in the Hearst Press, then represented in New York by *The Daily Mirror* and the *Journal American*, I thought that now that the Nazis had been defeated, the only exceptions were a handful of communist or socialist crackpots.

My cheerful confidence in the popularity of individual freedom began to erode when I reached junior high school. There, after a few months’ attendance, I came to the conclusion that a disproportionate number of the communist and socialist crackpots I had read about were to be found among my teachers. I encountered teachers who openly confessed to being socialists, including one who regretted that he lived just inside the border of a conservative Republican’s congressional district because if he lived across the street he could have voted for Representative Vito Marcantonio, then the most far-leftwing member of Congress. The same man described the Soviet Union as a great experiment. He and his colleagues dismissed questions that challenged any of their interpretations by referring to the presumed size of the bank account or stock portfolio of the questioner’s father. I clearly remember this man’s response to what I thought was an astonishing fact that all by itself proved the value of the United States and what it stood for, a fact which I happily conveyed

to my classmates in the seventh grade in an oral report, and which I had learned from a motion-picture documentary shortly before. This was the fact that with only six percent of the world's population, the United States produced fully forty percent of the world's annual output of goods and services. The man's reply was yes, but so what; ten percent of the country's population owned ninety percent of its wealth.

I soon realized that no one I knew, neither other students, nor any of the adults I knew, was able to answer the leftwing arguments I was encountering daily at school. For a time, I thought, the explanation was that this was New York City. The people here have been intellectually corrupted. But the rest of the country is still full of people who support the principles of individual rights and freedom and know how to defend them. Over the next two summers, I learned that the problem was nationwide. I made this discovery as the result of my experiences at a vacation camp in Maine, where I met a wide variety of college students from all over the country who were working as camp counselors, as well as occasional local citizens. The college students too included a goodly proportion of self-confessed "social democrats." I remember one of them telling me with obvious contempt how ignorant the parents of many of the campers were. They had been to see a local production of a play by George Bernard Shaw that made this type of people its targets, and they all loved it.

I saw that virtually all of the arguments against property rights were of an economic nature. I undertook the study of economics for the explicit purpose of finding economic arguments in defense of property rights. In my first year of study, with the aid of a dictionary by my side, I read substantial portions of Adam Smith's, *The Wealth of Nations*, and David Ricardo's, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, as well as the whole of a book on the history of economic thought. I started with Smith and Ricardo in the belief that their books would provide the arguments I was seeking, for they had the reputation of having been the leading defenders of capitalism in the system's heyday. Although my mature evaluation of them is that they do in fact have some very important things to say in the defense of capitalism, I was greatly disappointed in them at the time, because it seemed to me that with their support for the labor theory of value, they served merely to prepare the ground for Marx. (Concerning the errors of this view, see *Capitalism*, pp. 473–500.) None of the other authors described in the book I read on the history of economic thought appeared to offer any serious arguments in defense of capitalism.

At the age of fourteen, I discovered William Stanley Jevons's *The State in Relation to Labour* and *The Theory of Political Economy*.

During this period, I had come to subscribe to a fortnightly magazine called *The Freeman*. At that time, Henry Hazlitt played a major role in writing the magazine's editorials and in determining its content. So long as he continued in that role, I found the magazine so valuable that I read every issue from cover to cover.

It was in one of the early issues of *The Freeman* that I had my first exposure to the writings of Ludwig von Mises. It was his essay, "Lord Keynes and Say's Law." From reading the essay, I could see that Mises knew the history of economic thought and that he was presenting a strong, self-assured position in defense of an important and relatively complicated aspect of the functioning of capitalism, a position that Say and Ricardo had taken in

the early nineteenth century, which was that general business depressions could never be caused by any so-called excess of production. I knew immediately that here was a man I must read further. And, a few months later, at the age of fourteen, I borrowed his classic *Socialism* from the public library. Unfortunately, the book was then beyond me and I was not able to gain very much from the parts I attempted to read. But less than a year later, with some of the money I had been given on my fifteenth birthday, I bought *Socialism* and over the coming months had one of the very greatest intellectual experiences of my life, before or since. In the intervening months since my previous attempt, my mental powers must have grown the intellectual equivalent of the several inches that boys of that age are capable of growing in such a short time, because I was now able to understand a very great deal of what I read. And what I read filled me with a sense of utter enlightenment.

The astonishing ideas I found in *Socialism* were amplified and additional major arguments were added to them in Mises's other writings then available in English, above all, *Human Action* and *The Theory of Money and Credit*, as well as *Planning For Freedom*, *Bureaucracy*, and *Omnipotent Government*, all of which I read over the next three years.

Mises was clearly the man whose writings I had been searching for. Here at last was a great, articulate defender of the economic institutions of capitalism, who wrote with all the power that logical argument could provide and with the authority of the highest level of scholarship.

One of the great good fortunes of my life, that profoundly contributed to my subsequent intellectual development, was to be invited by Mises to attend his graduate seminar at New York University. I received this invitation shortly after my sixteenth birthday, in the last part of my senior year in high school. It came about as the result of a meeting, arranged by The Foundation for Economic Education, between Mises, myself, and Ralph Raico, who was then a fellow student of mine at the Bronx High School of Science. After several hours of conversation, spent mainly answering our questions, Mises invited us both to come to his seminar—provided (in reference to our extreme youth) that we did “not make noise.” We both eagerly accepted his invitation and began attending the very next week.

The format of the seminar was that each semester it was devoted to some topic of special current interest to von Mises, such as inflation or the epistemology of economics. It would open each evening with Mises himself speaking from a few notes for about twenty minutes to half an hour, followed by a general, cross discussion among the various seminar members who wished to participate or who Mises occasionally called upon. Often, a portion of the discussion was devoted to some paper that a seminar participant had prepared for the occasion.

I regularly attended the seminar for about seven and a half years, through the remainder of high school, all through my college years at Columbia University, and then as an enrolled student in NYU's Graduate School of Business Administration, which was where Mises taught. I stopped attending only when I myself began to teach and had a class of my own to conduct on Thursday evenings.

At the seminar, I had the opportunity of hearing many observations by Mises that were not in his books that I had read. Equally important, I had the opportunity of asking

him questions. Uncharacteristically, I did not raise any questions until after I had been in attendance for about a year and a half. Thereafter, I became a full-fledged participant, often being assigned papers to write and deliver.

My most outstanding memory of the seminar is that of Mises himself. I always experienced a heightened level of awareness when he entered the room and took his seat at the seminar table. What I was acutely aware of was that here, just a few feet away from me, was one of the outstanding thinkers in all of human history.

One of the things Mises stressed in his seminar was the importance of knowing foreign languages. One of the reasons he gave for this was the frequent inadequacy of translation. In this connection, I was very surprised to learn that he was unhappy with the translation of *Socialism*.

I accepted his injunction to learn foreign languages because there were important writings of his own not yet translated, as well as important writings of Menger and Böhm-Bawerk, his predecessors in the Austrian school. The result was that in the Christmas vacation of my sophomore year, I dared to translate a chapter of his *Grundprobleme der Nationalökonomie* (Epistemological Problems of Economics) and then show it to him. Although he had some misgivings, he supported my application for a grant from the William Volker Fund to translate the remainder of the book over the following summer. I obtained the grant and accomplished the translation the next summer.

I know that both he and the Volker Fund were very favorably impressed, because he urged me to translate Heinrich Rickert's *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, which he considered a major answer to logical positivism, over the next summer, and, when I applied for a grant to do it, I got an immediate favorable response. Both translations were published a few years later by D. Van Nostrand, the latter under the title *Science and History*.

I have to say that translating Mises, and being well paid to do it at that, was absolutely the most fabulous thing I could think of doing at the time, and to this day, I count it as a major accomplishment of my life.

Some of the credit for my having had the courage to start the translation belongs to the late Murray Rothbard, whom I met when I entered the seminar and became close friends with over the next five years. (Other members of the seminar when I arrived on the scene were Hans Sennholz and his wife Mary; Israel Kirzner; Professor William H. Peterson, then of New York University, and his wife Mary; and Percy Greaves, who later wrote *Understanding the Dollar Crisis*, and his wife Bettina Bien Greaves, then a staff member of the Foundation for Economic Education. Prominent more or less frequent visitors to the seminar were Henry Hazlitt, then a regular columnist for *Newsweek* as well as the author of numerous books, the best known of which, of course, is *Economics in One Lesson*, and Lawrence Fertig, who at the time was a columnist for the *New York World Telegram and Sun*.) Rothbard was then working on his *Man, Economy, and State* on a grant from the Volker Fund and urged me to apply, assuring me that a proposal to translate *Grundprobleme* would be considered both seriously and sympathetically.

By the time I had been in the seminar for about a year, Rothbard, Raico, and I, were joined by Robert Hessen and Leonard Liggio. About a year after that, Ronald Hamowy also joined us. We almost always continued the discussions of the seminar until past

midnight, usually at Rothbard's apartment, and frequently met on weekends. We informally called ourselves "The Circle Bastiat," after the leading nineteenth-century French advocate of capitalism, Frédéric Bastiat.

At one of our gatherings, in the summer of 1954, over three years before the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*, Rothbard brought up the name Ayn Rand, whom I had not previously heard of. He described her as an extremely interesting person and, when he observed the curiosity of our whole group, asked if we would be interested in meeting her. Everyone in the group was very much interested. He then proceeded to arrange a meeting for the second Saturday night in July, at her apartment in midtown Manhattan.

That meeting, and the next one a week later, had an unforgettable effect on me. In the year or more before I entered Ayn Rand's apartment, I held three explicitly formulated leading intellectual values: liberalism (in the sense in which Mises used the term, and which actually meant capitalism); utilitarianism, which was my philosophy of ethics and which I had learned largely from Mises (though not entirely, inasmuch as I had already come to the conclusion on my own that everything a person does is selfish insofar as it seeks to achieve his ends, a conclusion that I now consider to be mistaken, because it attaches no objective meaning to the concept of self); and "McCarthyism," which I was enthusiastically for, because I believed that the country was heavily infested with communists and socialists, whom I detested, and to whom Senator McCarthy was causing a major amount of upset. By the time I left Ayn Rand's apartment, even after the first meeting, I was seriously shaken in my attachment to utilitarianism.

Both meetings began at about 8:30 in the evening and lasted until about 5:00 the following morning. When I was introduced to her, I had no real idea of her intellectual caliber. I quickly began to learn her estimate of herself, however, when I offered her two tickets to an upcoming dinner in honor of Roy Cohn, Senator McCarthy's chief aide, at which Senator McCarthy would be present. (I was scheduled to make a brief speech at the event, and when I mentioned to one of the event's organizers that I was going to meet Ayn Rand, she asked me to extend the invitation.) Miss Rand declined the invitation on the grounds that to get involved as she would need to get involved, she would have to drop her present project (which was the writing of *Atlas Shrugged*) and do for McCarthy what *Zola* had done for Dreyfus. I had seen the Paul Muni movie *Zola*, and so had a good idea of *Zola's* stature. I don't quite remember how I experienced the comparison, but it was probably something comparable to the expression of a silent whistle. (After I came to appreciate the nature of Ayn Rand's accomplishments, a comparison to *Zola* would seem several orders of magnitude too modest.)

At both meetings, most of the time was taken up with my arguing with Ayn Rand about whether values were subjective or objective, while Rothbard, as he himself later described it, looked on with amusement, watching me raise all the same questions and objections he had raised on some previous occasion, equally to no avail.

I had a sense of amazement at both meetings. I was amazed that I was involved in an argument that in the beginning seemed absolutely open and shut to me, and yet that I could not win. I was amazed that my opponent was expressing views that I found both utterly naïve and at the same time was incapable of answering without being driven to support

positions that I did not want to support, and that I was repeatedly being driven into supporting such positions.

Neither of the evenings were very pleasant. At one point—I don't know how we got to the subject, nor whether it occurred at our first or second meeting—I expressed the conviction that a void must exist. Otherwise, I did not see how the existence of motion was possible, since two objects could not occupy the same place at the same time. Ayn Rand's reply to my expression of my conviction was that "it was worse than anything a communist could have said." (In retrospect, recognizing that the starting point of her philosophy is that "existence exists," I realize she took my statement to mean that I upheld the existence of "nonexistence" and was thus maintaining the worst possible contradiction.)

Because of such unpleasantness, I did not desire to see her again until after I read *Atlas Shrugged*. However, I could not forget our meetings and could not help wondering if somehow she might be right that values really were objective after all. I was very troubled by the implications of the proposition that all values are ultimately arbitrary and subjective, as Mises claimed. It no longer seemed enough that the great majority of people happened to prefer life to death, and health and wealth to sickness and poverty. For if they happened not to, there would be nothing to say to them that could change their minds, and if there were enough of them, no way to fight them, and, worst of all, no way even morally to condemn any slaughters they might commit, because if all values really were arbitrary and subjective, a concentration-camp sadist's values would be as good and as moral as the values of the world's greatest creators.

The years between my first meetings with Ayn Rand and the publication of *Atlas Shrugged* spanned my sophomore through senior years in college. In that time, I experienced serious intellectual doubt in connection with my ability to defend capitalism. What I had learned from Mises enabled me decisively to answer practically every argument that had been raised against capitalism prior to 1930, which was more than enough to answer my high school teachers. But my college professors presented a different challenge. They were teaching Keynesianism and the doctrine of pure and perfect competition/imperfect competition. Mises, I reluctantly had to conclude, had not dealt adequately with these doctrines. (This conclusion may appear somewhat ironic in view of the fact that what is today accepted as a new and convincing major critique of Keynesianism, namely, the "rational expectations doctrine," is nothing more than arguments made by Mises and Hazlitt in the 1950s, for which they have received no credit.) At any rate, these were two major areas in which I found myself unable to turn to his writings for the kind of decisive help I had come to expect from him.

The doubts I experienced in college were not in response to any kind of solid arguments, but more in response to phantoms of arguments that could not be grasped in any clear, precise way and that in fact usually bore obvious absurdities. This last was certainly true of the Keynesian multiplier doctrine and of the claim on the part of the pure-and-perfect competition doctrine that competition implied the absence of rivalry. Despite the absurdities all of the faculty and practically all of my fellow students at Columbia seemed perfectly at home with the doctrines and absolutely confident of their truth.

If anyone concrete example can convey the intellectual dishonesty of Columbia's economics department in those days, it was this. Namely, while neglecting to provide a

single copy of any of the writings of Mises, or even so much as mention the existence of any of them in any of the assigned readings or, as far as I was aware, in a classroom, the department saw to it that literally dozens of copies of Oskar Lange's attempted refutation of Mises's doctrine on the impossibility of economic calculation under socialism were available on open reserve in the library—as an optional, supplementary reading in the introductory economics course.

Economics was not the only area in college in which I experienced revulsion for Columbia's teachings. I had the same experience in the so-called contemporary civilization courses I had to take, and in history courses.

I do not know if my college education could have damaged my intellectual development permanently. It did not have the chance. For just a few months after graduation, *Atlas Shrugged* appeared.

I obtained a very early copy and began to read it almost immediately. Once I started it, I could not put it down, except for such necessary things as eating and sleeping. I was simply pulled along by what I have thought of ever since as the most exciting plot-novel ever written. Every two hundred pages or so, the story reached a new level of intensity, making it even more demanding of resolution than it was before. I stopped only when I finally finished the book, four days after I had started it. When I finished, the only thing I could find to say in criticism, tongue in cheek, was that the book was too short and the villains were not black enough.

The first thing I got out of *Atlas Shrugged* and the philosophical system it presented was a powerful reinforcement of my conviction that my basic ideas were right and a renewal of my confidence that I would be able to expose my professors' errors.

Very soon thereafter, the whole Circle Bastiat, myself included, met again with Ayn Rand. We were all tremendously enthusiastic over *Atlas*. Rothbard wrote Ayn Rand a letter, in which, I believe, he compared her to the sun, which one cannot approach too closely. I truly thought that *Atlas Shrugged* would convert the country—in about six weeks; I could not understand how anyone could read it without being either convinced by what it had to say or else hospitalized by a mental breakdown.

The following winter, Rothbard, Raico, and I, and, I think, Bob Hessen, all enrolled in the very first lecture course ever delivered on Objectivism. This was before Objectivism even had the name "Objectivism" and was still described simply as "the philosophy of Ayn Rand." Nevertheless, by the summer of that same year, 1958, tensions had begun to develop between Rothbard and Ayn Rand, which led to a shattering of relationships, including my friendship with him. (When I knew Rothbard, he was a staunch pro-McCarthy, anticommunist. In fact it was he who wrote the speech I delivered at the previously mentioned dinner for Roy Cohn. Later on, incredible as it may seem, he came to hold that the United States was the aggressor against Soviet Russia in the so-called Cold War (see his *For a New Liberty*).

Shortly after that break, I took Rothbard's place in making a presentation in Ayn Rand's living room of the case for "competing governments," i.e., the purchase and sale even of such government services as police, courts, and military in a free market. As the result of Ayn Rand's criticisms, I came to the conclusion that the case was untenable, if for

no other reason than that it abandoned the distinction between private action and government action and implicitly urged unregulated, uncontrolled government action, i.e., the uncontrolled, unregulated use of physical force. This was the logical implication of treating government as a free business enterprise. I had to conclude that government in the form of a highly regulated, tightly controlled legal monopoly on the use of force, was necessary after all, in order to provide an essential foundation for unregulated, uncontrolled private markets in all goods and services, which would then function totally free of the threat of physical force. This indeed, represented nothing more than a return to my starting point. It was what the government established by the United States's Constitution had represented, and which I had so much admired.

At that time, and in later years, I came to be influenced by Ayn Rand's ideas in numerous ways, thanks in part to the fact that over the years between 1957 and her death in 1982, I had the opportunity of frequently meeting with her and speaking with her extensively about her writings. The influence of her philosophy extolling individual rights and the value of human life and reason appears repeatedly in my book, *Capitalism*, and in numerous ways sets its intellectual tone.

The year and a half or more following my abandonment of the doctrine of competing governments turned out to be the most intellectually productive of my life, and to provide most of what is original in my book.

By this time, I had already completed all of the course work for a Ph.D., but I still had the written and oral exams and the dissertation in front of me. My original plan had been to go straight through for the Ph.D., in the shortest possible time. Now I found the prospect of the obstacles that still remained to be somewhat more daunting, and so I decided that it would be worthwhile to take a few months out and obtain an MBA degree. For this, all I needed to do was write an MBA thesis.

I decided to choose a topic that would require that I read only "good people"—i.e., sound authors. I had come to the conclusion that because the efforts of proto-Keynesians, such as Malthus and Sismondi, had been decisively defeated by the classical economists in the early nineteenth century, and because nothing like the pure-and-perfect-competition doctrine had ever even arisen in the nineteenth century when classical economics was in vogue, there must have been something in classical economics that served to refute or thoroughly preclude such doctrines in the first place, and thus that I should turn to it once again as a source of knowledge. The thesis topic I chose was *The Classical Economists and the Austrians on Value and Costs*. This topic required that I read extensively in Menger, Böhm-Bawerk, and Wieser for the Austrian views, and not only in Smith and Ricardo, but also in James Mill, Say, McCulloch, Senior, and J.S. Mill, for the views of classical economics.

This project turned out to be a very good idea, indeed. I learned much more about the doctrine of diminishing marginal utility, including how it subsumes cases in which prices are actually determined in the first instance by cost of production. (On this point, see the lengthy quotation from Böhm-Bawerk on pp. 414–16 in *Capitalism* and see also my translation of Böhm-Bawerk's "Value, Cost and Marginal Utility" and my notes on the translation, both of which appear in the fall 2002 issue of the *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*.)

In reading seven different classical authors, each one covering essentially the same ground, and doing so at the age of twenty-one and twenty-two, instead of thirteen, I was able to come to a genuine understanding of their work, including the profound differences between their views and those of Marx, which are typically ignored.

What I gained from the extensive reading I had done in connection with my thesis went far beyond the subject of value and costs. In the months immediately following, I knew that I had learned a great deal that had not gone into the thesis—knowledge that I could then not yet even explicitly formulate. I felt good about my state of mind and I am pretty sure that I described my mental condition to myself as one of being “intellectually pregnant.”

Back in the spring of 1958, I had succeeded in formulating to my own satisfaction a set of conditions in which capital accumulation could take place indefinitely with no accompanying fall in the rate of profit. I had tried to explain it to Rothbard, but without success. That demonstration was one element in the back of my mind, before I even got to the reading for my thesis. My exposure to principles of actual business accounting, as the result of having taken a number of courses on investments and corporation finance in the NYU program, provided another critical element besides what I had learned from my reading.

In July of 1959, it all came together. The precipitating event was my reading an extensive quotation from John Stuart Mill presenting the proposition that “demand for commodities is not demand for labour.” This was a passage I had not read before. It appeared in Henry Hazlitt’s newly published *The Failure of the “New Economics.”*

Very soon thereafter, I had a period of five successive days in which I was able to make one connection after another and to answer one question after another from a list I had compiled. In essence, I had put together, and was able to hold in my mind all at the same time, an early version of what now appears in *Capitalism* as Figures 16-2 and 17-1 and derive a succession of major implications from it.

As I made the new connections I wrote them down, sometimes jumping out of bed to do so, lest I forget any of them. After the first five days, I had accumulated about fifteen pages of notes, the most important part of which was an elaborate numerical example of the most essential points in a form consistent with the principles of business accounting. In August, I wrote a hundred-page-plus typed paper called “The Consumption Theory of Interest,” which I showed to Henry Hazlitt. He was generally impressed with it, and, starting with the third printing of *The Failure of the “New Economics,”* credited me with an important application I had made in the paper identifying a simultaneous breakdown of the Keynesian doctrines on consumption, employment, liquidity preference, and the rate of interest, though he did not refer to my manuscript specifically. (See Henry Hazlitt, *The Failure of the “New Economics,”* p. 196, n. 6.)

Not long after I made my discoveries, I decided that they should be the main subject of my doctoral dissertation, which I began to do research for soon after passing my oral examination in the spring of 1960. For the sake of thoroughness, I wanted to include not only my own views, but also a critical analysis of all significant alternative views. I set out to follow the example of Böhm-Bawerk, who had done just that. Thus, in preparation for

writing my dissertation, I read virtually all of Böhm-Bawerk that I had not previously read, as well as major selections from other authors whose views concerning the rate of profit/interest were prominent, such as Irving Fisher, Knut Wicksell, and Frank Fetter, as well as Smith, Ricardo, other classical economists, and Marx and Keynes.

I began writing the dissertation in May of 1961 and handed in a 625-page typed manuscript in the fall of 1962. The title was *The Theory of Originary Interest*. (At this time, I still followed Mises in describing what businessmen and accountants normally describe as profit, and which I too now refer to as profit, as “originary interest.”)

In January of 1963, I learned that one of the members of my reading committee had rejected the dissertation. In order to gain his approval, it was necessary for me to eliminate well over half of the manuscript I had submitted, and write approximately thirty new pages at the beginning and thirty more new pages at the end. (On my own initiative, I replaced “originary interest” with “profit” throughout.) The last time I spoke with this committee member, he said he liked the new version much better than the original one, except for the first thirty pages; he also said he had not yet read the last thirty pages. (Sometime later, I was told that this individual had left the university to write editorials for *The Washington Post*.) My dissertation, as finally approved, carries the title, *The Theory of Aggregate Profit and the Average Rate of Profit*.

This situation constituted the one time in my life when I was seriously disappointed in Mises. He told me that he found it amusing that I should receive such trouble from this particular committee member, whom he regarded as a Marxist, when what I was providing was a modernized, more scientific version of the very ideas that were the foundation of the man’s own beliefs. Mises believed that because of my resurrection of the classical economists, I was indirectly resurrecting Marx. Happily, he changed his mind on this subject two years later, after hearing my lecture, “A Ricardian’s Critique of the Exploitation Theory.” (The substance of this lecture was published many years later as my essay, “Classical Economics Versus the Exploitation Theory,” in *The Political Economy of Freedom Essays in Honor of F.A. Hayek*. The same analysis, greatly elaborated, appears in Chapter 11 of *Capitalism*. But the same essential material had been available to him in my original dissertation.)

Looking back over the past and all that has led to the writing of my book, I cannot help but take the greatest possible pride and satisfaction in the fact that along the way, in having been the student of both Ludwig von Mises and Ayn Rand, I was able to acquire what by my own standards at least is the highest possible “intellectual pedigree” that it is possible for any thinker to have acquired in my lifetime, or, indeed, in any other lifetime. I can only hope that if they were alive, they would look favorably upon what I have attempted to build on the foundations they gave me. ■

MEETING MURRAY ROTHBARD ON THE  
ROAD TO LIBERTARIANISM

IN HIGH SCHOOL, I TOOK MY “first steps” toward becoming a libertarian when I read books by Ayn Rand and Frédéric Bastiat, and subscribed to *The Freeman* magazine. I didn’t know it at the time, but those chance philosophical encounters would lead to a multifaceted career in journalism, broadcasting, audio book narration, and editing that would span more than three decades.

I received my first copy of the Foundation for Economic Education’s *The Freeman* in 1963. In it, I found a definition (offered by a writer named Leonard Read, of whom I had never heard) of a word that was also new to me: the word libertarian. With something of a start, I realized that this word described me. I was a “libertarian”—and not, as I had thought, a conservative.

After a stint with Teenage Republicans for Goldwater and the University of Houston’s Ayn Rand Club, I decided to pursue a career in journalism. I started at KFWB, an all-news radio station in Los Angeles, where I worked as an anchor, interviewer, writer, and producer. In later years, my voice was heard as a daily economics commentator for CNN Radio and as a weekly commentator on the Cato Institute’s Byline, which was broadcast coast to coast on several hundred radio stations.

While in Los Angeles, I was exposed to the writings of Robert LeFevre, Lysander Spooner, and Murray Rothbard, and began to work for magazines that catered to the growing libertarian movement. Beginning in 1977, I served as a contributing editor or writer for *Reason*, *New Libertarian*, *The Libertarian Review*, and *Inquiry*.

Over the years, I also published more than 400 editorials, op-ed columns, and reviews (of literature, music, and film) in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and others. In addition, I worked as an editorial writer and columnist in California for the *Orange County Register* and the *Oakland Tribune*. Whenever possible, I did pieces, whether for newspapers or for radio, that promoted libertarian ideas.

In 1998, I published my first book, *In Praise of Decadence*. The book, an overview of the libertarian movement’s impact on the 1960s, argued that baby boomers “have always been more libertarian than anyone expected,” according to Prometheus Books. The book also suggested that the oft-criticized “decadence” (that is, disrespect for traditional authority) of

the 1960s ushered in a vibrant era of cultural experimentation and growth in America. The book received a five-star rating from readers at Amazon.com.

Drawing on vocal skills I honed in radio, I have narrated the audio book versions of numerous libertarian works, including David Boaz's *Libertarianism: A Primer*, Rose Wilder Lane's *The Discovery of Freedom*, and Jim Powell's *The Triumph of Liberty*. I also taught philosophy, music appreciation, popular culture, and writing at San Francisco's Academy of Art College. ■

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LLEWELLYN H. ROCKWELL, JR.

## LIBERTARIANISM AND THE OLD RIGHT

IN FEBRUARY 1999, for research he was doing on postwar libertarianism, Brian Doherty interviewed Lew Rockwell. The interview was published in the May 12, 1999, issue of SpintechMag.com.

*Doherty:* How and under what circumstances did you first become interested in political philosophy/work? Was it of an individualist/libertarian orientation from the beginning?

*Rockwell:* I've been interested in ideological matters from the earliest age. My father was a Taft Republican, and trained me well. A good thing too, for even as a schoolboy, I argued with my teachers over the New Deal, public accommodations laws, U.S. entry into World War II, and McCarthy's questioning of the military elites (I'd still like to know who promoted Peress).

I told them that Tailgunner Joe should have been attacking the U.S. government all along, because it was the real threat to our liberties. That drove my teachers crazy. None of them would be surprised that I grew up to be a full-time gadfly against the conventional wisdom.

My influences included Taft, Garrett, Flynn, Nock, Mencken, Chodorov, Tansill, and the scholastic just-war tradition. Though a Yankee, I never subscribed to the Lincoln cult, and I admired the Southern secessionists for taking the original constitutional compact seriously.

For my twelfth birthday a friend of my father's gave me Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*. That book taught me how to think in economic terms, and I have been reading in economics ever since, with a special appreciation for the old French liberal school and the modern Austrians from Menger to Rothbard.

Once oriented, I gained reinforcement from a wide range of literature in high school and as an English major. I found property rights in German literature, skepticism against the state in English literature, and a love of liberty in American literature.

I was also taken with Cicero: his love of liberty and the old republic; his celebration of natural elites and opposition to egalitarianism; and, most of all, his fighting, indefatigable spirit. I believed that he was no less right because his principled stand did not prevail. There is virtue in the fight regardless of the outcome. The eloquence and courage of Tacitus influenced me for the same reasons.

Over time, I became aware that I was not only dissenting from the left but also from the conservative establishment, which was embroiled in the Cold War as a first principle. I grew increasingly skeptical of the official right, especially during the war on Vietnam.

Back then, the establishment meant *National Review*. There were some good people on the masthead, and it wasn't as neoconservative domestically as it later became, but the magazine's position on the Cold War came close to calling for a murderous first strike use of nuclear weapons. I could never understand how a person claiming to understand the merits of liberty and property, much less a person schooled in Christian ethics, could entertain such a bloody fantasy.

In the 1960s, like Murray, my sympathies were with the anti-war crowd (but not the unrelated Age of Aquarius bunch). I liked the willingness to resist, the commitment to principle, the moral tone, the defiance of the power elites. I had been a reluctant Goldwaterite in 1964, but by 1968 I worked briefly for Gene McCarthy.

There were some very sophisticated antistatist writings coming out of the left at that point. This is what distinguished the New Left from the Old Left. The Old Left, at least since the Stalin-Hitler pact, had become cautiously pro-empire and unflinchingly pro-D.C. bureaucracy. To believe in any central planning, as the Old Left did, is to cease to be a radical, of course. It means to love what the bureaucracy was doing and aspired to do.

This is why the New Left was a breath of fresh air. Its orientation was anti-government. It focused on a fundamental moral issue—whether the U.S. government should be waging war on foreign peoples—and it was open to historically revisionist scholarship that demonstrated the evils of the corporate state in American history. The focus was also correct: on the war profits being garnered by the munitions manufacturers, exactly as the Old Right had done in the interwar period. If you read Mises's *Liberalism*, you see the same ideological disposition at work at a different time and a different place.

In some ways, there was a dovetailing of the New Left and the little that remained of the Old Right. For instance, hardly anyone remembers this, but the right was actually divided on Vietnam.

I remember when Robert Welch of the John Birch Society, harkening back to a praiseworthy Americanist impulse, criticized the war. It was then that *National Review* turned its guns on the JBS, citing a book Welch had written on Eisenhower some ten years earlier.

It was sheer farce. Buckley tolerated dissent on a wide range of issues—even allied himself with anti-Soviet Marxists like Max Eastman and Sydney Hook—so long as he could consolidate a consensus for the buildup of the military state.

The civil-rights movement of the 1960s complicates the picture. My ideological sympathies were and are with those who resisted the federal government's attacks on the freedom of association (not to mention the federalist structure of the Constitution) in the name of racial integration. I never liked Martin Luther King, Jr. I thought he was a fraud and a tool. But when he turned his attention to the evils of the U.S. war on Vietnam, I began to like him. That's also when the establishment turned against him, and soon he was murdered.

These days, the neocons say the 1964 Civil Rights Act was an attempt to remove barriers to opportunity, and only later was distorted with quotas. That's absurd. Everyone, both proponents and opponents, knew exactly what that law was: a statist, centralizing measure that fundamentally attacked the rights of property and empowered the state as mind reader: to judge not only our actions, but our motives, and to criminalize them.

The good folks who resisted the civil-rights juggernaut were not necessarily ideologically driven. Mostly they resented horrible intrusions into their communities, the media smears, and the attacks on their fundamental freedoms that civil rights represented. The brighter lights among the resistance movement correctly forecast quotas, though few could have imagined monstrosities like the Americans With Disabilities Act. Of course, they were and continue to be viciously caricatured by the partisans of central power.

By the way, I've recently noticed that mild neoconish critics of the ADA are saying that it too was passed with the best of intentions, and only went wrong later. This is a fantasy based on an impulse to always believe the best of the state and its edicts.

In the early 1920s, Mises said that no man who has contributed to art, science, or letters has had anything good to say about the state and its laws. That is exactly right. Intellectual secession from the ruling regime is the first step to clear, creative thought.

How can all these threads in my personal history be reconciled? What was missing in those days, that the ascendance of libertarian theory in Rothbard's hands later provided, was an overarching framework to explain why war resistance, opposing forced integration, and celebrating individual enterprise were all of a piece. Liberty rooted in private property is the highest political virtue, and its enemy is the consolidated state. I have made that my lifetime credo.

But those were frustrating days and ideological confusion was everywhere. When Nixon was in power, I could not stand him (though I will admit to once having had a sneaking appreciation of Agnew). Like many later political leaders on the right, he talked a good game but expanded government power in ways the left never could have gotten away with.

Affirmative action, the EPA, the CPSC, the CFTC, destruction of the gold standard, massive inflation, welfarist ideology, huge deficits, price controls, and a host of other D.C. monstrosities were Nixon creations—not to mention the bloodiest years of the war. Nixon's carpet bombing of Cambodia, for example, destroyed the monarchy and brought the Khmer Rouge to power. Nixon, Kissinger, and the rest have the blood of millions on their hands.

In intellectual circles, you could find conservatives who would write passionate articles and give riveting speeches on the glories of free enterprise. But then the other shoe would drop. Nixon is the answer, they said, because at least he has his priorities straight: before restoring free enterprise at home, the U.S. needed to be a world empire to defeat the Russian army. The Russian army was defeated, or rather fell under its own weight, and all we're left with is another evil empire. We're still waiting for free enterprise.

*Doherty:* How did you get involved with Arlington House? When did Arlington House begin, who financed it, what was its philosophy, and why did it die?

*Rockwell:* In the early 1930s, most libertarian literature was published by mainstream houses. There wasn't much of it, but our ideas did get a hearing. Hazlitt was published in *The Nation* and the *American Century*, Garrett appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and Nock was in the *Atlantic*, while the Southern Agrarians were at the height of the literary profession and Mencken had the *American Mercury*. American Austrian economists like Benjamin Anderson and Frank Fetter had very high profiles in academia and business. And there was Colonel McCormick's *Chicago Tribune*.

But a decade of the Depression and the New Deal killed off most mainstream outlets. Opposing the federal government became politically incorrect, and publishers didn't want to take the risk of calling down the price-control police or being accused of sedition. The generation that opposed the New Deal's welfare-warfare state did not reproduce itself on any serious scale, and those who remained couldn't get a hearing.

After Roosevelt tricked the Japanese into firing the first shot, the America First Committee, which had been a major vehicle for the resistance, shut down, and after the war, dissident, pro-liberty publishing houses survived only in a handful of places.

Our professors had mostly retired, and our journalists were reduced to the status of pamphleteers. The left enjoyed ridiculing libertarian political commentary because it was so unmainstream, and they were able to point to the existence of all these cranky pamphlets to prove it wasn't serious material. Of course, Trotskyite pamphlets were never similarly attacked.

The only real publishers out there were Caxton, Regnery, and Devin-Adair, which did heroic work, but their distribution channels were limited, and in the latter case, some of the material cranky and tainted. Think about it: it was something of a miracle that Mises's books were able to come to print at Yale University. But we should appreciate the fact that there was massive internal and external resistance to each one.

In the middle 50s, as a consequence of Russell Kirk's book, *The Conservative Mind*, the word "conservative" came to describe anyone who was a non-socialist skeptic of federal policy. I was unhappy with the word, because I was a conscious disciple of the pre-war Nock-Mencken-libertarian school. There was a fundamental difference between the Old and New Right of Kirk's making. Kirk's book celebrated some good writers and statesmen. But he distorted what it was that drove them, which was not the "politics of prudence" but implacable moral and philosophical conviction. The main thrust of Kirk's influence, I believe, was to turn the right against its best pre-war instincts.

In Kirk's hands, conservatism became a posture, a demeanor, a mannerism. In practice, it asked nothing more of people than to acquire a classical education, sniff at

the modern world, and privately long for times past. And if there was a constant strain in Kirkian conservatism, it was opposition to ideology, a word that Kirk demonized. This allowed him to accuse Mises and Marx of the same supposed error. In fact, ideology means nothing more than systematic social thought. Without systematic thought, the intellectual shiftiness of statist impulse gets a free ride. You can't fight the massive and organized powers of statist, centralist, and generally destructionist social forces armed only with a watch chain and an antique vocabulary. Ultimately, the question that must be asked and definitively answered in the world of ideas was posed most famously by Lenin: What is to be done?

On the answer to that question rides the fate of civilization itself. And if those of us who believe in the magnificence of the classical-liberal vision of society do not answer it definitively, we will lose. Seeing this, men like Frank Meyer—who was a libertarian on all matters but war and peace—blasted Kirk as a statist and an irrationalist. In the end, however Kirk's moderatism and escapism prevailed because it was an easier path.

Rejecting this easier path was Neil McCaffrey, an extraordinary man who later became my friend and professional mentor on many levels. He was a very close friend of Meyer's, as was Murray. Neil had founded the Conservative Book Club in 1964, and built a booming market among *National Review* and *Human Events* readers. But he soon noted that there were not enough books for people to buy.

That's why Neil founded Arlington House in 1965, and named it after Robert E. Lee's ancestral home, stolen by Lincoln for a Union cemetery. (I still hope to see it returned some day.) McCaffrey had hoped to create a major publishing house that would bring conservative classics and contemporary titles to a broad public for the first time in the post-war period.

There was a series of books forecasting the death of the gold standard and its consequences, by Bill Rickenbacker and Harry Browne, preeminently. The only bestseller Arlington ever had was Harry's *How You Can Profit From the Coming Devaluation*, and I worked as his editor. I also edited George Roche's books, and the works of other many conservative leaders. I was peripherally involved in the publication of Hazlitt's books.

Preeminently, I served as editor for new editions of Mises's *Theory and History*, *Bureaucracy*, and *Omnipotent Government*. Reading those books, I became a thoroughgoing Misesian. I was so thrilled to meet him at dinner in 1968. He was already in serious decline, but it was still wonderful. That is also when I got to know his wife, Margit, who later helped me found the Mises Institute.

Neil and I disagreed about foreign policy, and it was an uncomfortable topic. He was opposed to U.S. entry into the two world wars, and sound on the so-called civil war, but he was a complete cold warrior, like most people of his generation. However, on economics, Mises was his guide. One of his favorite topics was the moral and economic justification of charging interest. He was also a brilliant student of Catholic theology, literature, and history, and a saintly man.

Intellectually, I was a libertarian, but I stayed out of the movement, mainly because I had other interests in the publishing world, and the libertarians struck me as a strange bunch in the early 1970s. It seemed to be more a lifestyle movement than a political one, a problem

that still persists. There was a very clear distinction in those days between libertarian intellectuals like Murray Rothbard, whom I admired, and the developing movement at large.

Neil had partners in the business, and he lost control, with Buckley playing a malicious role. The company was sold to Roy Disney in the mid-1970s, and eventually phased out.

By this time, I had gone to work for Hillsdale College. I had known George Roche while at Arlington, and admired the fact that he was both anti-war, having written his doctoral dissertation on 1930s war resistance on the right, and a free enterpriser with Austrian sympathies. At Hillsdale, I started *Imprimis* and Hillsdale College Press, set up a speakers' series, oversaw public and movement relations, and helped with fundraising.

It was clear to me at the time that Murray Rothbard was Mises's successor, and I followed his writings carefully. I first met him 1975, and knew immediately that he was a kindred spirit. Like all the other living intellectuals I respected, he was on the margins, laboring at a fraction of the salary he deserved, and excluded from conventional outlets of academic and political opinion.

I cannot remember the day that I finally came around to the position that the state is unnecessary and destructive by its nature—that it cannot improve on, and indeed only destroys, the social and economic system that grows out of property rights, exchange, and natural social authority—but I do know that it was Rothbard who finally convinced me to take this last step.

Unfortunately, I could only admire his writings at a distance. I tried to get Hillsdale to invite him to speak, but that was ruled out immediately. I was told that he might be a fine economist, but he was a loose cannon, unconnected from an organized apparatus of conservative thinking.

But what really did Murray in was not his conviction that the state was unnecessary, but his position on the Cold War. Libertarians were said to be tacit supporters of the Sovietization of the world. It was utter nonsense, but this accusation that Rothbard was a “fine economist” but nothing else would dog him until the end. I always saw this as a rationalization to justify fear of a fundamental rethinking of political philosophy and world affairs.

After Hillsdale, I turned to editing a journal of socioeconomic medicine called *Private Practice*. I worked to integrate the work of the Austrians and apply it to health economics and government intervention in that industry. It proved to be a fruitful mix, and in my mind demonstrated the possibilities of using the Austrian tradition to explain the way the world works in a very practical way.

*Doherty:* How did you end up working with Ron Paul?

*Rockwell:* In those days, unlike today, I had a keen interest in the affairs of Congress: the members of each committee, the legislation that was being considered, and the like. Being a Congressional aide had always been a dream of mine, as absurd as that may sound today. When Ron won his first full term, he asked me to work for him.

We never saw his office as a conventionally political one. It was a bully pulpit to get the message out. We sent out hundreds of thousands of tracts on freedom, inserted amazing articles in the Congressional Record, and drafted libertarian legislation as an educational effort.

As for his voting record, Ron had a clear standard: if it meant stealing people's money, he was against it. If it gave people back the liberty and property the government had taken, he was for it. Most of the lobbyists eventually stopped visiting our offices.

He was always respected by fellow legislators, but they thought of him as a bit off-kilter. It was *Mr. Paul Goes to Washington*. Politicians view their job as trading votes, getting their share of pork, expanding government, and generally playing the game. They believe they are being productive when they have helped pass more spending and regulatory legislation, and the price for their vote gets high indeed.

Ron was the opposite. He was a standing rebuke, not only to his colleagues but to the entire system. He still is.

Not many people in D.C. understood what Ron was up to. I remember once when a lobbyist came by and demanded that Ron oppose foreign aid to the Philippines on grounds that people there killed dogs for food. Ron was glad to support cutting foreign aid for any reason. He introduced the bill, and overnight he was celebrated by animal-rights activists all over the country.

Of course, the bill didn't pass. It's important to remember that ideology plays a very small role in legislative affairs except as a kind of public relations gloss. If a farming bill is passed by a Republican Congress, it is called the "Freedom To Farm Act." If it is passed by a Democratic Congress, it is called the "Family Farm Fairness Act." The text can be identical; only the coloring changes.

Watching this system up close, all my worst suspicions about government were confirmed. When I later started the Mises Institute, I swore that it would not function the way party think-tanks in Britain do: as intellectual veneer to a gruesome system of legislative exploitation.

Washington has its own version, of course, and if anyone thinks Congressmen or their aides study some group's "policy report" on this or that bill, he knows nothing about the imperial capital of the world. Its animating force is not ideas but graft, lies, and power. Those policy studies are for PR. On the other hand, there is a cost to treating the policy game as if it were some sort of intellectual club to which we all belong: it imbues the process with a moral legitimacy it does not deserve.

A scam was perfected in the early 1980s among leading politicians and the think-tanks. A group celebrates a politician's supposed achievements in exchange for which the politician pretends to be influenced by the group. It's all a public relations game. This is a major reason why Murray was never able to work within that system. He had an irrepressible urge to tell the truth regardless of the consequences. Sure, he was a loose cannon, as any cannon should be on the ship of an imperial state.

*Doherty:* What was the genesis of the Mises Institute? How difficult was it to get off the ground?

*Rockwell:* When I was in D.C., my happiest moments were receiving calls from students who wanted to know more about Ron and his ideas. He had a huge amount of support on Texas campuses. He struck students as smart, principled, and radical. But sending students speeches and pamphlets only took matters so far. I wanted to do more, but as I looked

around, I didn't see any libertarian organization that focused on advancing academic scholarship specifically focused on the Austrian School.

Also, I worried that Mises had been losing status as a thinker since his death. Hayek's place was secure because of the Nobel Prize. But the rationalism of Mises, the tough-edged quality of his thinking and his prose, the conviction that economics is a logical system that can justly claim the mantle of science, seemed to be fading.

The free enterprisers were turning toward murkier thinkers, monetarists, positivists, and even institutionalists who had no interest in the grand Misesian project. This also seemed to go along with an unwillingness to consider difficult and radical questions on grounds that they were politically unviable.

There was overlap here with what was happening in politics. Since the early 1970s, the conservative movement was increasingly dominated by former members of the Old Left who had made their way over to the right. These so-called neoconservatives made the switch in opposition to George McGovern's foreign policy "isolationism," but they had not really changed their views on domestic issues.

To give them credit, the neocons always admitted that they hadn't left the Democrats; the Democrats had left them. They openly celebrated the legacies of Wilson, FDR, and Truman—mass-murdering, would-be dictators all.

That position needed to be refuted and fought, but instead, a military-minded conservative movement embraced the neocons as allies on the only issue that really mattered to them, the expansion of the warfare state. There was no place for Mises, whose writings on war and statism were numerous and profound, in this new consensus.

There were few alternatives to the Reaganized right. The Beltway libertarians were drifting more and more toward policy and a generalized concern with respectability (the two go hand in hand), and away from Austrian economics and anything that smacked of idealism or a high theoretical concern. Hosting Alan Greenspan at a cocktail party became the goal.

I noticed a similar tendency among scholarship-granting institutions. They seemed interested in subsidizing only Ivy League students of a soft classical-liberal bent, rather than promoting the concrete development and application of radical thought.

Another approach I rejected was quietism. I've never been impressed with the idea that we should sit back in complacent satisfaction that we constitute the remnant, while others eventually join us or not. Surely ideas do have consequences, but reality dictates that they need passionate scholars to advance them on every front.

Hence, Mises as a thinker, who had done so much to resuscitate old-fashioned, tough-minded liberalism, was falling by the wayside, a victim of a movement that eschewed all such unrespectable thinkers. Misesian theory and practice were fading fast. I set out to change that, and to serve a neglected generation of students. Idealism is what stirs the young heart, and the only idealism that seemed to be available to students in those days was from the left. I harkened back to my lifetime love of Mises, of his brilliance and his courage, and talked with Margit about the project. She was thrilled, made me promise to make it my lifetime work, and we got busy.

When I asked Murray to head academic affairs, he brightened up like a kid on Christmas morning. We agreed that the goal should be to provide a support system that would revive

the Austrian School as a player in the world of ideas, so that statism of the left and right could be fought and defeated.

The main criticism directed against Austrian economics in those days was that it was not formal or rigorous because it rejected the use of mathematics as the tool for constructing economic theory. But this is absurd. In fact, Murray actually had two majors as an undergraduate: one in economics and the other in math. What was at stake here was not the competence of the Austrians but a fundamental methodological question: can the methods of the physical sciences be imported to the social sciences via economics? The Austrian answer was no.

At the same time, there was a grain of truth in the criticisms. American academia provided no formal setting to study economics from the Austrian perspective. Most of the then-current practitioners were self-taught, so even they had a limited perspective on the possibilities of creating an alternative formal system of economics.

I wanted to make up for this deficiency by creating a shadow university setting in which students could study economics under the post-Mises generation of Austrian scholars, especially Murray.

Murray loved our programs. He would teach all afternoon and stay up until 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. talking to students about ideas. He was always accessible, laughed easily, and was never foreboding. He learned from everyone around him and rejected the “guru” persona he could have so easily adopted.

Students who came to us expecting a stern setting of judgmental theorizing were shocked to discover something closer to a salon where intellectual inquiry was free and open-ended. It had to be that way to balance out the rigor of the content. Murray’s spirit still animates all our programs.

The funding problem was one I dealt with from the beginning. I had wanted to give Murray a platform, but I quickly discovered that old-line foundations would not help so long as he was on board. They certainly would not support an organization that argued for positions like the abolition of central banking, or funded revisionist historical scholarship and disagreed with the two-party consensus in Washington.

Corporate foundations, meanwhile are not very interested in ideas generally, particularly not ones that threatened the status quo. It’s a cliché now, but I also found that big corporations are not the strongest supporters of free enterprise.

I also found that most old-line foundation and corporate money comes with strings attached. And if there is one institutional feature I desired for the Mises Institute, beyond its ideological stance, it was independence.

I did not want to get roped into supporting cranky policy projects like vouchers or enterprise zones, and I did not want to be forced into emphasizing some aspects of Misesian theory simply because they were trendy, while feeling compelled to deemphasize others. I never wanted to find myself censoring an associated scholar because some foundation bigshot didn’t like what he was saying.

I wanted to see the fullness of the Austrian program funded and represented, consistently, fearlessly, and regardless of the fallout. The Mises Institute needed to do work that is deep and wide. It needed to be free to support research in areas like economic

methodology, which doesn't interest corporations, or blast the newest policy gimmick, a stance that doesn't interest foundations. Finally, government money was not ever a consideration.

In the end, our support has come from individual donors and nearly exclusively so. I had a good-size Rolodex, so I started there. Ron Paul and others signed letters to their lists, which was a big help, and I had enough savings to work a few years without a salary.

We've been in business now for 17 years, and it took a long time to become viable. But we built slowly and carefully, brick by brick, and now have a solid edifice. And we still have our independence, and we still have an edge.

*Doherty:* I've heard intimations that Koch interests attempted to stymie the Mises Institute's development. Is this so, and if so, specifically how?

*Rockwell:* It wasn't exactly subtle. In the early eighties, Charles Koch monopolized the libertarian think-tank world by giving and promising millions. That's fine, but he was gradually edging away from radical thought, which included Austrian economics, and toward mainstreaming libertarian theory (as opposed to libertarianizing the mainstream) that attracted him in the first place.

I have never understood this type of thinking. If being mainstream is what you want, there are easier ways to go about it than attempting to remake an intellectual movement that is hostile to government, into a mildly dissenting subgroup within the ideological structure of the ruling class.

Murray and Charles broke at this point, and I won't go into the details. But it was clear that Koch saw their break as the beginning of a long war. Early on, I received a call from George Pearson, head of the Koch Foundation. He said that Mises was too radical and that I mustn't name the organization after him, or promote his ideas. I was told that Mises was "so extreme even Milton Friedman doesn't like him." If I insisted on going against their diktat, they would oppose me tooth and nail.

Later, I heard from other Koch men. One objected to the name of our monthly newsletter, *The Free Market*. The idea this time was that the word "free" was off-putting. Another said that the idea of an Austrian academic journal was wrong, since it implied we were a separate school, and mustn't be. All urged me to dump Murray and then shun him, if I expected any support.

I was taken aback by what I interpreted as pettifoggery, and I had no idea what we would yet face. I negotiated a contract with Lexington Books for an annual journal, and put together a pretty good list of editorial advisers with Murray as the editor. Soon after, what came to be called "the boycott" began. Letters and calls poured in from those associated with Koch-dominated organizations. They resigned and swore eternal enmity. We even lost some big donors. It was my baptism-by-fire into the world of research institutes.

It may seem absurd to talk about this as if it were some sort of conspiracy against the Mises Institute. Why would a multi-billionaire care if the Institute existed or not? I mean, we were a gnat compared to his water buffalo. It's a mystery that even today I do not entirely understand. In any case, there was blood all over the place by the time it was over.

Among threatened programs, the *Review of Austrian Economics* was nearly killed, but Murray persevered and the first issue came out in 1986. We went through ten volumes of that journal, and it was the key to building up the Austro-Misesian movement as we know it today. The entire collection is PDF'ed on Mises.org, and downloaded by students all over the world. And now we have the higher-profile *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*.

Today, I regard all these early conflicts as water under the bridge. The Koch Foundation uses our texts in their seminars, and the old antipathies are dwindling. Koch organizations are no longer shocked to see us taking different views in areas like vouchers and trade treaties. They serve one agenda with a particular style, approach, and audience, and we serve another with a different style, approach, and audience.

One note about competition among non-profits. From time to time, well-meaning people suggest that the Mises Institute join with other like-minded groups. By pooling our resources, we would have a greater impact. But this rationale is flawed. Competition is as essential in the non-profit world as it is in enterprise generally. The early opposition spurred us on to do a better job, never to give up, and never to give in.

I still get harassed from time to time about something someone connected to us has written or said. I'm told that I should do something to shut him up, and indeed policy institutes can be very restrictive in the way they treat their scholars. If they are pursuing a political agenda, I suppose they have to be. But I don't believe in telling any of our associated scholars—and there are fully 200 of them—what to think or what to write.

That's because I founded the Mises Institute to provide a setting for unrestricted intellectual exploration in the Austrian tradition, no matter how radical the conclusions may be. There are no speech controls at our conferences. There is no fear that someone will say something that lies outside the preset boundaries of respectable opinion.

I cannot let the temptation to get along with everybody, or fit into someone else's strategic agenda, stand in the way. In the political and academic worlds, taboos are piling up by the day, but they are enemies of serious thought.

The Mises Institute has a unique place in the division of labor, and it is to make possible a radical reevaluation of the intellectual foundations of the modern statist enterprise. Our senior scholars—Walter Block, Tom DiLorenzo, David Gordon, Jeff Herbener, Hans Hoppe, Guido Hülsmann, Peter Klein, Yuri Maltsev, Ralph Raico, Joe Salerno, and Mark Thornton, Tom Woods—lead the way. Some people say our approach is reckless. I can only hope that it always remains so.

*Doherty:* Relate to me what you think the Mises Institute's greatest successes have been.

*Rockwell:* Most recently, I'm thrilled with the restored *Human Action*. I was astounded when I first realized how far later editions of this book had strayed from the original. I mean, the third edition has Mises endorsing conscription, which was not only not in the original, but Mises had specifically and persuasively condemned conscription in his writings.

There were other problems. Important passages on Nazi economic planning were eliminated as were whole paragraphs from the section on monopoly. By comparison, the

first edition is a seamless web and I'm so pleased that it is back in print in a scholar's edition. It's been flying out of our offices.

By the way, what economics text of 900 pages is still a huge seller fifty years after it first appeared? I can't think of one. Facts like this tell me that Mises is here to stay. In the next century, I'm convinced he'll have a much higher profile than he did in this one. He was a prophet and a fantastic genius. Not that his work shouldn't ever be improved or criticized. We have such papers at every session of our Austrian Scholars Conferences. But we have to have the material available to learn from before it can be revised, improved, and reinterpreted.

The first book the Mises Institute printed was Mises's *Theory and History*, with an introduction by Murray. It is still a big seller. We have brought Murray's *Ethics of Liberty* back into print, along with two dozen monographs on the Austrian School that we have distributed all over the world.

Our book *The Costs of War* has been called the most important piece of anti-war revisionist scholarship in the second half of this century. Our book *Secession, State, and Liberty* is a success. We brought *Man, Economy, and State* back into print, as well as a dozen other books. We even have a new edition of Murray's *America's Great Depression*, with an introduction by Paul Johnson, and an Austrian economics text for smart high-school students, in the works.

Oddly, I never envisioned the Mises Institute as a publishing house, though it could easily be mistaken for one. We are funding the research and writing of a major intellectual biography of Mises, a massive two-volume project. We want one of Rothbard as well. And we have five regular periodicals: a newsletter on current trends, an interview publication, a literary review, a scholarly journal, and a news and information sheet on the Austrian School.

Meanwhile, our summer Mises University has put a host of Ph.D. students in economics through a rigorous program that would otherwise be unavailable. We've trained plenty of historians, philosophers, theologians, and others too. We've also started a summer Rothbard Graduate Seminar for advanced Ph.D. students and post-docs, and been overwhelmed by the worldwide response. There's also our weekly Austrian Economics Workshop.

We spend the bulk of our money on students and student programs. When we take on a graduate student in economics, we stick by him or her for up to six years. That's a huge investment, but look at the results. We now have professors honeycombed through academia, and they have made Austrian economics a vital part of their curricula.

Our Mises and Rothbard Fellows are in demand, and not only because more and more departments seek genuine diversity at a time of Austrian renaissance. They are among the best young economists working today. Not only can they run rings around the mainstream with the mainstream's own tools, but their praxeological grounding gives them a real leg-up in understanding actual economic events. They are also blessed with the vocation to teach, to be scholars in the classical tradition. This is no way to get rich, and it's not for everyone, but in the secular world, there is no higher calling.

Over the long term, this will be where the Mises Institute makes the biggest difference. Seventeen years ago, Austrians had a hard time finding positions, much less holding on to

them, but these days, we run out of candidates long before the requests for our students stop. Demand is outstripping supply.

Hazlitt told me that he thought the great success of the Mises Institute was providing a forum for Rothbard at a time when everyone else had turned his back on him. I am indeed proud of that. I also think that the Mises Institute has helped raise up an alternative intellectual framework as freedom of thought and speech has played a smaller and smaller role in academia.

The faculty at our conferences speak of their elation at escaping the stultifying political rules of their home campuses. Our students feel it too. That kind of freedom and collegiality is what a university is supposed to be about.

But I think the key achievement of the Mises Institute is the one Murray pointed to. Before the Institute, Austrian economics was in danger of becoming a hard-money investment strategy or an anti-rationalist process analysis—ironic indeed for a school rooted in Aristotelianism. The Institute rescued the praxeologically based main trunk of the school, and restored it to prominence and fruitfulness. Thus the Austrian School of Menger, Böhm-Bawerk, Mises, and Rothbard lives and grows and has increasing influence.

*Doherty:* Tell me about your involvement with the Libertarian Party, and the specific reasons for your disenchantment with it.

*Rockwell:* I was never an LP person, though I generally like the platform, which was largely written by Murray. People say that he wasted his time in the LP. That judgment presumes that geniuses like Murray should not be allowed to have hobbies and amusements. He loved Baroque church architecture and 1920s jazz. He loved soap operas and sports. He loved chess and eighteenth-century oratorios. And he enjoyed, for many years, his activities with the LP, particularly since it was a hobby that intersected with his professional interests. It certainly didn't distract from his scholarly work, which continued unabated through this entire period.

For years, as close as we were, I largely ignored what Murray was doing in the LP. But Ron Paul decided to run for the 1988 presidential nomination, and he announced in 1986. That's when I got involved. I feared he wasn't going to get the nomination. To my astonishment, Russell Means, who didn't seem to be a libertarian at all, had a real shot at it. I swung into action, and helped orchestrate Ron's bid for the nomination. But that pretty much burned me out.

I wasn't pleased with what I saw in the party. I sensed a lack of interest in ideas and an absurd obsession with petty organizing details. There was a lot of waste of time and money. I also felt like the party was creating a false hope of successfully bringing about reform through politics. And yet, in all these ways, I suppose it was no different from any other party.

What bugged me the most, however, was a general tendency among the party types to downplay libertarian theory in a host of areas. They were generally sound on tax cuts and drug policy and the like. But there was no interest at all in foreign policy. In fact, the largest faction in the party was actually hawkish on war and strangely conventional on policy particulars. Then there was the perpetual focus on living a life of liberty. A life of liberty meant, in the first instance, never wearing a tie or a white shirt.

The last time I had any contact with the LP was the summer of 1989 in Philadelphia. Sweet, sweet Murray, eternally optimistic and good-hearted Murray, rose to the platform to make the case for electing this chairman over that chairman. I forget the details. In any case, they hissed at him. They booed him. They shouted him down and denounced him. I thought: this is just amazing.

The greatest libertarian thinker in history, and they can't even treat him politely? Even more astounding, Murray thought nothing of it. To him, this was just life in the LP. It was then that I thought: This is it. I reemphasized to Murray my views on these people, which he had come to share, and suggested we get out. We did, and his wife Joey cheered.

Again, this is water under the bridge. I'm perfectly happy for the LP to go about its business. Harry Browne said some good things in the last election. He's generally a man after my own heart. I'm just not cut out for politics, and I don't think politics holds out much hope for the future of human liberty.

*Doherty:* Tell me about your relationships with Pat Buchanan and the Randolph Club.

*Rockwell:* Before I do that, let me just emphasize that all these political goings-on were a mere sidelight in Murray's life. His main project in these years was the magisterial *History of Economic Thought* that came out just after he died. For most academics, these two volumes would be more than enough to show for an entire career. But for Murray, they were just a slight piece of a massive literary output.

His output was huge, even aside from scholarship. On a typical morning, I would find a 20-page article on politics on my fax, and a five-page article on strategy. For him, pounding out these gems was just a way to pass the time between 100-page scholarly articles and whole book manuscripts. His output was beyond human comprehension.

That's why Burt Blumert and I started the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*, whose name Murray was kind enough to suggest. At the Mises Institute, we could have spent all our time marketing his material to newspapers and magazines. Instead, we needed a steady place to publish all his short pieces on political and cultural topics, and—as Joey has mentioned—it was one of the joys of his last years.

At the same time, Murray needed practical ideological recreation to make his scholarly work possible and add leaven to his life. Leaving the LP lifted a burden off Murray's shoulders, but I worried that it would also leave something of a hole in his life. A part of him loved ideological organization on a grand scale.

Our first contacts with the paleoconservatives came after their huge break with the neoconservatives, the most warlike and statist intellectuals in the country. Murray and Tom Fleming, editor of *Chronicles*, exchanged letters and found they agreed on the intellectual errors on the right. Some people say Murray was becoming more conservative and conventional. This is unbelievably uncomprehending.

Murray rejected what Mises called the cultural destructionism of the left because he saw it as a back-door to state building. If you attack the family by impinging on its autonomy, the family can no longer serve as a bulwark against state power. So it is with leftist rhetoric that ridicules the habits, prejudices, traditions, and institutions that form the basis of settled,

middle-class community life. He saw the relentless attacks on these as paving the way for government managers to claim more territory as their own.

Moreover, it was Murray's conviction that government power was the greatest enemy that a rich cultural heritage has. It is not capitalism that wrecks the foundations of civilized life but the state. In this, he was in full agreement with Mises, Hayek, and Schumpeter. And incidentally, this line of argument, which Murray had long used, has been picked up by other libertarians in the meantime.

But the real bond between Tom and Murray was their shared hatred of the statism, centralism, and global warfarism of the conservative movement. They were both fed up with a Buckleyized conservatism, and now, at last, here was a chance to do something about it.

Together Murray and I watched as the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union dissolved, and we were intensely curious as to how the conservatives would respond. Would they return to their pre-war, anti-war roots? Or would they continue to push for the American empire? Well, we got our answer in 1990 with the beginnings of the Gulf War. It seemed obvious that this was Bush's attempt to keep the warfare state fat and thriving.

The U.S. gave permission to Iraq to annex Kuwait, and then suddenly reversed positions. The U.S. paid off countries around the world to be part of its "coalition" and waged a bloody war on Iraq, burying innocents in the sand and proclaiming victory over the aggressor.

We waited for the conservatives to denounce the war, but of course it didn't happen, although I'll always treasure Kirk's last letter to me, in which he called for hanging the "war criminal Bush" on the White House lawn. Too bad he never wrote like that in public. But the neocons were entirely in control of the right and cheered Bush to the heavens.

These were disgusting days. Bush dragged out all his taxfunded missiles and other weapons of mass destruction and put them on the Washington, D.C., mall for the boobsoisie to admire. Yellow ribbons were everywhere.

But the paleos were a different matter. Paul Gottfried, Allan Carlson, Clyde Wilson, Fleming, and others associated with the Rockford Institute blasted the war without qualification. They openly called the U.S. an imperial power and made the argument that we had always made: that the greatest threat to our liberties was not overseas but in the District of Columbia.

Meanwhile, we were alarmed that not even the libertarians seemed prepared to go this far. *Reason* magazine and the Republican Liberty Caucus were for the Gulf War, and *Liberty* magazine, for whom Murray had written, was ambivalent on the question. In general, there was silence from the people who should have been our natural allies. To us, that merely underscored a more deeply rooted problem in libertarian circles: the strange combination of cultural alienation and political conventionality.

We began to write about the errors of the "modal" libertarians. They were soft on war, sanguine about centralization of power, and friendly toward the rise of the social-therapeutic aspects of the state inherent in civil-rights egalitarianism. They were uninterested in scholarship and unschooled in history. They were culturally fringy and politically mainstream,

which is precisely the opposite of what Murray and Mises were. I couldn't imagine the old libertarian school of Nock, Chodorov, Garrett, Flynn, and Mencken at home with this.

The best of the paleoconservatives, in contrast, were old-fashioned constitutionalists who took libertarian positions on a range of issues. They wanted the troops home and the government out of people's lives. They wanted to abolish the welfare state, and had a very telling critique of it. Their critique was not based on rights, but it was serious and sophisticated.

The Center for Libertarian Studies co-founded the John Randolph Club, which I named for the aristocratic, anti-egalitarian battler of centralized power of the early nineteenth century. The word "paleolibertarian" was mine too, and the purpose was to recapture the political edge and intellectual rigor and radicalism of the prewar libertarian right. There was no change in core ideology but a reapplication of fundamental principles in ways that corrected the obvious failures of the *Reason* and *National Review* crowd.

I remember people at the time saying: "Oh no! You're falling in bed with a bunch of religious rightists!" I would just rub my eyes in dismay. In the first place, if a person believes in liberty and also happens to be religious, what is wrong with that? Since when did atheism become a mandatory view within libertarian circles? Also, the point was not to fall in bed with anybody but to organize a new intellectual movement precisely to do battle with the statist on all sides.

Much good came out of this. We took out ads in the *New York Times* attacking war and we gave the neocons a run for their money. We had some very good and fun meetings, and Murray had the chance for a productive exchange of ideas with some of the smartest thinkers in the country.

But there were limits to what could be accomplished. As old-fashioned Burkeans, somewhat influenced by Kirk, they resisted ideology in principle. That meant an impatience with the rationalism of economic theory and libertarian political theory. That eventually caused us problems on issues like trade. All sides opposed NAFTA, which was mercantilist, but we couldn't agree on the urgency of eliminating trade barriers. Still, the debates were fun. We agreed to cooperate where we could, and disagree where we must.

Another problem was that usual evil force in the world: politics. Nearly alone among Republicans, Pat Buchanan was a strong opponent of the war on Iraq, denouncing it up until the troops actually landed. He then began to offer a radical critique of the interventionist state in a host of areas. In 1991, he challenged Bush for the nomination, speaking out against Bush's tax increases and welfarism. In some ways, it appeared that he could become a dream candidate, uniting a passionate concern for both free enterprise and peace.

Conventional libertarians didn't like Pat, in part because he was against open immigration. But it seemed obvious that the patterns of immigration since 1965 have increased rather than decreased the government's control over the economy. And there is no obvious libertarian position on this subject: whether immigration is peaceful or invasive depends entirely on who owns the property onto which they immigrate, and whether they make their own way once here. The welfare state and public schools complicate the picture enormously.

Unfortunately for everyone, as the campaign progressed, Pat got more and more protectionist and nationalist. Murray saw that Buchanan was in danger of jettisoning all his good principles. If the state can and must plan trade to protect the nation, then why not the rest of the economy? Sure enough, by 1996, Pat's protectionist theories mutated and took over his economic thinking entirely. For example, he advocated a 100 percent tax on estates over \$1 million. Pat still says good things on foreign policy, but the lesson for me is an old one: never hinge the hopes of a movement on a politician.

*Chronicles* is open to libertarians, and the Randolph Club still meets. But, for me, this chapter in the history of ideological organizing came to a close with Murray's death. With Murray, anything seemed possible. We could dabble in practical tactics and strategy, write on every topic under the sun, and keep cranking out the students and academic conferences and publications. But without Murray, I needed to concentrate on what I do best, which was and is internal development. At the same time, the Mises Institute began to develop the resources to expand its horizons as broadly as Murray had always wanted.

*Doherty*: Do you feel you succeeded in creating the paleo movement you speculated about when you departed from the "modal" libertarian movement?

*Rockwell*: To some extent, I would say the present decline in the moral legitimacy of the executive state represents a paleoization, if you will, a systematic radicalization of the middle class. As Frank Rich has pointed out in the *New York Times*, all the real political dissidents and radicals, the people who are raising fundamental objections to the status quo of the American civil project, are on the right.

They are homeschoolers fed up with the propaganda in public schools. They are average Americans who fear and resent anyone with a federal badge and gun. The pro-lifers are pushing the boundaries of permissible civil disobedience. Anti-war rallies are as likely to be populated by old-line constitutionalists as aging New Lefties.

Meanwhile, the mainstream left is increasingly censorious. It is there that you find the book burners, the taboo enforcers, the thought police, and the apologists for federal tyranny.

On the other hand, and despite the continued growth of the state, we are seeing the flourishing of enterprise across the country and the world, an intense and renewed interest in the art of private life, and a continuing secession from establishment political institutions. Another way of putting this is that the classical ideal of liberty and private life is again gaining currency, and a major reason is the successes that an intellectual vanguard of Austrian scholars and political dissidents have had in undermining the ideological foundations of the state.

Murray anticipated all this with his outreach efforts to marginalized conservatives. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, he had an outstanding strategic sense. It's just that he was always ahead of everyone else in his thinking, and so he suffered detraction and calumny. Not that it mattered to him. Early in his career, he decided to take a certain path, inspired by the example of Mises, and he stuck with it to the end.

*Doherty:* What about plans for the future?

*Rockwell:* These days, we have more than enough work to do in publishing, funding, and supporting Austrian and libertarian scholarship, both of which are in a boom phase. People on the left thought that the collapse of socialism would mean that antisocialist intellectual forces would decline as well. The opposite has happened. At last, it is clear to anyone who cares about liberty that the real enemy is the ruling regime in government and academia, and that this ruling regime resides within our own borders.

The Internet has been a tremendous boost to the Austrian School and the classical liberal perspective. Since the second world war, the biggest hurdle our side has had is in getting the message out. At last, the net evens the score. Not a day goes by without hosts of people around the world discovering the world of Misesian-Rothbardian theory for the first time, just because they run across our website at Mises.org.

We're also building a Center for Libertarian Studies site at LibertarianStudies.org that will feature the back issues of the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* and the *RRR*, as well as Murray's classic *Libertarian Forum* and *Left and Right* journals. [Note: the founding of LewRockwell.com changed this; *JLS* (now published by the Mises Institute) and *Left and Right* are archived at Mises.org; we still hope to scan and upload the *Libertarian Forum* on LRC.] Our goal always is to provide the resources that keep people's attention on the conceptual fundamentals: liberty and property versus the state and its power.

Right now, we are faced with a historic opportunity. In academia, the old guard no longer has the same credibility among students. The left has surrendered the mantle of idealism and radicalism. The Austrian School is perfectly suited to be the new and fresh alternative. And in public affairs, we need to take advantage of the declining status and moral legitimacy of the central state to make a major push for libertarian ideas. The revolution that struck Eastern Europe a decade ago has come home in surprising ways, and we need to work to encourage these trends and direct them toward a consistent stand for liberty and property.

Many years ago, Hazlitt gave a speech in which he said it is our moral obligation to continue the battle no matter what the odds. What he said then is still true today: we are not threatened with bankruptcy or jail for holding the opinions we do. All we risk is being called nasty names. Surely that is not too high a price to pay for defending the very foundations of civilization. ■

## ARRIVING AT LIBERTARIANISM

MY JOURNEY TO LIBERTY BEGAN at the tender age of seven, when I fell madly in love with Walt Disney's rendition of General Francis Marion. This legendary Southern freedom fighter harassed the British during the Revolutionary War and became known as the elusive Swamp Fox. My infatuation was not simply with the hero of the TV show, played by actor Leslie Nielsen, however. Somehow the concept of freedom, poorly understood by my young mind, drew me like a magnet.

After I had exhausted everything that the library had on the Swamp Fox, I began reading accounts of the American Revolution, just to gain a better understanding of what my hero had been up against. My history classes dealing with the founding of our nation were disappointing, however. They dealt with prominent battles and dates and not with the true meaning of liberty.

Consequently, throughout high school, I still equated liberty with democracy. My first introduction to hard-core libertarian concepts was in my freshman year of college when a friend insisted that I read *Atlas Shrugged*.

Although I enjoyed the book immensely, I was concerned with its apparent lack of compassion. Raised as a Catholic, I could not reconcile the concept of ending tax-supported welfare with Christ's admonition to love our neighbors.

In considering this dilemma, I suddenly became aware of a pivotal point: although refusing to help others might not be very loving, pointing guns at our neighbors to force them to help those in need was even less so. Honoring our neighbor's choice was more loving than the forcible alternative. If people needed helping, I should expend my energy to offer that help, rather than forcing others to provide it.

In the next couple of years, I quickly went from an objectivist to anarchist. In the late 1960s, Morris and Linda Tannehill lived in the East Lansing, Michigan area, where I was going to school. Through the friend who encouraged me to read Ayn Rand's books, I met this fascinating couple and obtained a copy of their libertarian-anarchist book, *The Market for Liberty*.

I was easily won over to anarchism.

For the next several years, although philosophically a libertarian, I was not even aware of the term. I finally discovered the Party in the early 1980s.

For me, libertarianism continues to be an evolution. As I detail in *Healing Our World*, all paths, whether spiritual, practical, rational, or humanitarian, appear to lead to liberty,

where these separate modalities become intertwined. Perhaps we truly are hard-wired for freedom so that nothing less will do. ■

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 JOSEPH T. SALERNO
 

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## IT USUALLY ENDS WITH MURRAY ROTHBARD: MY LONG AND WINDING ROAD TO LIBERTARIANISM AND AUSTRIAN ECONOMICS

I VIVIDLY RECALL THE EVENT that set me on a long and winding road to libertarianism and Austrian economics. I was twelve years old and my parents, who were both first generation Italian-Americans, were hosting some of my mother's relatives, including a distant male cousin who had traveled from Italy to visit relatives residing in Rhode Island and New Jersey. His visit to our home was proceeding pleasantly if uneventfully that day when the subject of politics came up and the cousin revealed that he was a card-carrying member of the Italian Communist Party. My father was still a New Deal Democrat at the time, but also a devout, Jesuit-trained Catholic and staunch anti-Communist who had voted for Kennedy in the presidential election the year before. A ferocious argument immediately erupted between my father and the cousin that enthralled me—not because of the issues debated, which I did not understand, but because of the passion with which the two men expressed their views. The argument came to an abrupt halt when my father, who was a formidable presence with an appearance and booming voice that suggested the actor Anthony Quinn in his prime, roared a threat to throw the Commie out of our house. Naturally I was eager to see what would ensue and would have permitted events to take their course if I had my druthers, but my mother's untimely intervention succeeded in negotiating a shaky truce between the two combatants that held until the visit ended. That night I decided that I would learn all I could about the subject that had roused such volcanic passion in my father. I soon began scouring the local library for literature on Communism and over the next year devoured everything I could lay my hands on related to the subject. These were

mainly Cold War polemical tracts with grizzly titles like *Masters of Deceit* and *You Can Trust the Communists (to Do Exactly What They Say)*.

I quickly became an ardent anti-Communist but knew little else about politics or political philosophy until Barry Goldwater began to campaign for the Republican nomination for President when I was thirteen years old. His firebrand anti-Communism greatly appealed to me at the time and after reading an article about him in *Life Magazine* in late 1963, I became aware of the conservative-liberal political spectrum and immediately proclaimed myself a conservative, much to my father's chagrin. My conservatism was reinforced by reading Goldwater's book *Conscience of a Conservative* and his biography, *Barry Goldwater: Freedom Is His Flight Plan* by Stephen Shadegg. A voracious reader of science fiction and political fiction, I also discovered the novels of Ayn Rand and read *Anthem* and *Atlas Shrugged* at about the same time. By the time I entered high school, I was a full-blown Goldwaterite conservative and Cold Warrior, who, inconsistently, believed in the inviolability of the rights to liberty and property.

I attended St. Joseph's High School, an all-boys Catholic institution, where, in the fall semester of my freshman year, my teacher for both English and speech was a young former marine, Bill Murray, who also passionately detested Communism. After I delivered a speech to the class mocking the military capabilities of the People's Republic of China, he was so enthusiastic he expostulated: "Salerno, you beautiful anti-communist, you." During the same semester, in my American History class, the teacher organized a debate between the supporters of Goldwater and the supporters of Lyndon Johnson. I was one of the seven students who self-consciously fidgeted on the Goldwater side and faced down the horde of thirty or so Johnson partisans, but we gave as a good as we got, at least according to the teacher's assessment.

My interest in political issues and my conservative convictions intensified during my high school years. It was the mid-1960s, the era of free speech and Vietnam War protests on college campuses, and just a few miles down the road at Rutgers University Eugene Genovese was dismissed from the faculty for having publicly dissented against the Vietnam war. The atmosphere at my high school was highly charged politically. A few of the younger members of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, the order that administered and staffed the high school, were deeply committed to Vatican II liberal Catholicism and New Frontier Great Society political liberalism, as were some of the younger lay faculty. They were also very eager to debate the issues in the classroom and encouraged the airing of opposing points of view. But the faculty was by no means ideologically monolithic and, in my sophomore year, the school hired as head varsity basketball coach and English teacher a hardcore member and chapter organizer of the John Birch Society. Bill Schreck was very charismatic and articulate and influenced Mr. Murray, the anti-Communist English teacher, to become a Bircher too. Mr. Schreck also openly propagated his views to my class as our study hall proctor. He eventually persuaded me and some other conservative students to attend a meeting of the local chapter of the Birch Society. However, I quickly lost interest in Birchism when I heard that Mr. Schreck had asserted in another class that the Beatles' music was manufactured by a communist computer secreted in the English countryside with the aim of corrupting the minds and morals of American youth. My English teacher in my sophomore year, Mr. Walko, although he had no apparent association with Mr. Schreck or the Birchers and revealed no

political biases in class, initiated an extracurricular reading club that I joined. The first book we discussed was *None Dare Call It Treason* by Bircher, John Stormer.

By my junior year, I had become recognized among the faculty as one of the most outspoken of the group of conservative students informally known as the “Lower Ten Percent.” This label emerged from a debate in religion class over the Catholic view of the Vietnam War wherein I called Pope Paul VI’s position on the war “quixotic” and another conservative referred to it as “asinine.” This infuriated our religion teacher who abruptly halted the debate. The next class the Brother informed us that there would be no more discussion of current events in class, noting cryptically that in some bushels of apples the “lower ten percent” begins to rot prematurely and threatens to spoil the rest. Of course we conservatives perversely seized on his words and proudly touted them as our new moniker.

Late in my junior year I tried to foment a petition drive among my fellow students in the A class to protest the rumored integration of the A, B, C, and D classes in our senior year. When my cohorts had entered as freshmen, we had been placed according to our scores on special placement exams. Each class moved from subject to subject (except for languages, I believe) *en bloc*. One significant result of this rigidly hierarchical system, which had existed since the founding of the institution, was that the classes competed ferociously with one another in intramural sports. Most importantly the A class, which took mostly accelerated courses, was supposed to have its grades more heavily weighted in calculating grade point average for the purpose of class ranking in senior year. Needless to say my anti-egalitarian and pro-tradition petition drive was ruthlessly quashed by the administration, and a few of the smarter B class kids were seeded amongst us in senior year. However, the administration did continue its policy of more heavily weighting grades for accelerated courses, while we “native” A class students employed informal methods of persuasion to ensure that the integrity of our intramural teams was not breached.

It was early in my senior year when I first became acquainted with the science of economics. My economics teacher was an enthusiastic young adherent of Great Society liberalism and the improbable brother-in-law of the Bircher, Mr. Schreck. Mr. Mautner assigned us to read John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* and then parts of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. Completely unacquainted with economics and distracted by Galbraith’s relentlessly sententious and laboriously styled prose, I could not follow and did not care much for *The Affluent Society*. *The Wealth of Nations* was another matter. I was enthralled by Smith’s straightforward and non-moralizing analysis of the free market economy and its social benefits. It dawned on me that economics offered a scientific argument for the free society that complemented the moral argument in its favor. By the time I finished reading the assigned passages in Smith’s book, I knew that I wanted to be an economist and I never really deliberated upon the matter again.

There was a pre-graduation tradition at St. Joseph’s in which the senior class presented a burlesque show amiably mocking the speech, dress, and mannerisms of its favorite—and not so favorite—teachers and the faculty returned the favor by bestowing frivolous legacies on selected seniors. My legacy read: “To Joseph Salerno, leader of the Lower Ten Percent, we leave a pair of binoculars with which to look down upon your fellow man.”

In 1968, I enrolled—or rather my father enrolled me—in Boston College, a Jesuit institution of higher education, which was actually a university not located in Boston but in the toney suburb of Chestnut Hill. In my freshman year I squirmed through the typically dreary two-semester principles of economics course taught by a graduate student from Samuelson's *Principles of Economics*, 7th edition. However this experience did not deflect me from my career goal and I declared economics as my major sometime during my freshman (or sophomore) year. That year I also began reading the *New Guard*, a periodical published by the conservative Young Americans for Freedom, where I encountered for the first time the schism in the conservative movement between “traditionalists” and “libertarians.” I was impressed by the arguments presented by the libertarian contributors and in short order jettisoned the Goldwater-Buckley conservatism of my early adolescence and adopted the libertarian positions to abolish the draft, legalize drugs, and other victimless “crimes,” and immediately end the Vietnam War. In my sophomore year I began to read Rand's nonfiction works including *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*. It was in the latter work that I first saw a reference to Ludwig von Mises, although I did not realize his significance at the time.

It was in mid-April of my sophomore year that a general student boycott of classes at Boston College began as a protest against a large tuition increase. Leaders of the campus SDS quickly gained control of the amorphous movement and by early May the boycott metamorphosed into a general student strike against the draft and the Vietnam War. A few hardy souls defied the strike and continued to attend classes—which attendance the squishy-soft liberal president of BC declared to be “optional,” with mid-term grades being the default final grade for those who chose to strike—while most earnestly participated in the innumerable informal “teach-ins” conducted by clueless liberal faculty on the war, women's liberation, racism, ecology, etc. I did neither. A select group of more entrepreneurial students carrying midterm grades of B or higher alertly seized the essentially “costless” opportunity to frolic and carouse with like-minded students of other striking colleges, along the Charles River, in the Boston Gardens and amidst other landmarks of lovely springtime Boston.

The break from course work did not preclude me, however, from learning a very important lesson concerning radical political change, although its importance and relevance for libertarian strategy was clarified for me only many years later by Murray Rothbard. One day during the strike, a coalition of left-wing organizations called for a march to the Boston Commons where assorted Yippies, peaceniks, and left-wing academics were to address an antiwar rally. Abbie Hoffman was there as, I vaguely recollect, were Noam Chomsky and Jerry Rubin. Despite my deep personal disdain for these men and for the mainly leftist hippie students who would turn out for the demonstration, I participated because I was opposed to the war and because I anticipated that many coeds of like mind would participate. The march commenced on the outskirts of Boston composed mainly of disheveled, although reasonably well-behaved, college students but as the crowd swept down Commonwealth Avenue, a main artery into the downtown area, I noted young middle-class adults pouring out of residences and office buildings to join us. As the demonstration was swelled by what Murray Rothbard would later call “real people,”—people with real jobs and family responsibilities—a palpable change occurred in the demeanor of the police monitoring the march. Initially coldly detached if not mildly hostile, they began to appear progressively anxious and forlorn, unsure of their

positions as representatives of a State whose legitimacy was suddenly being seriously questioned by tens of thousands of ordinary Americans. Some of the younger officers even seemed as if they would have liked to shed their uniforms and join us. At the rally itself the greatest response from the crowd occurred when the clownish but charismatic Abbie Hoffman pointed to the John Hancock building looming over the Commons and roared, “John Hancock wasn’t an insurance salesman, he was a f---g revolutionary.”

The ability of charismatic leaders to imbue ordinary middle-class Americans with a radical anti-state mentality by demonstrating how specific government policies exploited and victimized them and disrupted their families and communities was actually brought home to me a year earlier when I attended a rally for George Wallace at the same Boston Commons in the waning days of the Presidential campaign of 1968. Campaigning on an anti-establishment third party ticket Wallace roused the crowd by hammering on the absurdity of the despotic and unconstitutional judicial mandate that prevented white and black students in Boston from attending schools near their homes and coercively bused them to schools in strange and distant, and sometimes dangerous, neighborhoods. At the end of his talk the feisty Wallace waded into the dispersing crowd to shake hands and engage a gaggle of leftist student hecklers in good-natured repartee. I was standing a few feet away from Wallace when he jovially suggested to one of the students, “Why don’t you bring your sandal over here, hippie, and I’ll autograph it for ya.” After the laughter abated Wallace surprised and disarmed his erstwhile hecklers by standing among them and amiably responding to their questions and criticisms.

I was deeply impressed by these two episodes, although at the time I could not have articulated the reasons why, let alone recognized their general implications for a coherent libertarian strategy of political change. It was only many years later that I was enlightened on this matter by Murray Rothbard’s analysis of the Joe McCarthy phenomenon of the early 1950s. Rothbard delighted in standing the established view of McCarthy on its head. The entire political and academic establishment, from New Deal/Truman Democrats to Eisenhower Republicans, from moderate liberals to moderate conservatives, concurred in the necessity of waging a Cold War to contain the alleged Soviet conspiracy to take over the so-called “Free World” and therefore were in explicit agreement with McCarthy’s ultimate *goals*. What they detested, they said, was McCarthy’s *means*. Rothbard, in sharp contrast, never believed that the Soviet Union, albeit a bloody and repressive dictatorship, had the ability or intention of taking over the West. Rather he argued that the Cold War was a ruse devised by the American ruling elite to justify the continuation and expansion of the massive, tax-consuming, welfare-warfare state built up during World War II at home and to rationalize postwar U.S. imperialist ambitions for assorted military interventions abroad. While dismissing McCarthy’s ridiculous and contrived Cold War ideology—which, to repeat, he shared with most of his respectable establishment detractors—Rothbard had a profound appreciation for the means McCarthy employed. According to Rothbard (*The Irrepressible Rothbard*, 2000, p. 13):

The unique and glorious thing about McCarthy was not his goals or his ideology, but precisely his radical, populist *means*. For McCarthy was able, for a few years, to short-circuit the intense opposition of all the

elites in American life: from the Eisenhower-Rockefeller administration to the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex to liberal and left media and academic elites—to overcome all that opposition and reach and inspire the masses directly. And he did it through television, and without any real movement behind him; he had only a guerrilla band of a few advisers, but no organization and no infrastructure.

The strategy of directly appealing to the exploited middle- and working-class masses and short-circuiting the entrenched political and media elites is what later led Rothbard to support the Presidential candidacies of Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan.

The academic year following that of the student strike was my junior year. The concurrence of a number of events marked it as a pivotal year in my intellectual development. To start with, soon after my return from summer break I discovered that a chapter of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) had begun operating on campus. Its eclectic membership included Buckleyite traditionalist conservatives, fusionist libertarian-conservatives, laissez-faire capitalist Randians, and a few nearly pure libertarians. Although I do not believe I joined the organization immediately, I began spending my spare time in their office participating in informal discussions and debates. This marked the first time that I had interacted with a group of my peers whose political philosophy even loosely paralleled my own and I found the experience exhilarating. Also, the friendly verbal sparring with thoughtful young “conservatives” of various stripes helped clarify my own thinking and propelled me toward a progressively more consistent and radical libertarian position.

My transformation into a full-fledged libertarian was completed when, at the start of my second semester, I read in a white heat the cover article of the *New York Times Magazine* (1971) entitled “The New Right Credo—Libertarianism.” The authors, Stan Lehr and Louis Rossetto, Jr. were seniors at Columbia University and their article presented the first comprehensive account that I had read of the unadulterated libertarian political philosophy, carefully differentiating it from both establishment liberalism and conservatism as well as from the New Left, whose positions it shared on the abolition of the draft and all drug laws and an immediate U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. The article also portrayed libertarianism as a vital and flourishing political movement that drew inspiration from Rand and science fiction writer Robert Heinlein, whose novels I had been reading since I began college. Jerome Tuccille and former Goldwater speechwriter Karl Hess, unfamiliar names to me at the time, were identified as leading publicists and pamphleteers for the movement and their writings cited for their defense of radical libertarianism. More significantly, from the standpoint of my academic interests, the article referred to “economists of the Austrian School”—a school I had never been introduced to in my two-and-half years as an undergraduate economics major—as having demonstrated that recessions and depressions were not inherent defects of the free market but the result of government and central bank manipulation of the money supply. The article later quoted a passage from *Man, Economy and State* by Murray N. Rothbard, explaining why state management of the economy deprived of market prices was inevitably chaotic. As with the Austrian School in general, I had never heard Rothbard’s name mentioned by any of my economics professors and had

no idea who he was. By the time I finished reading the article I had been converted to the pure libertarian position—a position the authors designated by the then novel term “anarcho-capitalism,”—and my curiosity about Austrian economics had been piqued.

Back at the YAF office I mentioned my discovery of Austrian economics to my comrades. Shortly thereafter, one of them, Gerald Uba, produced and placed in my hands an odd-sized “minibook” (measuring 3.75” by 5”) written by Rothbard and entitled *Depressions: Their Cause and Cure*. After reading Rothbard’s thirty pages of clear and scintillating prose, I knew I had learned more in one hour about business cycles or “macroeconomic fluctuations” than I had absorbed from two semesters of listening to lectures in Principles of Macroeconomics and Intermediate Macroeconomics and of poring over the jargon filled, opaquely written, deadly dull textbooks assigned in these courses. Moreover, my deep interest in economics was now transformed into a burning passion for the subject.

Serendipitously, in the same semester that I was introduced to Rothbard and modern Austrian business cycle theory, I was enrolled in a History of Economic Thought course taught by Robert Cheney, S.J. Father Cheney was a superb, if somewhat low-key, teacher and near the end of the course he introduced the topic of the marginalist revolution. Referring to the early Austrians, Carl Menger, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, and the latter’s brother-in-law, Friedrich von Wieser, he characterized the formation of the Austrian School as a “unique event” in intellectual history. Never before, he declared, had such brilliant men worked so closely together to develop a common approach to economic phenomena. Father Cheney’s enthusiastic endorsement of the older Austrian School further bolstered my interest in learning more about the School.

As soon as I arrived back home that summer I began to devour all the libertarian and Austrian books I could lay my hands on. Through my local bookstore I ordered Jerome Tuccille’s *Radical Libertarianism: A Right Wing Alternative*. Although some of its illustrations are now a bit dated and it contains a few minor “lifestyle libertarian” confusions and deviations, it served, and still serves, as a compelling introduction to the radical libertarian philosophy and movement.

I next began to scour public libraries in the suburbs of central New Jersey for books by Rothbard and the two Austrian business cycle theorists he had referred to in his booklet, Mises and Hayek. Needless to say, I did not have much luck at first. Desperate, I then decided to venture into the Plainfield Public Library. Plainfield was a small city that, like Newark had been torn by race riots in 1967. A city policeman chasing looters had been set upon by a black mob and beaten to death with a shopping cart. The National Guard, which had then been sent in to quell the riot, conducted an indiscriminate and warrant-less house-to-house search for weapons that inflamed even the most peaceful black residents and left lingering bitterness and racial hatred. Anyway, by the summer of 1971, “white flight” from the beautiful Victorian houses and Dutch colonials that encircled the once thriving shopping district of the city was almost complete leaving the large well-stocked library, housed in a new glass-walled building next to the increasingly rowdy high school, nearly always deserted. It was there one late spring evening that I finally located musty copies of *America’s Great Depression*, *The Theory of Money and Credit*, *Human Action*, *Monetary Theory and the Trade Cycle*, and *Prices and Production*. Despite the fact that I was an out-of-towner I

somehow or other finagled a library card from the sympathetic and lonely librarian and was able to withdraw the books.

That summer I worked as a janitor at an engineering facility for AT&T. I always completed my assigned tasks quickly and distinctly recall spending a great deal of time ensconced in a stuffy broom closet with a naked overhead light bulb reading *America's Great Depression*. Although the Mises and Hayek volumes presented more of a challenge because of some unfamiliar terminology and stylistic idiosyncrasies, by summer's end I had grasped enough of the substantive theory to consider myself a reasonably well-informed student of Austrian business cycle theory.

As my senior year began I discovered the *Books for Libertarians* catalogue and ordered Rothbard's *Man, Economy and State, Power and Market*, and *What Has Government Done to Our Money?* as well as the first modern anarcho-capitalist treatise, *The Market for Liberty* by Morris and Linda Tannehill.

The most memorable course my senior year was Political Economy taught by Professor Barry Bluestone, a young Marxist economist and member of URPE (Union of Radical Political Economists) newly hired by the department. Professor Bluestone knew and had worked with David Friedman on an anti-draft coalition and was familiar with Rothbard's writings. He was also somewhat conversant with the radical libertarian position. One day, while explaining this position to the class, he stated with a smirk that some libertarians actually believed that law could be enforced through private competing police agencies, although even they conceded that the functions of lawmaking and the judicial system would have to be monopolized by the State. I immediately raised my hand and pointed out that there were libertarians, myself included, who would relegate even these functions to private competition. I went on to explain why, under competition, honest courts would drive the corrupt and biased courts, such as he had told us existed in "Amerika," out of business. A good speaker and teacher, never at a loss for words, he was momentarily struck speechless.

After graduation from Boston College I proceeded on to the graduate program in economics at Rutgers University, just ten minutes away from my parents' home in New Jersey. Graduate school was hugely entertaining owing to the eclectic mixture of the Rutgers graduate economics faculty. The most noteworthy among the faculty included: Paul Davidson, the prominent post-Keynesian who taught macro and monetary theory; Hugh Rockoff, a Chicago Ph.D. and eminent economic historian who published a number of seminal articles on the free banking era in the United States; Alexander Balinky, a Marx scholar, who claimed the distinction of having been Joseph Schumpeter's last graduate assistant and whose office was occasionally picketed by the Maoist Progressive Labor party over some arcane point of Marxist dogma; Marc Miles, a student of Arthur Laffer's, who later co-authored an international economics textbook with Laffer and also published a book on supply-side monetary theory and policy; and the prolific international economist, H. Peter Gray, a former student of William Fellner's at Berkeley and a strict, but tolerant and well read, Keynesian who was to become my dissertation adviser. To Professor Gray, I owe a debt of gratitude for introducing me to the classical "monetary" approach to the balance of payments and exchange rates, an approach that was later revived and elaborated by Ludwig von Mises and that I investigated in my dissertation.

Overall, I was quite pleased with my experience at Rutgers. The diversity among the faculty led to my exposure to a broad range of literature and also to toleration of my vigorously expressed Austro-libertarian views by my professors and peers alike. My dissertation committee comprised a Keynesian, a monetarist and a supply-sider. Perhaps as important, the transmogrifying of economics into a branch of applied mathematics, which had begun in the 1960s in American economics, had not yet progressed very far at Rutgers. Indeed, it was this trend that led to my enrolling at Rutgers. After I had received my GRE (graduate record exam) results in my senior year at BC, I went to see my faculty adviser to discuss my prospects for graduate education. Having scored in the 99th percentile in the verbal part of the exam and just below the 90th percentile in the economics part and on track to graduate with honors from BC, I thought I could write my own ticket to graduate school. I asked him what he thought of Princeton, where he had received his Ph.D. He took one look at my mediocre score in the math part (76th percentile) smiled indulgently, and said: “With that score you won’t get into Princeton and if you do, you won’t make it through. I suggest you apply to a school just up the road, Rutgers University.” Although I was stunned and dismayed at the time, I remain grateful today for his straightforward advice.

It was while I was attending graduate school that I met Murray Rothbard. Shortly before my first semester began I was involved with the founding of the New Jersey Libertarian Party, of which I was subsequently elected Treasurer. Our first convention was scheduled for February of 1973 and we required a keynote speaker. In November 1972, the President of the NJLP Bob Steiner and myself attended a libertarian conference in New York City whose featured speakers included Rothbard, Bob Lefevre, and Karl Hess, among others. It was the first time I had seen any of these giants of the nascent libertarian movement in person and I was excited especially at the prospect of hearing Rothbard speak. Rothbard followed LeFevre on the program and, although I do not recall the precise topic of his talk that day, I was extremely impressed with the joyfulness, affability, and sense of humor he projected. The latter was especially on display during the question and answer period following his talk. When someone asked him his view of the extreme pacifism of LeFevre’s “autarchist” philosophy—which prohibited any form of violence even in self-defense—Rothbard replied: “Well, if someone was brandishing a mallet at me and I had a gun, I’d plug him.”

We subsequently invited Rothbard to give the keynote address at the NJLP convention, and he graciously agreed to do it for the rubber chicken dinner and paltry \$75 we were able to offer him. Prior to his talk, I introduced myself to him and we spoke for a while about libertarian issues before I mentioned that I was a graduate student in economics and was going through Frank Fetter’s articles, the references to which I had gleaned from reading *Man, Economy, and State*. I never expected his reaction to my casual remark. His eyes immediately lit up and he seemed like he could barely contain his enthusiasm. He feverishly searched for a pen and asked me for my address and phone number and told me that he would pass on this information to people in New Jersey who had formed an Austrian reading group. The following Monday I received a call from a student member of this group who invited me to attend the meetings of this reading circle, which was directed by Walter Grinder and included another one of my libertarian heroes, Walter Block. In the year-and-one-half that followed I enjoyed increasing personal contact with Murray Rothbard,

including visits to his home, meetings with him in his office at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, and arranging for him to address the graduate economics faculty and students at Rutgers. Rothbard also encouraged me to write a review essay on David Friedman's book, *The Machinery of Freedom*, for *The Libertarian Forum*, and this became my first publication. Thus when I disembarked from Don Lavoie's car in South Royalton, Vermont in June 1974 to attend the first Austrian economics conference to be convened in the United States, I, like Don and most of the other attendees, had arrived by way of Murray Rothbard. ■

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JAMES V. SCHALL

## CONFESSIONS OF A PRACTICING "SOCIALIST"

Socialists are collectivist in their proposals. But they are Communist in their idealism. Now there is a real pleasure in sharing. We have all felt it in the case of nuts off a tree or the National Gallery, or such things. But it is not the only pleasure nor the only altruistic pleasure, nor (I think) the highest or most human of altruistic pleasures. I greatly prefer the pleasure of giving and receiving. Giving is not the same as sharing: giving is even the opposite of sharing. Sharing is based on the idea that there is no property, or at least no personal property. But giving a thing to another man is as much based on personal property as keeping it to yourself.

~ G.K. Chesterton, "Why I Am Not a Socialist" (1908)

WHEN I AM ASKED, "how does capitalism work?", I like to recount something I read in Andrew Beyer, the turf commentator for *The Washington Post* (June 20, 2003). Beyer had noted the sudden increase in interest in thoroughbred racing after the surprising run of Funny Cide in the first two legs of the Triple Crown (2003). Some 101,864 fans showed up on a terribly rainy and chilly day for the Belmont Stakes, the third event of the series, the chance for the first winner of the three races—the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, the Belmont—in over a quarter century. Track owners naturally have been seeking to capitalize on this increased interest in racing. They see it as a way both to help the business and to make a profit. They are legitimate capitalists using their minds to expand their business. But how to make it work is also a legitimate and essential capitalist question.

Belmont Park several years ago had devised a sure-fire, free-enterprise, entrepreneurial way to accomplish this purpose. They sought to lure back to the track those bettors, who showed up in large numbers for the popular Belmont Stakes, on other Saturdays when attendance and tote were way down. The managers of the track shrewdly thought that if they put a coupon into the Belmont Stakes Program, entitling every holder to a free entrance to any other Saturday of the Meet, they would have a perfect gimmick for increasing attendance and hence profit. Once the bettors were in the stands, of course, they would make up for any loss of gate fees by cash on the nose of multiple losing horses, not to mention food and drink sales and parking fees.

What happened, however, was just the opposite of expectations. The risk of losing money (including bankruptcy) is essential to capitalism. It is better to let some things go broke rather than subsidizing them at increasing losses. The fact is most people are not going to go to ordinary race days no matter what their cost. They come to the Belmont because of its excitement, especially with the possibility of a Triple Crown Winner.

However, the regular, much smaller crowd that would go to the races every Saturday and pay the fee anyway, spotted the many hundreds of free coupons that the Stakes attendees threw away. This abundance of free coupons meant that the regulars, by picking them up, would get in free for the rest of the season without paying the normal entrance fee they would have gladly paid anyhow. In addition to this boon, several innovative bettors sold their extra collected coupons for 50 cents apiece to pick up some extra change. Seeing this defeat of their plan to increase attendance go awry, naturally the capitalist owners cut their losses and did not try that scheme again.

I conclude from this amusing account that, at least at the track, capitalism is working as it should. That is, entrepreneurs seek to increase revenue from their product. They dream up (innovate) schemes to do so. They try them out. Other lesser entrepreneurs in the stands see an opportunity to make some money on the failed plan and do so. The lesson is learned that tracks must figure out other ways to increase attendance and revenue. The market tests the plan. Someone wins, someone loses. Enterprising bettors, however, chalk up some extra cash to bet on the horses they would have bet on anyhow even if they had to pay to get into the track.

Had the scheme worked, however, increased revenues would have accrued to the track. The sharp bettors who collected free coupons would have gone to the track anyhow with their ordinary fees and bets. Perhaps anybody could have told the owners of the track that the scheme would not work. Capitalism, however, allows them to give it a try and take the consequences. Some free coupon offerings, after all, do work. The racing market meanwhile adjusts to a new equilibrium, while waiting for new innovations.

Capitalism includes the possibility of spending money to make money with the connotation that this making money is caused by producing something new, needed, or desirable. Profit has a title of legitimacy. The world can be improved for human purposes. Capitalism also includes the possibility of losing money to make money, or even just losing money period. Without this possibility, we are socialists. The government covers all our risks, claims any profit. We risk nothing. Indeed socialism discourages risks, whereas what we need to do is encourage risk-taking. If no one is allowed to fail, we won't know the

difference between what works and what does not. Without a free market, we have no real or objective test of cost or of the worth of innovations and their relation to costs of production. Employees and employers tend to think they have a “right” to their income no matter what they do, no matter what their product costs or whether anyone wants it. A free market enables us to test out ideas against demand.

If the government owned the track and paid for its operation from tax money, we would not have to worry about the track’s profit and loss. But this alternative would be a form of “bread and circuses.” The present system has the advantage of letting those who want to spend their money in this way to do so—granted of course that the government still taxes all entry fees, all winnings, and all racing corporations, as well as guaranteeing the integrity of the operation through state racing commissions. This tax, if set too high, often makes gambling prohibitive. Capitalism also allows unsuccessful tracks to declare bankruptcy, to cease operation. Those who want nothing to do with the track or betting can simply do something else, whereas in a socialist system where the government ran the track, the public would have to foot the losses.

I begin this discussion of how I came to understand the value of a free market with a homey example of betting because I learned to understand capitalism from such incidents. In some sense, capitalism is the natural order of things. It proposes that if we want to make money, we have to do something to warrant it. It does not start out with an abstract idea that everyone is owed a living or an income apart from anything he does. Almost all ancient or modern ideology arises from some noble purpose that, when put into effect, does not work in practice. What capitalism is, then, is a scheme to test what works.

The title of these reflections is related a wonderful essay of G.K. Chesterton entitled, naturally, “Why I Am Not a Socialist.” Though I do not recall ever being a socialist in theory, my understanding of free enterprise in practice comes from critiques of socialism in its various forms. Intellectually, I learned about the market in an articulate way not from running a business but from reading about socialism. This latter essay of Chesterton’s was originally written in 1908, the same year he published *Orthodoxy*, four years after the birth of my father in Iowa.

Basically, the essay suggests that if you do not own anything, you cannot give anything away. If you cannot give something away, there is no risk in the world. Giving something to someone implies that something is already yours by real title. It also implies the existence of someone else to whom you actually want to give something, not just “share” it. “Sharing” is a form of non-giving. The owned gift may be given away, but it need not be. This is the whole point of giving a gift, its symbolism of love and generosity. Thus, it means something, it reveals your character, whether you give it away or keep it. *There is no virtue in my giving away what is not actually mine.* Indeed, if I give away what is not mine, it is a form of stealing, just as receiving stolen goods, even as a gift, is not a virtue. “Sharing” has to do with justice, not giving.

One of the main problems with modern governments is their assumption that they can give away what is not theirs under the guise of social purpose. They call it a virtue, usually some sort of “social justice.” What the government has to give away is necessarily first taken away, in the form of taxes, from the people who produce it. Governments are

tempted to conceive themselves as responsible for taking care of everyone in all walks of life—the all-caring state—whereas their only legitimate purpose is to allow human lives be lived by free people, themselves deciding what they should do with them and with their own money.

I do not argue that there is no need for government. I do argue that, in the name of high purpose, government as it actually functions can and often does undermine the actual lives and wealth of its people. The government is not itself the common good, it is but a means by which that good can be achieved by everyone with his own talents and wealth. Both capitalism and socialism are rooted in the elimination of poverty. Capitalism does so by making everyone richer, albeit at differing rates. Hence the problem of capitalism is mainly envy, that is, chagrin that others legitimately have what we do not. Socialism begins in equality. Hence it is content if everyone is poorer if they are equally poor. The problem of socialism is generally greed, the wanting of what is unavailable.

Socialism suggests that the ideal answer to the human problem is that no one owns anything. If this non-ownership were to be the case, many of the higher virtues could not be practiced at all; e.g., charity. Nor could most people be adequately taken care of by their own labors. In an important sense, socialism undermines any direct relationship that one person can have with another as it implies that everything is due to everyone whether he owns or does anything or not.

All motives of charity and generosity are thus communalized, reduced to distributive, not commutative, justice—or better, equality is seen as the only object of distributive justice. And if this commonality of property is in effect, then the very notion of “giving” something to someone is subverted. The possibility of widespread individual virtue acquired in the exercise of one’s own responsibilities over one’s own property is taken away from the majority of the people.

Now, there are religious and philosophical origins to the idea that the less property we have the better. These are not unworthy ideas. The rich young man in the Gospels was told to sell what he had and give it to the poor. He was not told to open a business to put the local unemployed to work. Greek philosophers sought to convince us that their personal poverty was chosen, that they did not want to be distracted by material goods. They rightly saw how riches could interfere with their pursuit of the higher things.

Both the Old and New Testaments manifest a special concern for the poor, who, we are assured, will always be with us, but whose needs are especially to be looked after. This poverty seems to be still rather widespread, even though there are economists who maintain that the problem of poverty is, in principle, solved, as I think it is. This conclusion suggests that the problem of poverty may not, at bottom, be a wholly economic one. If our neighbor has more than we do, we can be relatively well-off and still feel comparatively poor, still feel envious, even though our neighbor’s wealth is come by legitimately and we are by no means in a dire condition, certainly not as a result of his efforts; indeed, we may well be *bettered* by them.

This observation leads to the issue of relative wealth, of how little is “enough” or of how much is “too” much? Most people, following Aristotle, recognize that we generally need a certain amount of property or wealth to practice minimal virtue. Many also

recognize with this same Aristotle that we can put too much emphasis on wealth to the detriment of other more important things in life. Moreover, contrary to many ecology schools, the world is in fact an abundant place, almost as if it is inviting us to “increase, multiply, and dominate” it. There would be something radically wrong with a position suggesting that we ought not work on, improve, make beautiful and productive the land and seas we are given.

This consideration also brings us to the Platonic notion that our faculty of desiring material things is, in itself, unlimited, and thus a potential cause of disorder among us. It needs to be controlled by virtues, specifically those of liberality and munificence. Liberality was the virtue that enabled us to use a moderate amount of riches for our real good, including the good of freely giving. Munificence was the virtue of those who had much wealth.

Aristotle was quite clear that wealth in itself was neither an evil nor a detriment to virtue. He proposed that a great amount of wealth could have a very high social purpose. Generally, he indicated that it be used for three purposes: for beauty, for truth, for goodness; think of art galleries, university chairs, hospitals. He understood the need for a certain graciousness in the use of property. Rich and poor really did not differ when it came to their possibility of practicing virtue. The poor could be generous, as could the wealthy. Both could be stingy and narrow. Virtue and vice are not external to our own souls.

I have entitled this essay, “Confessions of a Practicing Socialist.” This experience of actually living a “socialist” life made it clear to me that such a life, while legitimate in certain circumstances, is not for everyone and itself depends on that which is not socialist. The reason for this peculiar title, then, is that I am a member of a religious order whose members have vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Basically, the effect of these vows is that members have no private property of their own in any form. They neither own nor use common property simply on their own choice. Since property was designed, in Aristotle, as the material support of family life, not having a family means not having a great personal need for private property. Greek philosophers understood this point.

The purpose of such vows was pretty much the same as that found in Plato’s proposal for commonality of property, wives, and children, namely to be freed from certain real and worthy obligations in order to be at liberty to devote one’s full attention to other projects. The Christian solution to the Platonic proposal was not commonality of wives or children, or the genetic engineering and state day-care regimes that went with it. Rather it was not having wives, children, and property in the first place, a more humane and manageable solution, though one not meant for everyone.

Thus, I have lived most of my life as a “practicing socialist.” Any income that I might receive from work or gifts belongs by right, actually by gift, to the Order. The Order can in law own property, but not the individual members of the Order. “From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs” is pretty much the principle of monastic living. Such vows do not mean that one has no access to food, clothing, or shelter, but that these are not one’s own, one’s personal property to do with as he wishes. Like Plato’s guardians, we dine in common dining halls. The emphasis is mostly away from personal possession and toward the freedom to do things without having to worry overly much about personal wealth and its conditions.

It is to be noted that this way of life was not seen to be for everyone or even for most, either by Plato or by the religious tradition. It was considered a separate way of life, with its own dangers and goods. It was not, furthermore, considered to be in principle antagonistic to the “normal” life of families or wealth production and distribution. Indeed, without the latter, without families, there could be no new members or normal way of life for monastic communities.

A responsible government would allow such forms of voluntary religious life to exist on their own legal terms. The contribution of the monastic orders was seen to be measured in new ideas and initiatives that directly or indirectly benefited both its members and the public. Indeed, economic historians have seen the vows of poverty to be responsible for the initial savings, hence accumulations of wealth from which things like banking and public or religious buildings and institutions sprang. The very discovery that savings could be the foundation of wealth productivity is not unrelated to the monastic experience.

I am, however, in agreement with the basic point of the Aristotelian critique of Plato’s proposals in Book V of *The Republic*, that we should have, for peace, justice, and philosophy, this commonality of wives, children, and property, at least in the city in speech. Aristotle, who seems to have taken Plato’s proposal as a serious one for actual politics, observed that if everyone was our parent or child, no particular person would really be adequately taken care of. He saw that good order required private property. Paradoxically, people took better care of what was theirs than what was public, no matter how noble-sounding public concern might appear. Accountability follows ownership. The general destruction of family or property did not improve but harmed human enterprise.

Moreover, property made the family, in which real children with their own parents could flourish, much more possible and secure. Thus, institutions like monastic life, while they were justified if seen as something extraordinary, were not designed for everyone. Monasteries have to take special precautions that its members do not become sloppy, or neglectful, or unconcerned. Human nature remains the same and needs to be counteracted if such a life is to be possible. The point is not that it is impossible or inadvisable to live such a life, but that it is a very special and often dangerous way of life if the virtues that support it are not practiced.

Thus, I think that my experience as a “practicing socialist” has been a major factor in seeing the value and worth of a private property system for most people. The great attack on this view today is, paradoxically, in the name of the poor, who generally speaking, if given a choice, want nothing better than having their own homes and families and private property. Modern ideology is often economic in nature, proposing some better way of coming to the aid of the poor. This endeavor has been the moral justification for movements from communism to liberalism. Moreover, this concern for the poor has been a major factor in pronouncements of religious leaders, including Catholic ones.

Modern economic systems are generally faulted for failure to help the poor in the third world, or sometimes at home. Schemes to remedy this failure are prevalent in modern parliaments and economic discussions. The question remains, what is the best way to help the poor, as well as enhancing the growth and abundance that is necessary to manifest the

myriads of things that people do when they are free and no longer poor. A society concentrated only on poverty relief would be one that missed understanding what life was for. “Man does not live by bread alone” may still be the most revolutionary social principle yet enunciated. For the question implies that there is indeed something else to live for, and it is best that we be about it.

However, I think that the most important idea for me that makes the question of the free market so important is the realization that wealth is not to be identified with physical things, even though we need physical things and they are good and necessary to have. The ultimate riches, the ultimate wealth in the universe, is the human brain, the mind, not property. Probably the most dangerous idea ever proposed, one that would do the most damage to the poor, is what I call “distributionism” or “gapism.” These theories are based on the notion that the world is a finite body of goods. What is wrong is that they are ill-distributed. Thus, if we see someone with more, it necessarily means, according to the theory, that an injustice has been done to others who have less, no matter what the one or the other did in the past to bring about this situation. Therefore, the solution is to take away from the rich and give it to the poor, usually by governmental coercion. This is what socialism’s moral justification is all about. This theory fosters envy and really undermines the security of property and the homes for which it is designed.

“Gapism” is a variety of distributionism. It is a theory that argues that the “gap,” usually calculated in terms of GNP, between the rich and the poor is growing greater and greater. By itself, this growing gap is taken as incontrovertible evidence that the poor are being exploited or getting poorer. The solution therefore is to “narrow” the gap, as if that is a necessary sign of economic or moral well-being. The main problem with this theory is that it implies that because the “gap” between the rich and poor is growing, assuming it is growing, it must mean that the poor are getting poorer. It also implies that the cause of this increased poverty is the gap.

However, it is quite possible that a “gap” of some degree between rich and poor is in fact normal and even necessary in order that anything at all be improved or produced. Without incentives to change things and rewards for actual contributions, the fact is that little will be altered or accomplished. Likewise, it is quite possible that, even though there is a growing gap between rich and poor, that those with comparatively less are not in fact getting poorer. Everyone may instead be getting richer because the whole economy is growing. Indeed, this latter is largely the case. It is what modern economies are about. The only real way to help the poor on a reliable and sustainable basis is to have an economy that grows in all its sections at the same time so that everyone becomes relatively richer. The current use of the word “globalism” to describe this phenomenon is not the best.

Generally speaking, I am of the opinion that if there is poverty in the world, as there is, it is not caused by riches or economic growth. These latter are the solutions to, not the causes of, poverty. We do know the general mechanics of producing wealth for everyone, but this does not mean that any economic or political system could achieve it. The fact is, the means of wealth production have to be invented and put into effect, into existence.

Wealth ultimately is not a thing, but it is knowledge. There is not a “shortage” of material goods for the world population. There may be a shortage of ideas, or more likely,

a failure, usually due to some theory of religion or politics or economics, to allow ideas that work to be put into effect. This brings me back to the socialist view: no matter how noble and worthy its basic idea, it will work to create poverty. It will prevent ideas that will work to enrich everyone from being put into place and allowed to operate.

Ultimately, there should be a premium not on the idea that the poor should “be helped,” but on ways and ideas that allow them to help themselves, to have their own homes, businesses, power to give and make things. In contemporary history, the main causes of failure of such systems coming to be are governments and left wing ideologies, often with good intentions, that do not allow what needs to be done to happen.

So, if I were to answer the question about why I, even though a “practicing socialist,” am an advocate of a free market, it is because I think it is really the only way that the poor will be helped or the only way in which a rich society can remain free to deal with things beyond politics. We are in an anti-growth, ecologically oriented ideological world that is not based on the idea of the real abundance of nature and of the effects of mind with regard to things. The real enemies of the poor are those who maintain ideas or institutions, including governmental ones, that do not work.

One final word on the notions of envy and greed. Though envy is generally associated with the poor, it can also be a vice of the rich. And though greed is also considered a vice of the rich, it can also be a vice of the poor. In other words, the virtues and vices that make life worth living are not the exclusive property of anyone. For Aristotle, envy was the desire of honors due to another. Greed was the desire of another’s property. Aristotle recognized that both greed and envy needed to be ruled through the will.

Aristotle also remarked that if someone steals because he is poor, the proper solution is to see that he has some property so that he can produce his own necessities. But some people steal because of pleasure. The solution for this vice, he thought, was virtue. But there were still others who might steal because of some grandiose scheme to cure mankind. He thought a correct philosophy was the only solution for this more deep-seated and dangerous problem.

When we read the classics, it looks like first we confront the economic problem, then the political problem, then the philosophical or religious problems of mankind. In terms of analysis, this is a perfectly good way to proceed. But in terms of action, it seems quite obvious that the economic problem, which can be solved, is not allowed to work because of prior problems of vice or more likely of philosophy.

Plato was not wrong to point his whole philosophy toward properly understanding the highest things, in the light of which generally speaking worldly and economic things are structured. Chesterton’s remark about a world in which giving was possible contains a whole philosophic understanding of the right order of worldly things. We can have private property or wealth and still be stingy or miserly. But we cannot have common property and still be able to give a gift, even so much as a cup of water.

Entrepreneurship means the possibility of devising a system whereby people can have pure water to drink and wash and water their lawns and at the same time provide a service to each other and an income for themselves via the market. Politics means allowing these systems to be put into effect at a reasonable cost. Ultimately, the poor are not poor because

the rich are rich. The only possibility that the poor be not poor, a reasonable desire for all including socialist monks, is for them to imitate the ways of those who have lifted themselves out of poverty. To insist on a way to accomplish this goal that will not work might be a noble dream, but it is not a way for free men.

The ultimate battles are not economic or even political. They are philosophical and theological. It has been the tradition of the West that such battles be fought out in the academy. It has been the unfortunate experience of modernity that they have been fought in the streets. In the end, a good idea, an idea that works, can be rejected. It is the virtue of the free market that a good idea can at least be tried to see if it is found wanting or tried to see if it is profitable. The pleasure of giving and receiving is to be preferred. This is not merely an economic principle. The ultimate wealth is in the mind. We do not become poorer if everyone is becoming richer. But freedom and virtue still have to do with what we do with our riches, little or great. ■

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KEN SCHOOLLAND

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## A LIBERTARIAN ODYSSEY

MY EARLIEST POLITICAL MEMORY is of a rally at the Arizona State Fairgrounds where Herbert *I Led Three Lives* Philbrick was speaking about his life as a double agent for the FBI. His story of espionage in the Cold War was chilling and I could see from my Mom's attitude that this was to be taken seriously. Tyrants, after all, were in the midst of killing 150 million people in the twentieth century.

Post-World War II movies reinforced the grim view of life under dictators and regular air raid drills made the confrontation seem imminent. (It was scary, but nothing as gruesome as the actual stories of Mao's China that I heard from Zhao Li, the woman who became my wife thirty years later. Li's life closely paralleled the world of Ayn Rand's *Anthem*.) My heroes in those years were G-Men and I wrote a paper in seventh grade explaining why I wanted to become an agent. Later, my interest changed dramatically.

During the Kennedy-Nixon debates I recall asking my mother what was the difference between Republicans and Democrats. She told me that Democrats wanted government to run our lives and Republicans wanted individuals to run their own lives. It was a vivid

contrast, especially as it seemed that greater governmental control could lead to the dreaded dictatorship. As it turned out, I learned that both parties wanted the same thing.

My family supported Barry Goldwater and I recall that during the presidential campaign against Lyndon Johnson I didn't have much intellectual ammunition to argue with my Democratic friends in high school. My friends were all Democrats and all seemed to know more about the latest news and could shut down any of my arguments. I decided to read every issue of *Newsweek* from cover to cover so that I wouldn't be embarrassed again with my lack of knowledge about current events. This started me on a long addiction to political soap opera, eager to catch the next episode. My magazines of choice changed to *Liberty* and *The Economist*, much better guides to political soap.

The first bombing strikes against Vietnam caused me to shudder. But the whole of U.S. action in Vietnam was explained by the authorities as a defensive maneuver or as a battle against communist tyrants who were trying to dominate a free people. When Secretary of State Dean Rusk broadcast that we had an obligation under SEATO to defend South Vietnam against communism, I trusted him—as did everyone I knew at the time. All of my elders were skeptical of politicians, except in times of war. My trust of politicians changed. I rarely ever trust them—*especially* during war.

From the safety of my college draft deferment, I mimicked my elders and argued publicly that this war was philosophically justified in the struggle for freedom, both for the Vietnamese and for Americans. But I was having some real nightmares, struggling with the huge contradictions between ideas of liberty, of military conscription, and of loyalty to politicians. My attachment to Republicans finally collapsed under the follies of Richard Nixon. The exceptions are Ron Paul and Sam Slom, libertarian Republicans.

At Occidental College, Professor Haring taught my first economics class. Contrary to expectations, it wasn't at all boring. This weekend preacher had a booming and enthusiastic personality that gave cautious rebuke to statist themes in Paul Samuelson's textbook. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Samuelson's views have since been modified.

A filmed debate over monetary and fiscal policy was my introduction to Milton Friedman's brilliance and wit so I soon devoured his book *Capitalism and Freedom*. I came to realize that the market was a remarkable phenomenon that offered solutions to problems that were only made worse by politics. While Milton will always be my first great economics hero, my views later favored the direction of his son, David, in *The Machinery of Freedom*.

I could count on one hand the number of university teachers who made any positive impression on me and I thought this would change in graduate school. But graduate professors at Georgetown, despite impressive credentials, were also a disappointment. I came to the conclusion that a professor's philosophy was fundamental to the worth of his lessons. Thirty years among colleagues in the teaching profession has confirmed that conclusion.

After studying in France and working briefly for the J.C. Penney Co. in Virginia, I got hooked on novels by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn (*The First Circle*) and Ayn Rand (*We the Living* and *Atlas Shrugged*). Rand's philosophy clicked with me. She provided an invaluable perspective on human motivations. Ironically, it was about the same time that I landed a position as an international economist in the U.S. Tariff Commission. It was thoroughly

demoralizing employment—never honest work. Rather than producing valuable goods and services, I merely got in the way of those who did. It was the perfect validation of Rand's assertions about politics and the bureaucracy.

As soon as possible I transferred to the U.S. Department of Commerce and had a brief stint in the White House, Office of the Special Representative for Trade Negotiations. Pay and promotions were coming along great, but ambitions that I had for a career in government contradicted my budding values. I hated Washington D.C. and decided on a career in teaching—as far away as possible.

All of my friends and mentors thought I was crazy to leave the “center of action” and move to Sheldon Jackson College in Sitka, Alaska. Indeed, I was leaving all the potential for power to the people who really hungered for it. Well, so be it. I wouldn't waste any more of my life in a cesspool.

Alaska is paradise for a libertarian soul. I was the entire Business and Economics Department at this tiny two-year college that mostly catered to Native Alaskans. The wilderness is spectacular and the pioneering folk are even better. I took up flying and theater as hobbies. Many of the plays had libertarian themes: i.e., Rand's *Night of January the 16th* and Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. Nat Mandel, Kristen Kappel, and I even started our own theater company, the Sitka Summer Players. Students who taught me the most were Bruce Weyhrauch, Rick Lenning, Wes Craske, Karl Moody, Anisha Angasan, and Neal Bauder.

I traveled to Hawaii on vacation one year and stumbled across various Libertarian Party candidates giving speeches at a university campus. I met Roger MacBride, Fred James, Rockne Johnson, Dale Pratt, and others. They introduced me to libertarians in Alaska: Carl Whitson taught me to consistently apply principles to the hardest of issues and Dick Randolph taught me to apply the principles to the hardest of critics. I was also thrilled to discover the world of liberty literature: i.e., Bastiat's *The Law*, Rothbard's *For a New Liberty*, Block's *Defending the Undefendable*, Burris's *Liberty Primer*, and Thoreau's *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*.

One little film, *The Incredible Bread Machine* by World Research Inc., permitted me to introduce libertarian ideas to all of my students in Alaska. In class I watched the film in awe a hundred times. Later in Hawaii it was Friedman's *Free to Choose* video series. The simplest tools were the most fun to use. And why shouldn't people have fun, instead of drudgery, with such things?

In 1979, I started teaching economics at Hawaii Loa College, and I made regular visits to the genius of talk radio, Fred James. Fred invited virtually every libertarian luminary to his show and eagerly sparred with a wide range of statist callers. I even joined him once at the station as he dressed in full costume and makeup to enact a fictional conversation between Thomas Paine (Fred) and Adam Smith (me). The hot Honolulu studio didn't cooperate, however, and the putty forming Paine's enlarged nose drooped into a long Pinocchio-like point. Fred was a great champion of both libertarian and Objectivist ideas, but he showed me the libertarian *joie de vivre*, minus the usual Objectivist condescension.

On behalf of the Libertarian Party of Hawaii, I produced weekly radio commentaries for an all-news radio station. These commentaries started as straight monologues and drew no response at all. I was getting nowhere with the audience and the time spent writing kept me from getting anywhere with my girlfriend as well. So why not kill two birds with one

stone? So I asked Debby Saito to participate in a little fantasy radio dialogue: “As you may recall, we last left Jonathan Gullible on a remote Pacific island after his boat was blown about by a terrific storm. One day . . .” And *The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible (JG)* was born.

The station didn’t much care whether we did commentary or drama, but the audience sure did! Instantly, listener response picked up all over town. I then followed Debby back up to Alaska for a year where she started the Libertarian Party of Sitka and I produced a dramatic radio series from the *JG* episodes.

Later I spent a couple years teaching in Japan where I met the foremost Japanese Austrian economist, Toshio Murata, translator of Mises’s *Human Action*. I rekindled an old friendship with a political ally from my college years, Bruce Hobbs. He too had discovered this libertarian movement. When I returned to Hawaii I was fired up for politics, always in “three’s.” I ran three times for the U.S. Congress and served three years as chair of the local party. I learned the talents, the value, and the futility of libertarian political action.

In Hawaii I was fortunate to learn most from the wit and wisdom of a whole new set of students: Marie Gryphon, Misho Ognanovich, Mike Jensen, Graham Thompson, Jon Graham, Winston Posegate, Stuart Hayashi, Geo Olsson, Nicki Moss, and others. I really should have paid them tuition!

Writing was the best way for my philosophy to mature. It required in-depth study of free-market literature, constant application to current issues, and feedback to keep me disciplined. My best critic over the years was Lane Yoder, a math professor, racquetball partner, and Go master. Some of the most searching, intellectual correspondence and libertarian discussions were with Mats Hinze, Nicolai Heering, and, still, my Mom. And my greatest promoter was Sam Slom, who published the *JG* episodes as an economics education project of Small Business Hawaii. The book quickly found its way into economics classes and won several awards.

By this time I read about the work of Vince Miller, Jim Elwood, and Bruce Evoy at the International Society for Individual Liberty (ISIL) and later joined their Board. ISIL was dedicated to translating free-market literature and networking globally in order to spread free market ideas. Their mission was perfectly timed with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the opening of so much of the world that had formerly prohibited free-market ideas. I was determined to be a part of that introduction.

*JG* has now been published in nearly 30 languages and has found its way into radio, television, and the Internet. Close friends, Hubert Jongen, Virgis Daukas, Kerry Pearson, Mary Ruwart, and hundreds of others in ISIL, collaborated to bring this about. My most memorable moment came when my dear friend Geo Olsson, introduced *JG* to Milton Friedman, my single greatest inspiration.

In reading through this, I would have to say that the books and films were all great. But the friends and family were by far the greatest influences on my personal libertarian odyssey. ■

## HOW I CAME TO LIBERTARIANISM

GROWING UP IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, born to a Greek and Sicilian family, I had some conservative predilections as a young high school student. One of my earliest high school teachers had a big influence on me; his name was Ira Zornberg. He was a faculty advisor of a social studies newspaper called *Gadfly* that I edited. He was the first teacher to bring the study of the Holocaust to high school students. He very much encouraged me in my conservative politics, even though I was never completely comfortable with the conservative social agenda, especially with regard to issues of abortion and sexuality. It wasn't until I read Ayn Rand in my senior year in high school that I was able to sort those issues out.

Being an outspoken political type in high school, I had been involved in some pretty terrific battles with the Young Socialists of America who had buried the school in their propaganda. My sister-in-law had been reading *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, and she said, "I think you ought to read this woman, you'll find some similarities between what you're saying and what she advocates." I wasn't a big fiction reader, so I started reading Ayn Rand's non-fiction first—*Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, *The Virtue of Selfishness*—and it was as if I had found a whole new world. At the time I was in an advanced placement course in American history, with another great teacher, Larry Pero, and I was able to bring to that class so many of the insights that Rand had on the history of capitalism. Rand also helped me deal with some pretty difficult personal health problems I'd been experiencing. Here was a woman who talked about heroism and potentials rather than limitations. It was an articulated philosophy that gave me encouragement not to wallow in self-pity and dismay, but to make the most of my potentialities. So on a personal level, her writings had a tremendous impact on my life—while also leading me to the works of every major libertarian writer, starting of course with Ludwig von Mises.

By the time I got to NYU, as an undergraduate, I chose a triple major in economics, politics, and history, so I had a lot of great teachers. In economics, I took many electives with those who were in Austrian theory and enjoyed courses and lectures with people like Gerald O'Driscoll, Roger Garrison, Stephen Littlechild, Israel Kirzner, and Mario Rizzo. I interacted with many of the newer generation of Austrian theorists, including Don Lavoie. In history, where I did my senior honor's thesis as an undergraduate, I studied with the great business historian, Vincent Carosso, and also a labor historian, Dan Walkowitz. In politics, on the undergraduate, graduate, and eventually the doctoral level, I studied with Gisbert Flanz, and, of course, most importantly, my mentor, Bertell Ollman, who is an internationally-known Marxist scholar, author of such books as *Alienation and Dialectical Investigations*.

While an undergraduate, I met Murray Rothbard. I was a founding member of the NYU Chapter of Students for a Libertarian Society. We invited Rothbard to speak before the society several times. I struck up a cordial relationship with Murray, and learned much from my conversations with him. He was a real character, very funny, and quite entertaining as a speaker. When I went into the undergraduate history honors program, Murray gave me indispensable guidance. I chose to examine the Pullman strike and I used his theory of structural crisis as a means of understanding labor strife.

Murray gave me some very interesting pointers about how to carve an intellectual niche for oneself. He told me that if I invested lots of time investigating the Pullman strike and other labor topics, I'd have a virtual monopoly among libertarians in the analysis of labor history. You end up thinking and writing more about a single subject than anyone else, and your work becomes indispensable to future research on the subject. It was good advice especially when one is compelled to defend one's thesis: you've spent more time on the subject and know more about it than most others. You've written the book, so who better than you to defend it?!

Well, I didn't continue my research in labor history, but I sure did focus on one subject—dialectical libertarianism—in the years that followed. Of course, I seemed to have picked a topic with which few would even want to associate themselves, so there doesn't seem to be any danger of losing my intellectual niche any time soon!

I should point out that Murray's influence on my honors thesis was significant. I pretty much sailed through the honors program. What I didn't know, however, was that I would face resistance from one of the three academics who sat on my oral defense committee. He was the chairman of the Department of History, Albert Romasco. When Romasco started questioning me about my "ideological" approach to history—that's a real buzz-word—he became almost hostile toward my reliance on Rothbard's work. Though I ended up receiving an award for best record in the history honors program, Romasco was so disenchanted with my thesis that he told me: "Maybe you ought to go into political theory instead of history!" I guess I took him seriously. In any event, when I related the story of my oral defense to Murray, explaining how hostile Romasco was, Murray started to laugh. It seems that in the Summer 1966 issue of *Studies on the Left*, Murray published a scathing review of Romasco's book, *The Poverty of Abundance: Hoover, the Nation, the Depression*. In it, Murray attacks Romasco's welfare-liberal ideology, his "failures" and "misconceptions," his bibliographic "skimpiness" and "ad hoc, unsupported and inevitably fallacious causal theories." Murray figured I became the whipping boy for Romasco; here was Romasco's chance to strike back at Murray Rothbard, by extension. Well, it was my first lesson in the politics of scholarship, even if it provided Murray with a hearty laugh. I sure wasn't laughing in front of that committee!

Eventually, through my efforts, the Department of History invited Murray to speak on "Libertarian Paradigms in American History"—a remarkable lecture extending from the colonial to the modern era—and it was one of the most well-received and well-attended seminars ever presented under the department's auspices. In later years, I don't think Murray was too thrilled with some of the criticisms I made of his work, but he was always cordial and supportive. Ironically, Bertell Ollman, who had known Rothbard personally because

they were both members of the Peace and Freedom Party in the 1960s, encouraged me not only in my student radicalism, but also in my desire to write a doctoral dissertation on Marx, Hayek,—and—Rothbard. I'm only sorry that Murray didn't live to see my published work on Rand, which greatly interested him, or my *Total Freedom*, which devotes half of its contents to a discussion of his important legacy.

And so: that's not only how I became a libertarian . . . but also how I've become a libertarian scholar. ■

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LARRY J. SECHREST

## BURKE, RAND, AND ROTHBARD

IF ONE CAN BE BORN AN anachronism, I was. I first saw the light of day in Detroit, Michigan, and my earliest memory—at the age of three or four—is of being taken to nearby Belle Isle where I was permitted to wander about an old wooden schooner named the *J.T. Wing*. Ever since I have been fascinated by sailing ships. My childhood fantasy was to be a designer of such ships, but since they were no longer economically viable, there was no demand for that sort of expertise. Therefore, I decided to do the next best thing: become a career naval officer whose sidelines would include designing sailing yachts and writing about maritime and naval history.

By the time I was twelve, my family had moved to Texas, and it was in the Dallas area that I spent four years in the U.S. Naval Sea Cadets, a sort of seagoing Boy Scouts dedicated to preparing boys for naval service. I was well on my way to the U.S. Naval Academy when, as a senior in high school, I decided to pursue a career in theoretical physics rather than join the Navy. I spent my first three years at the University of Texas at Arlington as a physics major, but graduated in 1968 as a history and philosophy major.

This switch caused me to have some strange elective courses. I would imagine that very few history or philosophy majors take courses in abstract algebra, thermodynamics, or quantum mechanics, but I did. Why the radical change? As I grew older, my interest in political philosophy and related disciplines also grew. Therefore, I left the physical sciences and math for the humane sciences.

This may have been a satisfying change from an intellectual standpoint, but I soon found out that there was little in the way of economic rewards offered to someone with my

degree. Searching for gainful employment of any kind, I happened to take a job as a hotel auditor. This was the beginning of fourteen fairly lucrative years in the hotel business, during which time I functioned variously as an auditor, controller, assistant manager, and general manager.

In the fall of 1983 I realized that I did not want to spend the rest of my life in the hotel business, so the following spring I returned to the University of Texas at Arlington.

I began as a graduate history student, but soon switched to economics at the urging of two professors in that department (both of whom apparently later regretted that encouragement when they discovered I was a libertarian and interested in Austrian economics). I enjoyed the subject matter, despite the neoclassical formalism, and did very well, so I got my Ph.D. there as well as my MA.

Most of the department was more-or-less hostile to Austrian ideas, but there were three men who were supportive. Peter Lewin was only there for a short time, but while he was he actively encouraged me to pursue my interest in Austrian economics. In addition, and separate from any specific content, I gained a better understanding of how economics ought to be done from the numerous discussions Peter and I had. Eirik Furubotn and Tom Holland both had some sympathies for the Austrian approach and always were at least tolerant of my “eccentricity.” I will forever be grateful to all three.

I should note here that the course of study at UTA was quite mainstream. There were, as I recall, four semesters of econometrics and two semesters of mathematical economics, for example. Moreover, virtually every class in the Ph.D. program required that the student write an econometrically based term paper. I would like to say that I strongly believe all graduate students interested in the Austrian School, despite the reservations they may have about mainstream methodology (reservations I share), will benefit from undergoing a similar course of study. To do otherwise is to shut ourselves off entirely from the rest of the economics profession. And we cannot persuade them of the “error of their ways” if we cannot speak in terms familiar to them.

The foregoing gives a rough idea of some key periods in my life. To that chronology allow me now to overlay some comments about my intellectual development, which of course is closely interwoven with those events. First of all, it is apparently quite common for those who are now libertarians to have once been socialists. That is not true in my case. Instead, in my early teens, I began my intellectual journey as a Burkean conservative, albeit a somewhat unusual one, because I have always been an atheist, and one does not encounter very many irreligious conservatives.

I was much impressed by Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and, later, his *A Vindication of Natural Society* as well as a number of his speeches and shorter essays. However, my atheism led me to question then, as I do now, whether the status of organized religion as a pillar of civilized society is justified. In other words, does religious belief bring about a net loss or a net gain? Should we nonbelievers follow Hayek’s suggestion in *The Fatal Conceit* and praise religion as a civilizing force, as a necessary condition for the “extended order” and co-extensive with it, despite what we see as its irrational roots? Or should we condemn religion, even though it often defends private property and the exercise of individual conscience, on the grounds that it also

extols self-sacrifice and mystical revelation, and thus ultimately undermines the foundation of a free society?

In short, the combination of conservatism and atheism constituted an uneasy alliance in my mind. I could not abide the proletarian, avant-garde, and libertine sentiments of the Left, but neither could I tolerate the self-righteous religiosity of many on the Right. I longed for a cultural perspective that challenged all the conventional myths without also rejecting the truly civilizing virtues: honor, courage, dignity, grace, sentiment, good manners, good taste. So I searched elsewhere. What I found was libertarianism, first in its Objectivist form and later as anarcho-capitalism. Of course, the seeds of the answer were in front of me all the time, but I failed consciously to recognize them. I say that because as early as 1958 Murray Rothbard wrote an essay identifying and praising the radical libertarian principles that can be found in Burke's *A Vindication of Natural Society*. I, however, never saw Rothbard's essay until many years later. In fact, the first work I encountered that challenged the standard portrayal of Burke was Isaac Kramnick's *The Rage of Edmund Burke* in 1977.

I say that I found libertarianism, but it was, in some ways, an accidental discovery. When I was an undergraduate in the mid-1960s there were no professors who mentioned libertarian ideas or writers in class. In 1969, however, there did appear a group of students on the UTA campus who were fascinated by Ayn Rand. They began to hold discussions of her works, and the leader of the group invited me to attend. Here was what I had been looking for. Free market radicalism and atheism, in one package. I first read Rand's nonfiction, most importantly *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* and *The Virtue of Selfishness*, and only later her novels. The blend of capitalism and egoism was both daring and exhilarating. The recurring themes of individual rights and of living a life here on earth, of living for one's own sake, I found enormously sensible and appealing—and I still do. Properly understood, Rand's work is not, as so many of her detractors claim, the expression of an adolescent mentality. At its core, it is elegantly nuanced. It is the mature expression of a brilliant mind. To see that, however, one must at times look past Rand's own rhetoric.

The positive references to Ludwig von Mises in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* induced me to read his *Socialism* and *The Theory of Money and Credit*. Soon after, I happened across a bound volume of the *New Individualist Review*, which introduced me to Henry Hazlitt, F. A. Hayek, Harry Elmer Barnes, Milton Friedman, and, most importantly, Murray Rothbard. Inspired by reading Rothbard's *Power and Market* and *For a New Liberty*, I then sought out works by Frank Chodorov, Benjamin Tucker, Lysander Spooner, and James J. Martin. Martin's *Men Against the State* made me aware of the depth of the individualist anarchist tradition in America. His *The Saga of Hog Island* and *Revisionist Viewpoints* sharpened my awareness of the corruption and deceit in American politics. Branching out from this Old Right/libertarian core, I also explored such diverse writers as Randolph Bourne, Paul Goodman, Rudolf Rocker, and Max Stirner (whose real name was Johann Caspar Schmidt).

Thus, by the time I began work on my Ph.D. I was already a longtime libertarian, not based primarily on economic analysis, but on ethical, political, and cultural grounds. I then

more carefully studied the technical arguments of the Austrian School in parallel with and as counterpoint to the neoclassical approach that I dealt with in class. Before long, it was clear to me that *laissez-faire* was irrefutably the social ideal from the perspective of any academic discipline. One thing that helped me immeasurably was the contact I had with Murray Rothbard throughout the 1980s. I wrote him somewhere around 1981 regarding some point in *For a New Liberty* and we periodically exchanged letters and phone calls until his death in 1995. He was always a gracious source of both information and inspiration.

It is fair to say that my approach to any subject, whether economics or not, is rather ecumenical. That, however, can constitute heresy in some persons' eyes. For example, although I categorize myself as an Austrian economist, I am not averse to the use of econometrics, if employed with great care. The key influences on my thought have certainly been Rand and Rothbard, but I have found value in the works of a number of other people. To synthesize those many insights is a daunting task which I am far from completing, and will never complete alone.

The common thread I am trying to trace is essentially an Aristotelian one. Carl Menger, founder of the Austrian School, was a realist in the tradition of Aristotle, as were both Rand and Rothbard. Mises and Hayek represent departures from that thread. Mises was, in at least some respects, a neo-Kantian, and Hayek was an ardent admirer of David Hume as well as of Kant. Insofar as economic theory is concerned, considerable progress along the lines I am pursuing has been made by George Reisman. Reisman's *Capitalism: A Treatise on Economics* tries to integrate the ethics of Rand with the economics of the Austrian School, partly by resurrecting various concepts from classical economics and partly by introducing clarifications of his own devising. An important recent development in a related area is the work of another friend, Chris M. Sciabarra. Sciabarra has made the provocative argument in his *Total Freedom* that libertarianism is best defended using a dialectical method. But this is not the dialectics of Hegel and Marx; it is the dialectics of Aristotle. Ultimately, if the Austrian School is to prosper, I believe it must return to its Mengerian, that is, its Aristotelian, roots and develop further from there.

My range of interests has led me to write on a variety of topics. My book, *Free Banking*, was published by Quorum Books in 1993. I have also written several journal articles on free banking and the related topic of business cycles. It may be unusual for an Austrian, but I have had two econometric papers published. One dealt with purchasing power parity as a reflection of expected rather than realized price levels. The other investigated correlations between an Austrian measure of the money supply and some common macroeconomic variables. *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* (Fall 1999 and Fall 2000) published my two-part critique of Rand's defense of limited government, a critique based on Rothbard's recognition that the distributional effects of taxation are never neutral. Those two papers also gave some of the reasons for my advocacy of anarcho-capitalism. My comparison of Rand and Hayek appeared in *Reason Papers* in 1998. An essay on the contributions of Jean-Baptiste Say appeared in the book *15 Great Austrian Economists*. I am currently completing an 800-page manuscript—the culmination of fifteen years of research—on the performance characteristics of commercial sailing ships. A paper on "Praxeology, Economics, and Law" draws parallels between Rothbard and legal theorist Adolf Reinach and appeared in the

*Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*. My essay on privateering, the for-profit use of private armed ships in time of war, will soon appear in a book edited by Hans-Hermann Hoppe. A short version of that essay was published as an op-ed in several newspapers and has been cited not only by various columnists and think-tank researchers but also by Representative Ron Paul on the floor of Congress.

In addition to my publications in academic journals, I have been very pleased to contribute a number of essays to *The Free Radical*, an outstanding New Zealand magazine founded and edited by Objectivist Lindsay Perigo.

To bring this autobiographical sketch to an end, I would like to offer some hopefully encouraging observations for the benefit of young libertarians and/or Austrians seeking an academic career. It is not necessary that you do your graduate work at an elite university, nor that you achieve a faculty position at such an institution. There can be no doubt that both are helpful, but neither is ultimately essential. I have done neither, and yet I have achieved some reasonable degree of success in my field. Many will also advise you to hide your libertarian sentiments and your interest in Austrian economics, at least until you have obtained secure employment. That might be prudent under certain circumstances, but I did not do that either. What is essential is that you follow your mind and heart wherever they lead you. Treat your own independent judgment as something sacred. And please keep in mind Herman Melville's admonition: "It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation." ■

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JEREMY SHEARMUR

## HOW I BECAME ALMOST A LIBERTARIAN

I WAS BORN INTO A MIDDLE-CLASS English household in Woodford Green, Essex, a suburban area just outside the borders of London. My father was the headmaster of a state school for educationally subnormal children, and my mother a teacher. I was (by far) the youngest of three children, and my father died when I was seven years old. After this things became financially quite difficult. I also suspect that the early death of my father led to my becoming psychologically resistant to arbitrary male authority, and thus

gave me a psychological predisposition toward libertarianism. Our house had perhaps two hundred books in it and a limited number of records (although we had access to a good public library system).

The culture in which I grew up was non-academic, and in substance it bore the influence of the indoctrination that the British received during the Second World War. It was also distinctive because of its religious pluralism: my mother was a devoted member of the Church of England; my brother had become a Catholic convert when he was studying at Oxford; my sister had become an evangelical Christian when she was at horticultural college, while I had been sent—for reasons that I do not understand—to an evangelical Christian Sunday school, and was (briefly) converted when I was about eleven. After attending a private elementary school, I was sent to a Quaker secondary school, a residential, co-educational school which offered a number of places paid for by the County's Educational Authority, and which I was able to attend without paying fees.

It used to be said that the Church of England was the Conservative Party at prayer; British Quakers represented something like left liberalism at prayer—although there was not much prayer going on, and in a religious instruction class, some surprise was registered when I expressed interest in hearing a systematic theological defense of the views of the Society of Friends. All this had some strange personal consequences, in that my upbringing was quite conservative, and at the very point when one might well rebel against established views, I found that the established views at school were, politically, on the left. The result of all this was that I became a somewhat timid, personally conservative non-conformist—in the sense of being unwilling to go along with established ideas and combining kind of morally driven for established values with a strong individualism and anti-authoritarianism in my personal attitudes. At the same time, the diversity of religious views to which I had been exposed led me into an interest in the problem posed by a diversity of claims to truth, and with how this should be intellectually resolved.

At British schools, one specializes in the last two years of study, and I specialized in history, mathematics and chemistry. Our careers adviser suggested that I might study economics, and with the intention of doing this I applied to and was accepted by the London School of Economics. The B.Sc. (Econ) degree required that, in the first year, one studied five different topics, and in addition to economics, I took courses in political science, history, mathematics and logic. Economics I found utterly unappealing.

It was taught like a Kuhnian “normal science,” and used deadly dull text-books by Lipsey and Samuelson. It so happened that the logic course was taught by Alan Musgrave, now a Professor of Philosophy at Dunedin in New Zealand, and it was taught not in the deadly dull manner in which logic is often taught, but as a fascinating history of problems, attempts to solve them, and what the consequences of this were. Of all the subjects that I was studying, philosophy appealed most. I was able to specialize in philosophy within my B.Sc. (Econ) degree, and subsequently in my M.Sc.

Philosophy at the L.S.E. was distinctive, because of the way in which the Department of Philosophy had been formed around Karl Popper. His ideas—and battles about them—formed the center of my education. Popper, while I do not think his ideas have been fully successful, has been the major influence on my philosophical views. In particular, I have

been influenced by his epistemological ideas. I also think that the ideas of Popper and of Lakatos about research programs offer a particularly important approach to the key problem for a libertarian of how one can combine an aspiration to objectivity with political commitment.

I was at the L.S.E. during the years of the late 1960s student revolts. These, at the L.S.E., were highly contested, with, for example, students in philosophy being almost totally at odds with the student revolutionaries. The renewed influence of Marxism in the late 1960s, however, gave a contemporary relevance to Popper's epistemological and political thought; notably to his critique of Marx. At the same time, I was exposed to—and felt utter contempt for—British progressive conservatives. They seemed to have no ability to engage with the intellectual issues that the Left were raising. I also encountered some American SDS-style radicals who played a leading role in the occupations at the L.S.E. They prided themselves in having no theoretical analysis behind what they were doing, and they seemed to me, in consequence, little better than fascist thugs.

After a year at the University Library at Durham, I returned to the L.S.E. as Popper's assistant, a position that I held for some eight years. Popper's work has been the most significant intellectual influence upon me, although I have come to disagree with some important aspects of his approach to politics. During this time, I was also registered for a Ph.D. thesis. The topic of Hayek's political thought had been suggested to me by Professor J.W.N. Watkins. I had known of Hayek through his "Scientism and the Study of Society" and some of his other methodological writings. These had seemed interesting but in some respects also rather odd. I was happy enough with Watkins's suggestion. But as I studied I became increasingly interested in and impressed by the political aspects of Hayek's work. In particular, I came to find his criticisms of socialist economic planning fascinating, and to offer a really telling response to a lot of ideas which, with the revival of Marxism, had come back into favor. I also found very stimulating Hayek's reading of Hume's political philosophy. In particular, I was most impressed by his discussion of Hume's ideas about justice—and of the way in which it works as a system, but includes actions on the part of a judge which, viewed individually, would be rejected as unjust. This—and points that related to it—became central to my later criticism of Popper's politics. But they also seemed to me to point to a key problem for any democratic system that responds to problems articulated in a piecemeal manner, without there being a check on their systematic consequences, as in American "pluralism," while Hayek's ideas about the limited role that rational deliberation can play in social organization (in his *Road to Serfdom*) was equally telling against the kind of deliberative democracy that is currently fashionable, as I write. I was also led, through my work on Hayek, to a serious study of Adam Smith, whose ideas—not least those on theoretical history and the epistemology of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*—have had a lasting influence on me. They emphasized, further, the ideas that I had absorbed from Hayek, as to the significance of systematic ways of proceeding which, however, one did not have to understand in a holistic manner. In this way, Hayek and Smith—both individualists—furnished me with the tools for a critique of certain other kinds of individualism (from Popper to rational choice theory), and for the appreciation of a market-based economy as a *system*.

I also think that there is a lot to be said for the kind of approach that Smith offered to the understanding of history, in which the way in which people are living—the mode of subsistence—plays a key role, supplemented by the effects of the kinds of customs and legal formations that people have, contingently, been led to adopt (see Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*). All this, in Smith, formed the backdrop against which his ideas about people's psychology and their other dispositions, then operated. This kind of analysis still seems to me sound—though I would now stress the way in which we may have a choice as to the structures under which we may live. But I would further supplement it, by arguing that we should bring in the interplay between such systematic ways of behaving and their ecological consequences, too. I discussed issues concerning the interpretation of Smith over many years with Knud Haakonssen, whom I first got to know as a translator of Popper into Danish, and I have subsequently been influenced in my understanding of rights theory and what also seem to me its limitations, by his fascinating work on Post-Grotian Natural Law theory.

At that time, however, I was still strongly influenced by Popper's political writings, and I had been impressed by Bryan Magee's reading of them as offering a basis for democratic socialism—indeed, to the point where I joined the local branch of the British Labour Party. My membership of this, however, did not last more than a few weeks, as I discovered the Party to be dominated by almost the antithesis of the piecemeal reformism that Popper's work suggested. At the same time, I made contact with some libertarians, as a consequence of John Blundell's organizing a conference on The Austrian School with financial support from the Institute for Humane Studies. The conference itself was interesting; but it was more the aftermath which made its mark on me personally. There were some follow-up meetings, and with continuing support from IHS, John and I came to run the Carl Menger Society. This had informal meetings, and subsequently one-day conferences, at which papers were given on themes relating to the Austrian School and to classical liberalism. My own concerns at the time related to Austrian methodology, and also to how traditional ways of life, valuable customs, and systematic ways of doing things, could be preserved within a classical liberal structure. At the same time, I had doubts about libertarianism, as I was concerned that the ways in which political power had been tamed, over time, might be lost, if there was a move to its interpretation of a completely free society (i.e., as to whether those running protection agencies might not behave more like absolute than constitutional monarchs). My own political views combined conservative themes—in the sense of an attachment to traditions—with a free-market liberalism. I was strengthened in these views by my growing hostility toward the kind of British conservatism represented by Edward Heath and, in particular, by his appeals for a government of national unity at the very point at which his government had been defeated by a strike of coal miners.

I became friendly with several libertarians through the Carl Menger Society—including both utilitarians, and semi-Randians. The former included David Ramsay Steele, now working for Open Court, whose *From Marx to Mises* contains a particularly effective presentation of the economic calculation argument, the latter, Chris Tame, who was for a while the manager of The Alternative Bookshop—a libertarian and classical liberal

bookstore, set up with the financial assistance of some people working at the Institute of Economic Affairs.

From London, I moved to teaching positions in Edinburgh where I learned a lot about the distinctive tradition of Scottish philosophy from George Elder Davie, author of *The Democratic Intellect*, and, subsequently, in Manchester. At Manchester, I met Istvan Hont: we had many conversations, not least about Smith, and I found his and Ignatieff's *Needs and Justice in The Wealth of Nations* immensely suggestive (not least for its discussion of the interplay between rights-based and economic argument in Smith). It also made a considerable impact upon my reading of Hayek. By this point, I was strongly attached to Hayekian and market-based perspectives, but I was also concerned with problems about how to shelter useful traditions and systematic ways of proceeding from a kind of piecemeal undermining by the currents of market-based societies. I spent a lot of time working through issues relating to these problems, making use of ideas from Adam Smith and Karl Popper.

While I was at Edinburgh, I received an invitation to participate in a Liberty Fund Summer Fellowship program at the Institute for Humane Studies, at Menlo Park, in 1982. Through this I made my first contact with serious neo-Randian philosophy, in the person of Doug Rasmussen, with whom I found myself in a good measure of political agreement, but in philosophical disagreement. The time at IHS led to a further invitation, in 1984, to direct their Summer Fellowship program—through which I had the opportunity of getting to know, over the years, many able younger scholars, including Steve Macedo and Dave Schmidtz.

My positions at Edinburgh and at Manchester were temporary, and Britain, at that time, offered little by way of academic appointments. I was, however, fortunate enough to be offered a position as Director of Studies at the Centre for Policy Studies in London, a “think-tank” set up initially by Sir Keith Joseph, with which Margaret Thatcher had also become associated, and who retained formal links with the Center while she was Prime Minister. This placed me at the heart of public policy issues, with access to political policy advisers in various different ministries, and to the 10 Downing Street Policy Unit. I considered my goal, to try to encourage non-governmental solutions to public policy issues, of a kind that might be of use to the government. It was an interesting time, but my own concerns were more academic than party-political. I was delighted when I received an offer from IHS to work for them, directing their summer residential programs, and working with the young scholars to whom they made awards. This gave me the chance to return to an academic setting; and IHS gave me three months on their payroll to complete my Ph.D. before joining them.

My work at IHS was fascinating, as it brought me into contact with a whole generation of young scholars with interests in classical liberalism, working in a range of disciplines including economics, history, political science and philosophy. It was a privilege to work with such people, and it brought me into contact with a wealth of scholarship of which I had, previously, only a very limited knowledge. I also benefited greatly from my contacts with IHS's staff members: from Leonard Liggio's amazingly broad historical knowledge; from Walter Grinder's vitally important insight into the significance, for arguments about

liberty, of being able to show that, in the past, various things had been done without the state which, today, people often presume can only be done by it, and from Tom Palmer's passionate concern for liberty, wide academic knowledge and ready wit. In addition to enabling me to spend my time discussing issues with, and giving assistance to, a range of outstandingly able young scholars with interests in classical liberalism, my time at IHS also led me away from the kind of academic parochialism that is, I fear, all too common in the UK.

In addition, I found that it made three significant intellectual changes to my own approach to political issues. First, it became clear to me that there is something terribly wrong with Hayek's views. For while he has some good arguments against central economic planning, he does not really have much to say about what the scope should be of state activity, within a market-based economy, provided, that is, that the state operates in such a way that it does not call the economy, or the rule of law, into question. Hayek does, it is true, raise some problems here; but they seem to me as telling against the modest interventionism of his own approach, as they are against more extensive ideas about the role for government. In my view, we should bite the bullet—and restrict the scope of what the state does, only to those things that it is impossible to do by other means. I would not, here, wish to be doctrinaire; however, and I am well aware of Popper's plea for piecemeal experimentation. Accordingly, I favor a policy of hollowing out the state, piecemeal, by gradually shedding its functions (where this means that it completely gets out of the particular business, rather than remaining in charge, and asking people to bid to provide services). In addition, it seems to me important to follow up on cases in which private provision leads to problems, to diagnose whether—and how—things might be done better, in future.

Second, it led me to an understanding of the extent to which the kind of statist presuppositions that nearly everyone in the academic world takes for granted are false. Not only are there historical counter-examples to so many of the claims and implicit assumptions that *only* the state can do this or that. But there is a sense in which many people seem to be wearing blinders, in terms of their view as to what are *possible* ways in which problems can be solved. The contrast is so stark, that it is, at times, difficult to know how it is best addressed. If one does so too directly, there is a risk that one might come across, to one's colleagues, like a member of some odd religious sect.

Third, I have become convinced of the significance of the libertarian case against foreign intervention. Attitudes like those of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair come all too easily to people brought up in Britain. In my own case they were re-enforced by the way in which many of my contemporaries at university seemed to favor the idea that the horrific political regime in North Viet Nam should be imposed on those living in the South, or to see nothing wrong with the tyranny of China's Cultural Revolution. I would not wish to argue that there are no cases in which there is an obligation not to intervene; and the toleration of German re-armament prior to the Second World War looks to me a case in point. Further, a world full of predatory states may force us to maintain our own active state, for the sake of self-defense. But what does now seem to me clear, is that the kind of interventionist foreign policy currently being pursued in relation to Iraq by

the governments of the U.S., Britain and Australia is horrific. Aside from the likely deaths of conscripts involved in the fighting and of civilians who get caught up in it, there are wider problems posed by the hubris of politicians who think that nation building is an easy enough matter, and the dangers of an international regime in which it is accepted that if you have strong moral objections to some other political leader, it is fine to go to war with his country. In addition, there are the dangers of a loss of liberty within the countries that engage in war.

So what is the outcome? I am still concerned with issues relating to how specific customs to which people may be attached, and worthwhile traditions (a concern, also, of John Gray's, which has led him in very different directions) may be preserved within market-based societies. But, over the years, and as I have learned more, not only is my attachment to classical liberalism stronger, but I have also become convinced that the best way to address these long-standing concerns is by means of voluntary associations within market-based societies, within which government plays as minimal a role as possible. I have also found the libertarian case against international intervention increasingly telling. Accordingly, I find that I have become almost a libertarian, and there is the possibility that, as I find out more, I may be led all the way, even to embrace a form of market-based anarchism (I am conscious of the fact that my views do change, on a regular basis, as the result of further reading).

However, while this change in my views has occurred, my reasons for holding the views that I do differ, I suspect, from those of many libertarians. I find Aristotle tedious and unconvincing and Ayn Rand's novels unreadable (while her work as a philosopher makes me think she should have stuck to novels). I'm a bit skeptical about traditional rights-based approaches and don't think that utilitarian or self-interest based, rational-choice approaches, or the recent rebirth of a kind of libertarian sociobiology, are either fully satisfactory or that they really lead to libertarian conclusions. I also find Mises and Rothbard better as cheerleaders than as sources of really telling scholarship.

All this, however, serves to re-enforce Popper's point that we are all fallible (not least myself in such judgments), and also to bring out just how diverse a group even of libertarians and near-libertarians may be. And this, as Nozick was to suggest in the under-appreciated utopia section of his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, itself suggests a further line of argument for libertarian, or almost-libertarian, ideas. ■

## THE RELUCTANT ANARCHIST

MY ARRIVAL AT PHILOSOPHICAL ANARCHISM has disturbed some of my conservative and Christian friends. In fact, it surprises me, going as it does against my own inclinations.

As a child I acquired a deep respect for authority and a horror of chaos. In my case the two things were blended by the uncertainty of my existence after my parents divorced and I bounced from one home to another for several years, often living with strangers. A stable authority was something I yearned for.

Meanwhile, my public-school education imbued me with the sort of patriotism encouraged in all children in those days. I grew up feeling that if there was one thing I could trust and rely on, it was my government. I knew it was strong and benign, even if I didn't know much else about it. The idea that some people—Communists, for example—might want to overthrow the government filled me with horror.

G.K. Chesterton, with his usual gentle audacity, once criticized Rudyard Kipling for his “lack of patriotism.” Since Kipling was renowned for glorifying the British Empire, this might have seemed one of Chesterton's “paradoxes”; but it was no such thing, except in the sense that it denied what most readers thought was obvious and incontrovertible.

Chesterton, himself a “Little Englander” and opponent of empire, explained what was wrong with Kipling's view: “He admires England, but he does not love her; for we admire things with reasons, but love them without reason. He admires England because she is strong, not because she is English.” Which implies there would be nothing to love her for if she were weak.

Of course Chesterton was right. You love your country as you love your mother—simply because it is yours, not because of its superiority to others, particularly superiority of power.

This seems axiomatic to me now, but it startled me when I first read it. After all, I was an American, and American patriotism typically expresses itself in superlatives. America is the freest, the mightiest, the richest, in short the greatest country in the world, with the greatest form of government—the most democratic. Maybe the poor Finns or Peruvians love their countries too, but heaven knows why—they have so little to be proud of, so few “reasons.” America is also the most envied country in the world. Don't all people secretly wish they were Americans?

That was the kind of patriotism instilled in me as a boy, and I was quite typical in this respect. It was the patriotism of supremacy. For one thing, America had never lost a war—I was even proud that America had created the atomic bomb (providentially, it seemed, just

in time to crush the Japs)—and this is why the Vietnam war was so bitterly frustrating. Not the dead, but the defeat! The end of history's great winning streak!

As I grew up, my patriotism began to take another form, which it took me a long time to realize was in tension with the patriotism of power. I became a philosophical conservative, with a strong libertarian streak. I believed in government, but it had to be "limited" government—confined to a few legitimate purposes, such as defense abroad and policing at home. These functions, and hardly any others, I accepted, under the influence of writers like Ayn Rand and Henry Hazlitt, whose books I read in my college years.

Though I disliked Rand's atheism (at the time, I was irreligious, but not anti-religious), she had an odd appeal to my residual Catholicism. I had read enough Aquinas to respond to her Aristotelian mantras. Everything had to have its own nature and limitations, including the state; the idea of a state continually growing, knowing no boundaries, forever increasing its claims on the citizen, offended and frightened me. It could only end in tyranny.

I was also powerfully drawn to Bill Buckley, an explicit Catholic, who struck the same Aristotelian note. During his 1965 race for mayor of New York, he made a sublime promise to the voter: he offered "the internal composure that comes of knowing there are rational limits to politics." This may have been the most futile campaign promise of all time, but it would have won my vote!

It was really this Aristotelian sense of "rational limits," rather than any particular doctrine, that made me a conservative. I rejoiced to find it in certain English writers who were remote from American conservatism—Chesterton, of course, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, George Orwell, C.S. Lewis, Michael Oakeshott.

In fact I much preferred a literary, contemplative conservatism to the activist sort that was preoccupied with immediate political issues. During the Reagan years, which I expected to find exciting, I found myself bored to death by supply-side economics, enterprise zones, "privatizing" welfare programs, and similar principle-dodging gimmickry. I failed to see that "movement" conservatives were less interested in principles than in Republican victories. To the extent that I did see it, I failed to grasp what it meant.

Still, the last thing I expected to become was an anarchist. For many years I didn't even know that serious philosophical anarchists existed. I'd never heard of Lysander Spooner or Murray Rothbard. How could society survive at all without a state?

Now I began to be critical of the U.S. Government, though not very. I saw that the welfare state, chiefly the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, violated the principles of limited government and would eventually have to go. But I agreed with other conservatives that in the meantime the urgent global threat of Communism had to be stopped. Since I viewed "defense" as one of the proper tasks of government, I thought of the Cold War as a necessity, the overhead, so to speak, of freedom. If the Soviet threat ever ceased (the prospect seemed remote), we could afford to slash the military budget and get back to the job of dismantling the welfare state.

Somewhere, at the rainbow's end, America would return to her founding principles. The Federal Government would be shrunk, laws would be few, taxes minimal. That was what I thought. Hoped, anyway.

I avidly read conservative and free-market literature during those years with the sense that I was, as a sort of late convert, catching up with the conservative movement. I took it for granted that other conservatives had already read the same books and had taken them to heart. Surely we all wanted the same things! At bottom this was based on the knowledge that there were rational limits to politics. Good old Aristotle. At the time, it seemed a short hop from Aristotle to Barry Goldwater.

As is fairly well known by now, I went to work as a young man for Buckley at *National Review* and later became a syndicated columnist. I found my niche in conservative journalism as a critic of liberal distortions of the U.S. Constitution, particularly in the Supreme Court's rulings on abortion, pornography, and "freedom of expression."

Gradually I came to see that the conservative challenge to liberalism's jurisprudence of "loose construction" was far too narrow. Nearly everything liberals wanted the Federal Government to do was unconstitutional. The key to it all, I thought, was the Tenth Amendment, which forbids the Federal Government to exercise any powers not specifically assigned to it in the Constitution. But the Tenth Amendment had been comatose since the New Deal, when Roosevelt's Court virtually excised it.

This meant that nearly all Federal legislation from the New Deal to the Great Society and beyond had been unconstitutional. Instead of fighting liberal programs piecemeal, conservatives could undermine the whole lot of them by reviving the true (and, really, obvious) meaning of the Constitution. Liberalism depended on a long series of usurpations of power.

Around the time of Judge Robert Bork's bitterly contested (and defeated) nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court, conservatives spent a lot of energy arguing that the "original intent" of the Constitution must be conclusive. But they applied this principle only to a few ambiguous phrases and passages that bore on specific hot issues of the day—the death penalty, for instance. About the general meaning of the Constitution there could, I thought, be no doubt at all. The ruling principle is that whatever the Federal Government isn't authorized to do, it is forbidden to do.

That alone would invalidate the Federal welfare state and, in fact, nearly all liberal legislation. But I found it hard to persuade most conservatives of this. Bork himself took the view that the Tenth Amendment was unenforceable. If he was right, then the whole Constitution was in vain from the start.

I never thought a constitutional renaissance would be easy, but I did think it could play an indispensable role in subverting the legitimacy of liberalism. Movement conservatives listened politely to my arguments, but without much enthusiasm. They regarded appeals to the Constitution as rather pedantic and, as a practical matter, futile—not much help in the political struggle. Most Americans no longer even remembered what "usurpation" meant. Conservatives themselves hardly knew.

Of course they were right, in an obvious sense. Even conservative courts (if they could be captured) wouldn't be bold enough to throw out the entire liberal legacy at once. But I remained convinced that the conservative movement had to attack liberalism at its constitutional root.

In a way I had transferred my patriotism from America as it then was to America as it had been when it still honored the Constitution. And when had it crossed the line? At first

I thought the great corruption had occurred when Franklin Roosevelt subverted the Federal judiciary; later I came to see that the decisive event had been the Civil War, which had effectively destroyed the right of the states to secede from the Union. But this was a very much a minority view among conservatives, particularly at *National Review*, where I was the only one who held it.

I've written more than enough about my career at the magazine, so I'll confine myself to saying that it was only toward the end of more than two happy decades there that I began to realize that we didn't all want the same things after all. When it happened, it was like learning, after a long and placid marriage, that your spouse is in love with someone else, and has been all along.

Not that I was betrayed. I was merely blind. I have no one to blame but myself. The Buckley crowd, and the conservative movement in general, no more tried to deceive me than I tried to deceive them. We all assumed we were on the same side, when we weren't. If there is any fault for this misunderstanding, it is my own.

In the late 1980s I began mixing with Rothbardian libertarians—they called themselves by the unprepossessing label “anarcho-capitalists”—and even met Rothbard himself. They were a brilliant, combative lot, full of challenging ideas and surprising arguments. Rothbard himself combined a profound theoretical intelligence with a deep knowledge of history. His *magnum opus*, *Man, Economy, and State*, had received the most unqualified praise of the usually reserved Henry Hazlitt—in *National Review*!

I can only say of Murray what so many others have said: never in my life have I encountered such an original and vigorous mind. A short, stocky New York Jew with an explosive cackling laugh, he was always exciting and cheerful company. Pouring out dozens of big books and hundreds of articles, he also found time, heaven knows how, to write (on the old electric typewriter he used to the end) countless long, single-spaced, closely reasoned letters to all sorts of people.

Murray's view of politics was shockingly blunt: the state was nothing but a criminal gang writ large. Much as I agreed with him in general, and fascinating though I found his arguments, I resisted this conclusion. I still wanted to believe in constitutional government.

Murray would have none of this. He insisted that the Philadelphia convention at which the Constitution had been drafted was nothing but a “coup d'état,” centralizing power and destroying the far more tolerable arrangements of the Articles of Confederation. This was a direct denial of everything I'd been taught. I'd never heard anyone suggest that the Articles had been preferable to the Constitution! But Murray didn't care what anyone thought—or what everyone thought. (He'd been too radical for even Ayn Rand.)

Murray and I shared a love of gangster films, and he once argued to me that the Mafia was preferable to the state, because it survived by providing services people actually wanted. I countered that the Mafia behaved like the state, extorting its own “taxes” in protection rackets directed at shopkeepers; its market was far from “free.” He admitted I had a point. I was proud to have won a concession from him.

Murray died a few years ago without quite having made an anarchist of me. It was left to his brilliant disciple, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, to finish my conversion. Hans argued that

no constitution could restrain the state. Once its monopoly of force was granted legitimacy, constitutional limits became mere fictions it could disregard; nobody could have the legal standing to enforce those limits. The state itself would decide, by force, what the constitution “meant,” steadily ruling in its own favor and increasing its own power. This was true a priori, and American history bore it out.

What if the Federal Government grossly violated the Constitution? Could states withdraw from the Union? Lincoln said no. The Union was “indissoluble” unless all the states agreed to dissolve it. As a practical matter, the Civil War settled that. The United States, plural, were really a single enormous state, as witness the new habit of speaking of “it” rather than “them.”

So the people are bound to obey the government even when the rulers betray their oath to uphold the Constitution. The door to escape is barred. Lincoln in effect claimed that it is not our rights but the state that is “unalienable.” And he made it stick by force of arms. No transgression of the Constitution can impair the Union’s inherited legitimacy. Once established on specific and limited terms, the U.S. Government is forever, even if it refuses to abide by those terms.

As Hoppe argues, this is the flaw in thinking the state can be controlled by a constitution. Once granted, state power naturally becomes absolute. Obedience is a one-way street. Notionally, “We the People” create a government and specify the powers it is allowed to exercise over us; our rulers swear before God that they will respect the limits we impose on them; but when they trample down those limits, our duty to obey them remains.

Yet even after the Civil War, certain scruples survived for a while. Americans still agreed in principle that the Federal Government could acquire new powers only by constitutional amendment. Hence the postwar amendments included the words “Congress shall have power to” enact such and such legislation.

But by the time of the New Deal, such scruples were all but defunct. Franklin Roosevelt and his Supreme Court interpreted the Commerce Clause so broadly as to authorize virtually any Federal claim, and the Tenth Amendment so narrowly as to deprive it of any inhibiting force. Today these heresies are so firmly entrenched that Congress rarely even asks itself whether a proposed law is authorized or forbidden by the Constitution.

In short, the U.S. Constitution is a dead letter. It was mortally wounded in 1865. The corpse can’t be revived. This remained hard for me to admit, and even now it pains me to say it.

Other things have helped change my mind. R.J. Rummel of the University of Hawaii calculates that in the twentieth century alone, states murdered about 162,000,000 of their own subjects. This figure doesn’t include the tens of millions of foreigners they killed in war. How, then, can we speak of states “protecting” their people? No amount of private crime could have claimed such a toll. As for warfare, Paul Fussell’s book *Wartime* portrays battle with such horrifying vividness that, although this wasn’t its intention, I came to doubt whether any war could be justified.

My fellow Christians have argued that the state’s authority is divinely given. They cite Christ’s injunction, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” and St. Paul’s words, “The powers that be are ordained of God.” But Christ didn’t say *which* things—if

any—belong to Caesar; his ambiguous words are far from a command to give Caesar *whatever* he claims. And it's notable that Christ never told his disciples either to establish a state or to engage in politics. They were to preach the Gospel and, if rejected, to move on. He seems never to have imagined the state as something they could or should enlist on their side.

At first sight, St. Paul seems to be more positive in affirming the authority of the state. But he himself, like the other martyrs, died for *defying* the state, and we honor him for it; to which we may add that he was on one occasion a jailbreaker as well. Evidently the passage in Romans has been misread. It was probably written during the reign of Nero, not the most edifying of rulers; but then Paul also counseled slaves to obey their masters, and nobody construes this as an endorsement of slavery. He may have meant that the state and slavery were here for the foreseeable future, and that Christians must abide them for the sake of peace. Never does he say that either is here forever.

St. Augustine took a dim view of the state, as a punishment for sin. He said that a state without justice is nothing but a gang of robbers writ large, while leaving doubt that any state could ever be otherwise. St. Thomas Aquinas took a more benign view, arguing that the state would be necessary even if man had never fallen from grace; but he agreed with Augustine that an unjust law is no law at all, a doctrine that would severely diminish any known state.

The essence of the state is its legal monopoly of force. But force is subhuman; in words I quote incessantly, Simone Weil defined it as “that which turns a person into a thing—either corpse or slave.” It may sometimes be a necessary evil, in self-defense or defense of the innocent, but nobody can have by right what the state claims: an exclusive privilege of using it.

It's entirely possible that states—organized force—will always rule this world, and that we will have at best a choice among evils. And some states are worse than others in important ways: anyone in his right mind would prefer living in the United States to life under a Stalin. But to say a thing is inevitable, or less onerous than something else, is not to say it is good.

For most people, “anarchy” is a disturbing word, suggesting chaos, violence, antinomianism—things they hope the state can control or prevent. The term “state,” despite its bloody history, doesn't disturb them. Yet it's the state that is truly chaotic, because it means the rule of the strong and cunning. They imagine that anarchy would naturally terminate in the rule of thugs. But mere thugs can't assert a plausible right to rule. Only the state, with its propaganda apparatus, can do that. This is what “legitimacy” means. Anarchists obviously need a more seductive label.

“But what would you replace the state with?” The question reveals an inability to imagine human society without the state. Yet it would seem that an institution that can take 200,000,000 lives within a century hardly needs to be “replaced.”

Christians, and especially Americans, have long been misled about all this by their good fortune. Since the conversion of Rome, most Western rulers have been more or less inhibited by Christian morality (though, often enough, not so's you'd notice), and even warfare became somewhat civilized for centuries; this has bred the assumption that the state isn't necessarily an evil at all. But as that morality loses its cultural grip, as it is rapidly

doing, this confusion will dissipate. More and more we can expect the state to show its nature nakedly.

For me this is anything but a happy conclusion. I miss the serenity of believing I lived under a good government, wisely designed and benevolent in its operation. But, as St. Paul says, “there comes a time to put away childish things.” ■

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ROBERT STEWART

## SEEKING AND FINDING LIBERTARIANISM

UNLIKE MANY OF YOUR OTHER CONTRIBUTORS, I can pinpoint the exact date on which I started on the road to being a libertarian. On June 14th, 1994 I read in a testimonial to Henry Hazlitt (who died in 1993) entitled, “A Rembrandt among commentators,” written by Michael Prowse in the *Financial Times* of June 13th. One of the disadvantages of living in Bermuda, is that the *FT* arrives a day late, although some of its advantages such as not having to pay income tax provide compensation.

I was mesmerised by the quotation heading his column, a text that will be so familiar to all Austrians that it should not need to be repeated. However, it is so eloquent, so simple, so obvious, so correct, so enlightening that it is worth restating: “The art of economics consists in looking not merely at the immediate but at the longer effects of any act or policy; it consists in tracing the consequence of that policy not merely for one group but for all groups.”

Fortunately, for me at least, Michael gave the address of the Foundation for Economic Education and from directory assistance I was given the telephone number and immediately ordered what most libertarians consider the finest introductory book on the subject of economics—*Economics in One Lesson*. When the book arrived some weeks later (another disadvantage is that we have a government post office in Bermuda) I was mesmerised when I read the text.

From then on, I was a convert. It took only a short time to discover other books by Hazlitt, Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, Murray Rothbard, Leonard Read, and many others. Subsequently, I navigated the web and found Mises.org and other free-market organizations.

The daily email from Auburn and from LewRockwell.com is one of life's simple pleasures for someone who became hooked on benefits of the free market at a late age.

However, I am getting ahead of myself. I took a degree in economics from the University of London in 1967 at the ripe old age of 28, when the reigning giants on the subject were Samuelson, Lipsey, and of course Galbraith. Government intervention was at its zenith and there were lots of nonsensical things to study such as the U.K. National Economic Plan of 1965. I first voted in 1964, foolishly for Harold Wilson's Labour Party, and again in 1966—these are confessions that should be made in private but are now embarrassing to make public.

At that time, I had never heard of the giants of Austrian economics. These omissions clearly did not qualify me to teach economics when I returned to Bermuda, although I did for two years until following the timeless advice of Adam Smith (of whom I had heard) I decided to follow my self-interest and leave teaching to earn a bigger salary at Shell.

There I remained for almost 30 years (a great company) and just before I retired in 1998, I published a book entitled *Bermuda—An Economy Which Works* that was sprinkled with many ideas and quotations from Hazlitt and Mises. In many ways, the Bermuda economy was a classic *laissez-faire* economy, the main reason for its stupendous success from the 1950s to the present.

Although a British Colony, it had the good sense not to follow the nonsensical welfare-state policies of U.K. Bermuda with its combination of low taxes, limited government, respect for the rule of law, and private property led inexorably, as one knows as a libertarian, to increasing prosperity and a per capita income higher than the U.S., and a great quality of life—no tax returns to complete. Although, I had not wholly appreciated it before 1994, I was living in a society that largely followed libertarian ideas.

Why was I so slow on the uptake? Apart from a natural inclination to being one sandwich short of a picnic, I had been hoodwinked by conventional and statist economics. In addition, apart from voting for Harold Wilson in 1964, I was an admirer in the 1960s to the early 1980s of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, and even of Richard Nixon. I admired, from afar, their ideas of bold government action to stimulate domestic reforms, to undertake utopian social engineering projects, to distribute wealth and their other fanciful plans. What a clown.

As I travelled the world for Shell, I saw at first hand in countries as different as Jamaica, India, and Guatemala the nonsense of economic planning and government intervention. In many countries, economic chaos reigned. Corruption, incompetence, poverty, penal taxation, starvation, ill-health and so on were the norm. As an executive of a Western company I was immune from most of the failures. I travelled first class, stayed in great hotels, and was paid a bundle. The economic chaos and distress that I witnessed was something I put down to as being akin to an act of God, not the self-imposed penalties of official incompetence and conceit.

I moved in 1982 from the tax-free sunny climate of Bermuda to London, and I was fortunate to be again in a highly privileged position by being quarantined from the excesses of economic incompetence. The U.K. was a mess. Huge inflation, high taxes, the destructive power of special-interest groups, labor unrest and strikes, public services that did not

work, and a welfare state that did little for the disadvantaged but did much for those who were able to write letters and lobby for special privileges.

Prime Minister Thatcher was in the midst of trying to change the moribund U.K. economy but the opposition to many of her policies was strident. Over time, I became a great admirer of her, and President Reagan, as they both labored to undo the mess bequeathed by their predecessors. What I had learned as a student of economics made very little sense in that environment, and apart from getting myself a good job my years of study in the mid-1960s seemed something of a waste of time.

My return to Bermuda in 1985 was a relief. Things worked, taxes were low, business flourished, government maintained a hands-off policy, and people worked hard although it was difficult to get that message across to my senior management in the U.K. who believed that all we did was go to the beach and play golf. What was not apparent was that Bermuda seemed to have found the financial philosopher's stone, whilst most countries continued to flounder. For several years, I simply accepted the fact that the economy of Bermuda was superior to that of most countries, and that other countries had somehow lost their way.

That was until I came across Henry Hazlitt in 1994. When I read Hayek, Rothbard, Mises, and the others I began to realize how foolish the rest of the world was in following the dead end of government intervention and high direct taxation; and how lucky Bermuda had been by unconsciously following libertarian precepts.

I, for one, am happy to be a small part of a movement that seeks to show ordinary people the extraordinary benefits that capitalism and economic freedom bring to everyone. As Ludwig von Mises wrote: "Economic prosperity is not so much a material problem; it is, first of all, an intellectual, spiritual, and moral problem." ■

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ALEXANDER TABARROK

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## RUSH, RAND, AND ROTHBARD: A BRIEF INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

I GREW UP IN A HOME where the dining room was a chamber for debate and discussion. My father, a professor of mechanical engineering with wide interests, would usually introduce the topic of the day. Politics was rarely topical but moral conundrums, paradoxes,

ideas from physics and mathematics and moral philosophy were often broached. Teenaged friends of mine would sometimes dine with us and were astounded that not only were they expected to have a position on whether the universe was fundamentally “analog or digital,” but that their answer would be listened to.

One such debate that occurred when I was perhaps 15 concerned classical music versus rock and roll with my father and mother arguing for the superiority of classical music. In my desperation to demonstrate that rock and roll appealed not just to the baser emotions of sex and rebellion, I referred to the rock band Rush who had dedicated one of their albums to the philosopher Ayn Rand. Never having read Rand, or any other philosopher for that matter, I had no idea what this meant. But a connection between rock and roll and higher thinking served my rhetorical goal to crush the opposition. Nevertheless, I had enough respect for ideas that when my mother replied “Oh yes, Ayn Rand—you would probably like her,” I felt ashamed. How could I argue that rock and roll had some connection with the ideas of philosophy if I myself did not pursue this connection? I resolved to go to the library.

At the school library I found *The Fountainhead* and with some trepidation—it was a long book and I secretly felt that philosophy would probably be boring—I began to read. Soon, however, I was overwhelmed, flattened, flabbergasted, and hooked. Rand changed everything! From Rand my reading spread further as I delved deeper into philosophy and followed up on her recommendations in other fields. One of Rand’s strongest recommendations was to the economics of Ludwig von Mises. *Human Action*, which I never much understood and Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson* were my first introduction to economics.

Austrian economics, however, did not figure large in my thinking until my first summer conference—a week long event put on by the Institute for Humane Studies. The speakers at the conference were great, I especially remember George H. Smith, but the best part of the conference was the last day when Walter Grinder brought the student attendees into a room piled high with books! For a budding intellectual this was better than Christmas! Among those books was a weighty tome, *Man, Economy and State* by one Murray N. Rothbard.

I spent the rest of that summer, one of the most enjoyable of my life, reading *Man, Economy and State* while tanning on my balcony (how lucky teenagers are to have so much free time and no rent to worry about!). Each day was a revelation of new ideas. I remember being stunned so much by one idea that I couldn’t wait to explain it to my friends. Goods weren’t expensive because inputs were expensive rather the inputs were expensive because they produced goods that were in high demand. Wow! I never would have understood general equilibrium theory had it not been for *Man, Economy, and State*. This may seem like strange praise but *MES* is by far the best verbal explanation of general equilibrium theory that has ever been written. Rothbard captures, in a way that no fixed point theorem ever could, how markets interact to produce a logically coherent structure. Every reader of Gerard Debreu should read *Man, Economy and State* alongside!

The following summers were filled with more conferences, including those put on by IHS, an Objectivist group, and the Mises Institute. At these conferences I met many people of my age whom I would later run into again and again. These included Carl Close, a good friend with whom I later worked at the Independent Institute, and Bryan Caplan who today

has an office next to mine. The highlight of these conferences were those put on by the Mises Institute where I actually was able to meet and talk with the great Murray Rothbard!

Rothbard was a wonder. At the conferences he would rarely appear until 1 or 2 in the afternoon. He would then give a great lecture on economics or history. Long after the other faculty members had retired for the evening, Rothbard would remain going strong. I remember one time when around midnight he declared that he was hungry. "Let's go!" he said with his infectious enthusiasm and he, myself, and a handful of other students hopped in cars and proceeded to a local restaurant where we talked and debated for hours. At the time this seemed natural but in retrospect I am amazed that a man with such knowledge would be willing to spend so much time discussing ideas with quite ignorant people. I should add that Rothbard never encouraged sycophants and his manner was such that no one was ever afraid to debate with him.

I learned later one reason why Rothbard was pleased to talk with students at the Mises Institute summer conferences. He had no students to speak of during the rest of the year. As a naïve young person seeking out a university for graduate studies I immediately thought of Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute where Rothbard was then teaching. I remember vividly the day I called BPI for an application to the graduate economics department. "But Sir, we don't have an economics department," the secretary told me. "What," I said incredulously, "you must have an economics department; you have one of the world's best economists on staff." But sadly it was true. I still find this a damning indictment of my profession and the American university system.

As an undergraduate at the University of Victoria (Canada), I was introduced to public choice analysis by Robert Bish, a former student of James M. Buchanan, and also to law and economics by Ken Avio and both of these interests were influential in my decision to attend George Mason University for graduate studies. At GMU, I was fortunate to interact extensively with Tyler Cowen. I had had many intelligent professors as an undergraduate but few were equipped to answer my libertarian arguments; that had made me unduly cocky. Cowen knew the arguments and knew their weaknesses. His challenges led me to sometimes revise my views but also sometimes to improve my arguments! I am fortunate to count Cowen as among my present colleagues.

At George Mason and also at the University of Virginia where I studied for a time I came to greatly appreciate the power of neo-classical economics including mathematical economics and econometrics. Austrian insights into the market process are critical and everyone should read some Mises, Hayek, and Rothbard but it's a shame that Austrian economics has become tied to constraining and sometimes absurd methodological strictures. My first published paper (in the *Review of Austrian Economics*) challenged the "Austrian" dislike of indifference curves by showing that anything you could prove with indifference curves could also be proved without them.

After graduate school I taught at the University of Virginia and then Ball State University which, under the direction of Norman van Cott, had developed a surprisingly strong department with a number of free market and Virginia political economy types. Eric Helland was hired that same year and has become a frequent co-author. David Theroux, a longtime Rothbardian who had been instrumental in starting the Cato Institute and the Pacific

Research Institute, then approached me to become the research director for the Independent Institute, a think tank located in Oakland. I accepted and spent three years in sunny California editing books including, as general editor, *Winners, Losers & Microsoft*, *Cutting Green Tape*, *Liberty for Women*, *The Voluntary City*, *Entrepreneurial Economics*, and *Changing the Guard*. David Theroux is particularly well grounded in the anti-war libertarian tradition and his insights have been important to my thinking on these subjects.

More recently I have returned to my alma matter, George Mason University, to teach and do research. ■

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MARK THORNTON

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### HOMEGROWN LIBERTARIAN

GENEVA IS A SMALL TOWN IN the Finger Lakes region of western New York State. I was born and raised there in a family that was Irish in extraction, Catholic in religion, entrepreneurs by occupation, and thoroughly Democrat in politics. I now realize that by the time I left Geneva for college I was already a libertarian, a fact I credit to my family, especially my mother and father.

Looking back, I was interested in politics at an early age, and libertarian-leaning from nearly the beginning. What is surprising to me, in retrospect, was that everyone wasn't a libertarian. This was the period of the Vietnam War, Nixon's War on Drugs, wage and price controls, Watergate, stagflation, and in New York—big spending Republican Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Nothing was going right in this country and nobody could cover up that fact.

One of my first political memories was watching the Democratic National Convention on the television at my grandparents' house. Hubert Humphrey was the nominee, and was roundly endorsed by my extended family. I vividly remember asking what the difference was between the Democrats and Republicans. My uncle Tim told me that Republicans supported big business and the Democrats were the party of the "little guy." This description was followed by the unexpected question: What party did I support?

I'm sure they expected me to answer "Democrat."

Standing on the proverbial hotspot, but firmly behind the Rawlsian veil of ignorance, I proclaimed that I didn't support either party. After all, why support big business over small business or the little guy over the big guy? I asked if I could be a Democrat-Republican or a Republican-Democrat, to which one of my uncles responded that the Democratic-Republicans won the presidency in 1800, but was no longer active.

I responded that I would not be able to vote for some time and that I was confident that the Democratic-Republicans would someday make a comeback.

Very little did I know that Hubert Humphrey's opponent would set in motion policies that would make that comeback possible within four years' time in the form of the Libertarian Party, and that I would come to embrace the principles of the Libertarian Party and the old Democratic-Republican Party of Thomas Jefferson.

As the first grandchild on both sides of my family, I was surrounded by a virtual army of aunts and uncles. I credit my family, especially my mother and father, for helping me and allowing me to become what I am today. Naturally, that honor may have been viewed by some as a dubious distinction in the era when being a libertarian, especially a libertarian politician, was a sign of being a radical and a quack, but no one tried to stop me.

My mother was very influential in my life. She was not overly protective, encouraged me to try new things, and believed in self-responsibility, not rigid, arbitrary rules. She emphasized incentives, persuasion, and thinking about how your actions impacted others, rather than punishment. Her influence was at the ethical, moral, and esthetic levels, not the political.

She never tired of telling the story of her fighting city hall over a traffic violation charge. She was told not to do so, that it was not that important, and that she would surely lose anyway. However, she spent a great deal of time and money fighting the charge. She hired a lawyer, took off time from work, and in the end lost the case and was given a more severe penalty than had she not contested the charge.

You could tell that this still "burned" her many years after the fact, but also that she was very proud for having defended herself and fought city hall with everything at her disposal. The point of her story was that, when confronted with such choices, we should always do what we think is "right." We should not take the easy way out or do the "smart" thing—especially in matters of justice and personal reputation. She remarked that your time and money come and go, but the things you are proud of, or embarrassed about, will stay with you for the rest of your life.

I think that this perspective is what underlies libertarianism: do what is right, rather than what is "smart" or personally advantageous in political and social matters. Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives—socialists of various flavors—always do the smart thing and all have groups they are defending. All of their actions are in the "national interest," but they never do what is right. In fact, by their nature, ideology, and "interests," they are consigned to do what is wrong. Virtually everything they do is wrong, both from a moral and ethical point of view and also from a practical and common sense (what I now would call "economic") perspective.

Obviously, all these statist think their views are moral and practical and that their policies are of absolute necessity, but upon mild reflection or historical examination, their

wishful thinking vanishes. Does welfare help the poor? Does government stimulate the economy? Does war create peace? Is justice something created by government? I have spent my entire adult life examining such questions and have yet to find just one good example that would answer any of these questions in the affirmative.

I strongly believe that this simple libertarian perspective of mine was reinforced by my Catholic education; an education that was insisted upon by my mother. The Catholic Church is an ancient, massive, hierarchical organization with lots of rules and ceremonies, but at its core is the role of conscience and of the individual who must choose between right and wrong. People listen to the pope, but they don't necessarily comply with his dictates. Catholics will listen to their bishops, but don't necessarily follow their orders (especially nowadays!). Catholics are supposed to do what they think is right. You should help the deserving poor and not harm others. Anything else is fair game. Everything is not morally black and white, but you pay for your mistakes. If your actions come into conflict with some official church dogma—no problem—just keep track of those “official” sins, along with your real sins (i.e., those that actually bother your conscience, like stealing and lying) and tell them to the priest in confession.

My experience is that adding the official sins to the real ones did little or nothing to increase your punishment. In fact, it was called penance, not punishment. Official sins need not be calculated exactly and are easy to estimate from month to month. Following all the official rules is also perfectly fine.

My father provided me with a completely different set of lessons. He was a practical man and ultra-frugal, having grown up during the Great Depression and World War II in a broken family. He was a good analyst of government stupidity and I owe a good deal of my understanding of the state to him.

I went to work with my father at an early age, and this is where I learned many valuable lessons. For example, I once commented favorably on the looks of a short section of road that connected the residential part of town, up on the hill, curved down to the shoreline of the lake, and then off to the next town, effectively bypassing the downtown business district. I was surprised with my father's reply. He said that it was nothing but a Federal “urban renewal” project. It had bulldozed all the shoreline businesses, was hurting downtown firms, undermining something called the tax base, and it would eventually kill the city.

Wow! I could not believe that one little road, less than a mile long could cause all that destruction, but that is exactly what happened, just the way he said it would. Urban renewal turned out to be nothing more than a stimulant for “urban blight” and suburban sprawl. I still, to this day, consider that pretty perceptive analysis for someone trained as a pharmacist, not an urban planner.

By the age of ten or eleven I could do practically every job in the store, including selling everything from cigarettes to narcotics, cashing out the cash registers, restocking shelves, taking inventory, cleaning everything, and even filling prescriptions. The only thing I couldn't do was type up the labels and take prescriptions from the customers. This was my father's domain. He would take the prescription from the customer, read it, puzzle over it, and then announce when it would be ready. In a few cases it could be ready “in just a

minute,” but most often it could not be ready for two hours or “later this afternoon,” or even “not until tomorrow.”

This always puzzled me because, although I could not read the doctor’s prescriptions to save my life and could not pronounce the names of most drugs, I could “fix” or fill the prescription in a matter of two minutes and my father could do it even faster. I suppose this stalling improved safety, but I bet it also had something to do with legitimizing professional licensing of pharmacists. (He always checked and rechecked everything I did dealing with medications, and this would be retested when we took inventory or reordered drugs so that we would know if even one pill was missing, all without the help of computers. He was even able to identify employee-pharmacists who stole pills from the inventory.)

The most basic and important lesson I learned while growing up in the store was that you must cheat on your taxes to succeed or even survive in business, and that most everyone who could, did so. It all began when I realized that we treated the “front” cash register different from the “back” cash register. After a little persistent questioning, my father said that we paid taxes on one, but not necessarily the other. He explained that if we paid taxes on every dollar of sales, we would barely break even, and that if we went out of business both we and our customers would be worse off. The meaning of this was clear to me and I understood its implications. This was not stealing. It was our money and if we gave it to the government they would just go and build more urban renewal. Getting “let in on” the family business made my job even more enjoyable, and I would regularly divert sales to the tax-free register.

As I learned more about the operation, it seemed like everything we did violated some government rule or other, but none of the regulations—from recycling prescription bottles to the location and storage of the cocaine—made sense. We never got caught and never got sued. I never heard a customer complain and we had plenty of happy long-term customers of all races and creeds. (We lived in the most “multicultural and ethnically diverse” society that anyone could ever imagine; everyone told ethnic jokes about each other, and everyone seemed to get along fine with each other.)

Federal regulators bothered my father the most, and they would cause him to swear and use the Lord’s name in vain. Even little things, like the requirement to use childproof bottles, got him worked up. The day we were ordered to do so, I didn’t see the problem and thought it might be a good idea, until he explained that childproof bottles were unnecessary and made it difficult for his elderly customers. I had two younger brothers, but “did we need childproof bottles in our house?” It dawned on me that I had never seen a prescription bottle anywhere in the house, despite the fact that we got sick and took pills like everyone else. Parents must hide the pills so that little kids can’t get to them. His point was now clear to me, but he continued to talk to me about it for the rest of the day, as well as with many of his customers—with everyone getting worked up about the childproof bottles as a result.

The maddest I ever saw him was over new federal rules about Medicaid and Medicare. One day he stormed out of his office and announced that “we were getting screwed.” It seems that our “reimbursement” was getting cut and that the chains would be able to cheat,

but that independents, like us, would get forced out. Moments later I was told that I could not go into pharmacy and would have to choose a new career. As someone who spent most of my free time playing with toy soldiers or riding my bike, I was unaware that I had chosen a career. One thing was clear: Medicaid was a bad thing.

One “political” memory I have from the store happened one Saturday when I went to work with Dad. My first customer picked up something red next to my cash register to purchase it. It was a bumper sticker—“ANOTHER TAX PAYER IN THE RED.” We didn’t sell bumper stickers and it didn’t have a price on it, so I asked my Dad how much it cost. He yelled back, “One dollar,” and added, “no tax!” He later explained that City Hall already took more from us than they deserved, that it wasted tons of money, and any further tax increase would kill the city. He was correct, once again. Over the last thirty years the city has lost business and population, and many of its buildings have decayed—often going unused for years at a time.

For me, the fight against taxes was a fun thing. I relished selling those bumper stickers and used some of my pay to buy one for my bike. Long before Geneva, New York had gone to economic hell, I knew that government was a bad thing and that taxes were destructive. I also realized at an early age that fighting taxes and fighting city hall was the correct and moral thing to do, and that it could also be fun and exciting.

Alas, my city did die economically, just as my father predicted. The store was closed and Dad took a job with a chain drug store. Now forced to pay taxes on my wages, I largely spent my high school years resisting three government prohibitions against me.

As high school graduation approached, I became increasingly interested in politics and public policy, and was very frustrated with the state of the world. Jack Kemp’s congressional office was next door to one of my family’s homesteads, so I became familiar with his politics and encouraged by his libertarian rhetoric, especially his desire to cut taxes. I had never heard of Austrian economics, classical liberalism, or libertarianism, but I knew that Kemp sounded like he was on the right track. In registering to vote that year, I became the first person on either side of my family to vote Republican.

Fortunately for me, my family didn’t care enough about politics to worry over my choice of political parties—boy, was I fortunate! Unfortunately for Kemp and the Republicans, I did care deeply about politics. Republican words rarely turned into libertarian actions or votes in Congress (I still had never heard the word “libertarian”), so I soon renounced my alignment with the Republican Party. I set off to college on a journey that would take me from being a homegrown libertarian to becoming a professional libertarian and life-long advocate of the individual’s will over the power of the state. ■

## FROM REBEL TO LIBERTARIAN

I SKETCHED MY OWN ODYSSEY from working class Bronx rebel to freestyle libertarian in my second book, *It Usually Begins With Ayn Rand*, which was first published in 1971. While many have claimed that my semi-autobiographical book was closer to fiction than fact, the book was true in spirit even if not always literally accurate in mundane detail. As I stated in an Author's Note in four separate editions of the book, "On those occasions when I was present, I have attempted to re-create the spirit rather than the precise letter of conversations that transpired. For other incidents . . . I have had to rely on information supplied to me by those with firsthand knowledge."

So much for the existing record. If my own written history as it stands to date is adorned with a bit of hyperbole, as I freely admit, poetic or novelistic license is often necessary for the creation of a better and more readable book than the unvarnished truth. Most memoirs that have withstood the test of time would have faded into obscurity long ago were it not for the creative and novelistic energies of the author.

I agree with Walter Block that autobiography is essential for anyone who has played even a minor role in the passing scene, and that libertarians have not written enough of it. It's a shame that Murray Rothbard never tried to capture his own life in print. Neither did Ayn Rand for that matter. We have to intuit a lot of what made both of them tick from the respective bodies of literature they left us. If nothing else, autobiography is therapeutic; it helps us sit back and take stock of where we have been, where we are, and where we think we're going.

With that in mind, the present task is somewhat daunting since this is not the kind of piece where embellishment is helpful. An honest account of my history as a libertarian has to begin with my roots as a rebel in a working class Bronx neighborhood. My teenage years took place in the 1950s in streets populated by wire lathers, tin knockers, garbage men, cops, firemen, and cab drivers—a category that included my father. My own interests tended toward the literary and artistic, subjects that did not go down well with most of the people I faced each day, including my family. They all thought I was weird and were not shy about letting me know it. I hated most of them and was not reticent about expressing my feelings.

No one had to teach me how to be an anarchist; I grew up loathing authority and institutions of all kinds.

In short order I rebelled against the religion of my family (Roman Catholic), the politics of my neighborhood (Social Conservative), and the culture of the class I came from (bigoted blue collar). In place of them I substituted hard-drinking and pugnacity. I got bigger, learned how to fight, and became a bully.

Hardly a weekend passed between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two that I was not battling my way from one barroom brawl to another.

Obviously, this state of affairs could not continue indefinitely. If it did I was going to end up in jail or in an AA ward before I was thirty. Escape was my only answer, and escape I did to San Francisco when I twenty-four years old. San Francisco was not far enough away from the Bronx to suit me, so I boarded a cruise ship and sailed to Australia, lived there for six months working on my Great American Novel, then continued on my round-the-globe odyssey through Singapore, India, Malta, the Suez Canal, and finally Europe. Broke and still unpublished, I returned to the U.S. around the time Barry Goldwater was running for president, a time when the big news of the day was the escalating conflict in Vietnam.

Until this time, my anarchism was unstructured and emotional, a mere rebellion against everything I despised. Goldwater articulated a philosophy of life and government that touched a chord inside me in a way no one had done before. His book, *Conscience of a Conservative*, was the first political book I read that gave me something positive to believe in: individualism, limited government, self-reliance, free enterprise. No longer was I just a rebel looking to smash things as I bulled my way through life. Suddenly I stood for something as well. Now I was a Conservative.

Over the next few years I devoured every book and magazine I could find preaching the Conservative message. I discovered Buckley, Hazlitt, Bentham, Locke, Adam Smith, and eventually Rand. I started writing for Conservative and Classical Liberal publications, including *The Freeman*, published by the Foundation for Economic Education, and the official magazine of Young Americans for Freedom. By 1968 I had completed Rand's basic course on Objectivism at the Nathaniel Branden Institute, and had read most of Rand's work plus books by Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek. I started calling myself an Objectivist, even though Rand would have denounced me as a second-hander since I had not paid for her advanced courses at NBI.

The problem for me with most Conservatives I encountered at the time was the war in Vietnam and the military draft, both of which kept getting in the way. I was adamantly opposed to our being in Vietnam, I thought a military draft was despicable, and I was troubled by so-called advocates of freedom, individualism, and limited government who supported both positions. Somehow, Conservatism was at odds with my core beliefs, but there was no alternative to turn to.

No alternative, that is, until I discovered Karl Hess. I picked up a newspaper one day and read about this hirsute fellow who had been a speechwriter for Goldwater, and was now calling himself an anarchist and a New Leftist. This was interesting, especially since YAF had invited me to debate Karl at some Conservative gathering in Manhattan. I was supposed to articulate the Conservative message while Karl defended his new anti-war, pro-New Left stance amid a hostile audience. The problem was that, by the time the day of the debate came around, I found myself more in agreement with him than I did with the panoply of Conservative stalwarts on the platform with me, including Libertarian-Conservative Frank Meyer and an out-and-out social nationalist, Henry Paolucci. Into the midst of this ideological circus strode a man I had corresponded with but never met before, Murray Rothbard, and a coterie of his acolytes, including Walter Block, Leonard Liggio, Joe Peden, and probably a dozen others.

As the debate got under way, I found myself more and more pissed off. I was still enough of a working class New Yorker to recognize a pile-on when I saw one, and my gut instinct inclined me to the side of the underdog. Hess had the guts to appear on the podium by himself in enemy territory and subject himself to a drubbing at the hands of hostile forces, one of whom was supposed to be me. Sorry, but I was not about to play along and, instead, delivered a speech sympathetic to Karl's position, which earned me a relieved smile from him, raucous cheers from Rothbard and his coterie, and an outraged roar from the rest of the assemblage.

I was no longer a Conservative or an Objectivist. I was not a philosophical anarchist yet, but I was willing to be converted to one if that's what it took to find a new political home. After the so-called debate, I broke bread with Murray Rothbard and company, and before long I was visiting Murray and his merry band of free-market anarchists in his apartment on the Upper Westside of Manhattan. Through Murray I was introduced to the writings of Lysander Spooner, Benjamin Tucker, and Albert Jay Nock, and I developed a deeper familiarity with Murray's own impressive output—even at that relatively early stage of his career. Before long, Murray launched the *Libertarian Forum*, for which I became a kind of co-editor and regular contributor.

I was not only an anarchist now, but one with a developing philosophical foundation to support my beliefs. Walter Block took one look at my thick beard and tangled hair and anointed me a “Right Wing Hippie,” even before Ayn Rand got around to popularizing the label.

In addition to Murray and the literature he introduced me to, the other major intellectual influences on me at the time were Leonard Liggio and, to a lesser extent, Joe Peden. Leonard in particular was a walking encyclopedia with a detailed grasp of history, which he colored with a revisionist tinge. Following the publication of my first two books, *Radical Libertarianism* and *It Usually Begins With Ayn Rand*, liberal reviewers started referring to me as “everyone's favorite Right Wing anarchist.” I had no problem with the description and started to fancy myself as the Right Wing answer to Hunter Thompson. My conversion to full-blown free market anarchism from Goldwater Conservatism was complete and public enough to have earned me the scorn of William F. Buckley on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*.

My break with Murray, which came around the time of my quixotic run for governor of New York on the Free Libertarian ticket in 1974 (see my book, *It STILL Begins With Ayn Rand*), had more to do with differences over our respective views on Israel, and foreign policy in general, than with ideology. He was also troubled by my characterization of him in *It Usually Begins With Ayn Rand*. In any event, Murray and I had little contact with each other after 1975, but I will always remember him for the major impact he had on my philosophical development at a time when I was searching for a new ideological home.

Over the years, my political philosophy has not changed all that much, although my tactics have. Murray, himself, rooted for Pat Buchanan in his 1992 quest for the presidency even though he never repudiated his free-market anarchism. Libertarian feminist Camille Paglia is a registered Democrat and voted for Ralph Nader in 2000. Politics, indeed, makes for strange bedfellows, and libertarians today cast their votes all over the political spectrum in elections, or vote not at all, while advocating contradictory positions on abortion and the death penalty.

Today, I refuse to get overly exercised about the distinctions between limited government (or mini-government) and free-market anarchism. We are so far removed from either ideal, while continuing to move in the wrong direction, that any reversal toward less-invasive government is to be welcomed. On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 representing free-market anarchism, 1 representing extremely limited government, and 10 representing totalitarianism, I would put the United States today at about a 6 or a 7. And sadly enough, this is the best the world has to offer among fully developed nations.

If we were to end the war on drugs tomorrow, dismantle Social Security, Medicare, and all the other entitlement programs, bring our military forces back from our varied commitments around the globe, and adopt a Hong Kong-style flat tax of 15 percent, we would still be left with a plethora of entangling restraints on voluntary activity that would require another half century to unravel.

These accomplishments, however, would still get us back to only a 3 or a 4 on the 0 to 10 scale, so both the free-market anarchist and mini-government positions amount to a state of affairs akin to Utopia. Too many libertarians have been spinning their wheels over the decades, debating the finer points of philosophy among themselves in a way that only serves to marginalize libertarianism in general. I'm happy that the Cato Institute, Reason, and other libertarian-leaning organizations are out there fighting for a handful of free market solutions where they can find them, but I truly don't expect to see any real movement in my lifetime—and most probably not in my son's and grandson's lifetimes either.

Murray, however, was the eternal optimist and truly believed that his ideal society—one unfettered by government and taxes—was within his grasp. It was his boundless energy and his commitment to the cause he espoused that made him such an effervescent force for liberty. Among writers and thinkers there is room for skeptics (H.L. Mencken, Mark Twain) and for dreamers, and Murray Rothbard clearly belonged to the latter camp. In her own way, so did Rand, although her toxic denigration of anyone who disagreed with her gave her a totalitarian edge that was at odds with her mini-government philosophy.

But her books survive her and continue to influence new generations of intellectuals. She has reached a vast audience of readers that is the envy of everyone, including Rothbard and Yours Truly, who commits libertarian thoughts to paper. I'm sorry that it was not the opposite, that it was not Murray's joyous sense of life and his bubbly enthusiasm for a government-free society that found the larger audience. Murray painted a more humane picture of the unlimited choices possible under his own model society than Rand, whose model is filled with grim, robotic automatons, all devoid of humor, who spout pre-recorded propaganda instead of spontaneous conversation.

As for me? I belong with the skeptics. I thank God for the optimists and the dreamers, but I will probably go to the grave being an anarchistic iconoclast looking to find the contradictions and humor in other peoples' systems of logic. But I can write about them at least and have a lot of fun doing so. ■

## HOW I DIDN'T BECOME A LIBERTARIAN

I AM NOT ONLY NOT A LIBERTARIAN, I'm not even an Austrian. Walter Block however wants me to explain the origin of what ideas I do have, and I think it may amuse.

To begin with I was born and brought up in Rockford, Illinois in a solidly midwestern conservative family. We all hated Roosevelt, and thought that an annually balanced budget and high protective tariffs were the essence of good economic policy. I had no intention of studying economics and planned on becoming a lawyer.

In the University of Chicago law school everyone was required to take a one-quarter course in economics taught by Henry Simons. In my case it was only ten weeks because the draft board intervened. In the ten weeks, however, Simons radically changed my intellectual persona. I became a free trader and adopted the Chicago attitude on money. In addition I learned a lot of other economics, and indeed I believe that I received the highest grade that Henry Simons ever gave in that course. This is not a very strong statement, however, since law students tended to do badly in economics.

On completing my legal training I practiced law in a downtown Chicago firm for about four months and then joined the diplomatic service and was sent to Tientsin, China. I was surprised to discover that most of my colleagues favored the Communists. This was also the policy of the Department of State although they didn't actually advertise it. They imposed an arms embargo on the nationalists thus making their victory impossible. They might have lost anyway, of course.

At first Tientsin was under Nationalist control but about a year after I arrived the Communists conquered the city. I spent a year under the Communists in Tientsin. It was nerve wracking, but nothing really bad happened to me. We did not have diplomatic privileges because they did not recognize us. During that year all of my colleagues lost their illusions about communism in China, but many of them continued to think the Nationalists were worse.

I returned to the United States and was sent to Yale and Cornell for two years to study Chinese. I now realize that this was a bad mistake. I am tone deaf and Chinese is a tone language. My education was improved by the experience however. One day I saw a big pile of books in red covers entitled *Human Action*. I bought one and read it through three times in the next couple of months. I never became an actual Austrian, but there clearly was a strong influence. Indeed my first book, *The Politics of Bureaucracy*, used Mises's methods extensively.

After leaving Yale and Cornell I was sent to far Eastern posts and then to the far Eastern bureaucracy in Washington. When I resigned I had no intention of going into academe. Indeed I thought I would take up a job with a foreign trading agency in the Far East. This plan was dropped for various reasons, one of which was my four months association with Karl Popper. I was helping him with stylistic problems in connection with the revision of his book on scientific method. This was in California and I used the time to investigate prospects of getting started as a foreign trader in the Far East.

I then went to New Haven for the purpose of finishing off my book on bureaucracy. There I met Richard Walker, a China expert who, remarkably for that time, did not like the Communists. This made us friends, and when he was simultaneously fired by Yale for being “too controversial” and hired by South Carolina to start a new department of international studies, he invited me to join him.

As a sort of byproduct of meeting Walker, he introduced me to Karl Wittfogel and his book, *Oriental Despotism*. This deals with the origins of civilization in Middle Eastern river valleys. The civilization there depended on large-scale irrigation and due to the engineering problems of moving large bodies of water they required strong central government for each irrigation network. The governments created were unpleasant enough so that the word “despotism” fit them, but they did support large populations in what would appear to be very unfavorable environments. This early despotism has also made significant contributions to culture. That is where reading and writing was invented. Their contributions to science and art were also great.

I had arranged to have a number of mimeographed copies of my book on bureaucracy made and circulated them to various publishers and other people I thought would be interested. All publishers turned it down and when I eventually did get it published it sold so few copies that I am sure their judgment was commercially correct. Intellectually it had considerable influence, however.

One of these copies went to the University of Virginia and I was invited to visit them for one year as a post-doc before I went to South Carolina. There I met James Buchanan and learned a lot of economics from him. I think, in reciprocation, he learned a lot about formal politics from me. My first article in this area, which dealt with logrolling, was written then and published in the *Journal of Political Economy*. I also wrote a monograph of about eighty pages on the application of economic-type reasoning to politics which we mimeographed and distributed privately.

When I returned to South Carolina, Jim suggested that we write a joint book in the area. As he explained in the preface he actually did the labor, but a good deal of the content was mine. We got immediate publication and the book, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (1962), rapidly became a classic. I still receive royalties almost fifty years after it was published.

Meanwhile in South Carolina I was teaching international studies with little in the way of economics. I insisted on the students getting at least the rudiments of game theory and made efforts, I'm afraid unsuccessfully, to convince them that free trade was a good idea. Basically, however, I taught foreign policy. Both Walker and I, of course, were regarded

as far right by the foreign policy establishment, but at least, for the time being, we were protected in our tiny niche.

Eventually Buchanan succeeded in getting me an offer from Virginia as associate professor at a higher wage than South Carolina was paying. Walker was away in Washington at the time, so I didn't get an attractive counteroffer. I should say that the University of Virginia flatly refused to promote me for a number of years, with the result that eventually I left. Buchanan left shortly after.

I had already published the first and second issues of what eventually became *Public Choice* using my own funds and my friendly contacts with a University of Virginia printer. Subscribers and contributors to this journal formed a little quasi-society originally funded by the National Science Foundation which eventually decided to call itself the Public Choice Society. From then on my work was primarily on government rather than strict economics.

As the reader can see, none of this is particularly Austrian. My contact with Mises was always friendly, but his aversion to indifference curves and statistics turned me off. In a way, I am the product of my intellectual education which began with foreign policy and law and then moved by way of Chicago and Mises into economics and in particular its application for governmental problems. The true libertarian will regard all of this as "deviationism," but I urge tolerance. ■

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## IT USUALLY BEGINS AT HOME

MY GRANDFATHER (1882–1960) WORKED AS A mechanic at the plant where the beautiful Minerva cars were produced. He was active in the Belgian Labourers' Party, the predecessor of the Belgian Socialist Party. In Wilrijk, a village near Antwerp, he became a councillor for that Party and then, in the chaotic days of the Liberation, at the end of the Second World War, the interim mayor. He was a quiet, soft-spoken and above all gentle man. Whatever had landed him in politics, it certainly was not personal ambition.

Like his dad, my father (1919–1997) spent most of his active life in the ambit of the Socialist Movement although never as a politician. After the war, he began to work for the Social Providence Insurance Company (PS), a firm funded mainly by the Socialist unions.

A successful profit-making business, it was the flagship of the Belgian socialist co-operative movement. Its profits were used in part for social works and other charities connected with the Socialist Movement: sanatoriums, revalidation centers, and resorts for the working classes. My father was very proud to be a part of that arrangement.

When I began to question my dad about politics—I knew then already that we were socialists but had no idea what that meant—he laid great stress on the fact that he was a co-operativist socialist. I gathered that he had no sympathy at all for the communists. Although he always voted for the socialist party, he did not share its assumption that it needed to get into positions of power to improve the standard of living of the working classes. As he saw it, the workers were quite capable of managing their own lives and affairs. He considered himself a self-made man.

Because of his work and his pastime—he was an amateur actor in a group called “Labourers’ Art”—everything my father did was somehow connected with Socialism. Yet, politics almost never was a subject at our home. During the sixties, when I was in high school, it became fashionable in the media to discuss the “illusion of wealth” or “the new poverty” which was the Left’s pretext for expanding the welfare state. My father scoffed at the idea. “What is worrisome,” he said, “is the illusion of poverty, the belief that one is poor because others have more.” It was the only time I heard him make a “theoretical” comment on the political scene.

My mother was even less inclined to discuss politics than my father. Political discussions tended to become acrimonious—and she did not like that. Nevertheless, she too habitually voted for the Socialist Party.

My parents made no secret of how they voted but never explained why. However, I saw no reason why I should vote differently because Socialism to me was just a word for our way of life—and there was nothing wrong with that as far I could see. The idea that in voting one was not just saying what one was but doing something to other people had not occurred to me.

There was nothing divisive, partisan or sectarian about my parents’ Socialism. I never heard them make a derogatory comment on the church or its priests, the bourgeoisie, the rich or any other group or class of people. They felt that one should judge people as individuals not as specimens.

To my parents, profit, property, money, capital, savings and the like were not dirty words. They were things that could be earned in different ways and used for different purposes, some better than others. It was obvious that they were things my parents were eager to acquire—but not at any price, not in any which way. They made it clear that life has a moral quality and that it is a moral responsibility more than anything else. Honesty, tolerance, patience, “live and let live,” “stand on your own feet,” “never envy another for his good fortune”—those were the things on which they insisted. As for the rest, you have one life; it is up to you to make it a good one.

Already in elementary school, I had become a voracious reader. A publisher had begun to market paperback pocket books for a fixed price of 40 cents apiece. The catalogue was truly encyclopedic, covering almost every science and every period of history. Whenever I had saved enough money, I bought one of those books, read it from cover to cover and tried

to understand it as best as I could. In high school, I began to read about philosophy and politics, especially of course about socialism. I found it difficult to connect what I read with the outlook on life that I had absorbed at home but put that down to my immaturity. Nevertheless, I began to use the phrases and formulas I had picked up from my reading to explicate my thoughts and opinions. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it did not. I still had a lot to learn. I also discovered that reading was no substitute for thought. There were too many contradictions and unresolved controversies in what I read to warrant a suspension of skepticism.

In 1965, I went to the University of Ghent to study Far Eastern languages. However, I soon felt that the quality of the teaching of Japanese and Chinese in Ghent was not very good. Therefore, after a few months, I decided to enroll also in the Law Faculty, just to keep my options open. At that time, before beginning his formal legal training, a law student had to spend two years studying Latin, Roman law, history, literature, logic, ethics, psychology, and the history of thought, especially the history of thinking about law and politics. I really enjoyed those subjects, although I regretted that economics, sociology and anthropology were not in the curriculum. In the third year, instead of concentrating on law—meaning Belgian positive law—I added philosophy to my program. That combination eventually would bring me to focus on the philosophy of law.

Studying law was a frustrating experience. The rampant positivism that pervaded every part of the curriculum repelled me. How could a professor teach us with a straight face that a verdict or a legal rule that was “incompatible with every known principle of law nevertheless” was “law” merely because some judge or legislature had declared that it was? What sort of “science” was it that requested a supine deference to “the powers that be” from its practitioners?

I also could not swallow the seeming arbitrariness of the progressive ideology that then was claiming the exclusive right to set the program for legislative reform. For example, many people were demanding that marriage be reduced to a simple contract of services that either party could terminate unilaterally. In almost the same breath, those people were insisting that an employer could end a labor contract only under exceptional circumstances to be specified by the legislature. Instead of solid principles of law, there were just hollow and contradictory formulas, for example about preserving freedom of speech, regulating commercial speech and outlawing hate speech. It seemed that law was primarily an exercise in codifying and streamlining prevalent prejudices. A science of justice it was not.

At the university, I found myself surrounded by leftist intellectuals. I was drawn to them because of my family background and my self-identification as a socialist. However, most of what they were saying was sheer nonsense. I recognized the phrases and the formulas from the books I had read but discovered that behind the rhetoric and the revolutionary posturing there was nothing but emotion, frustration or ambition, and often not even that. I ran into old friends from high school who had never claimed to be socialists before but now saw themselves as the vanguard of the Revolution. One of them went rhapsodic over Mao Ze Dong’s “success in bringing billions of Chinese together in one close-knit family!” Few members of the two faculties in which I was enrolled—law and philosophy—were willing to criticize those fashionable views, if they were not all too

willing to go along with them. I also had my first encounter with militant science. One member of the Philosophy Department actively campaigned for making contraceptives, especially the pill, widely available. Part of his message was that “scientific studies have shown that the availability of the pill has no noticeable effect on the attitude of young girls toward sex.” In private conversation, he confided that only a complete idiot would believe that.

To my dismay, I found that argumentation was not meant to separate truth and falsehood, valid and fallacious reasoning. Its ostensible purpose was to identify the progressives, who were beyond criticism because their motives supposedly were pure and noble, and the reactionaries, who were beneath criticism because they were alleged to be advocates of the sinister interests of the ruling classes. Apparently, facts, logic and even plain common sense were to be the first victims of the coming Glorious Revolution.

At one time, I resolved to write a vindication of Socialism—the outlook on life I had absorbed from my parents—and a refutation of the utopian babble that passed for intellectual criticism at the university. However, I soon found that socialism as a distinct intellectual tradition had little to do with the points of view and the values with which I had been brought up. I realized that how my parents voted and identified themselves politically had little, if anything, to do with what they valued and believed. That turned out to be true of most people I knew.

Eventually, I discovered that if any label fit my education it was classical liberalism, not socialism. It was not a painful discovery, because my attachment was to the substance of my education, not to the label that somehow had been stuck on it. However, the discovery made me realize that I had to understand a lot more about economics than I did. When I asked people where to begin the study of economics, two and only two names were suggested: Karl Marx and Paul Samuelson. I read both, but I had already decided that I would not buy into anything they had on offer until they satisfied my personal test.

That test was based on a simple syllogism: economics is about human beings; I am a human being and so is everybody I know. Therefore, economics is about me and the people I know. It followed that if a book on economics systematically or glaringly got it wrong about me and the people I knew, it would not be acceptable. Both Marx and Samuelson failed the test and I was left empty-handed.

Then, shortly after I had graduated from law school, I stumbled upon Friedrich Hayek’s “The Uses of Knowledge in Society” and instantly knew I had struck gold. Very soon, I was reading everything by Hayek that I could get my hands on. From Hayek, I moved on to Mises and then to Rothbard. However, by the time I got to Rothbard many things had happened.

What had struck me in Austrian economics from the very start was its attempt to explain economic phenomena in terms of human beings as they actually are, feel, think, and act. It took into account all the limitations of their physical, intellectual, emotional and moral capabilities that are obvious to the most casual observer of human life and to anybody with the least bit of self-knowledge. Eventually, that literature’s frequent references to Robinson Crusoe made me understand the importance of distinguishing clearly between a person’s confrontation with impersonal nature and his confrontation with others like him.

I sensed that precisely this distinction was the main reason why I could not agree with my progressive friends and teachers. For example, whereas I saw the market as a way in which people deal with others without denying their otherness, they saw it as an impersonal mechanism, which they—each one believing himself a Robinson Crusoe—had to bring under their control in order to humanize it. Of course, they denied being motivated by a desire for control and power. They claimed to be mere spokespersons for Man, the vicars of Humanity on Earth. They spoke about individuals as if they were no more than human material, human resources—particles of Nature that Man had to mould into useful tools for constructing His own world.

Although I was (and still am) an atheist, I began to suspect that the crucial issue was a religious one. On the one hand, there was the biblical religion with its clear message that the place of God is already taken, so no human being need apply. On the other hand, there was the belief that the God of the Bible is dead and that consequently his place was up for grabs. Man is the true God; it is his task to remake men and women in his own image. That Religion of Man implied a clear distinction between those that should have the power to remake and those that would have to be remade. It reminded me of Hobbes's conviction that "the Common-peoples minds . . . are like clean paper, fit to receive whatsoever by Publique Authority shall be imprinted in them." I had discovered the dark side of the Enlightenment—and the rationale for the massive public expenditures on education.

I had not intended to embark on an academic career, but my philosophy teacher, Prof. Dr. Leo Apostel, suggested that I try it. At first, I did some research on the foundations of logic, mainly on Paul Lorenzen's view that the laws of logic are governed by the requirements of dialogue. It struck me that, in this perspective, logic had its foundation in a structure or distribution of rights of the participants in a dialogue. Thus, one could generate almost any logic one wanted merely by choosing an appropriate set of dialogue rights. On the other hand, if there were a true test of logic, then one could move from a critique of the resulting logic to a critique of the presupposed set of dialogue rights.

It was fashionable, at that time, to maintain that there was an infinite number of logics—as evidenced, for example, by the literature on two-, three-,  $n$ - and even infinite-valued logics—all of which were said to be "equally valid in their own right." Apparently, logic could be almost anything you wanted it to be. I thought that was a fallacious view. True, one might produce as many formal systems as one wanted, and attach an interpretation to them that made use of the vocabulary of logic, but one still could subject the reasoning that went into the construction or the interpretation to a criticism based on principles of logic. Strictly speaking, logic is what such criticism appeals to, not that to which the criticism is applied. Similarly, one can produce as many systems of rules as one wants, and attach an interpretation to them that makes use of the vocabulary of law and rights. However, one still could subject the reasoning that went into the construction or the interpretation of the system to a criticism based on principles of law and rights. Gradually, the idea took root in my mind that just as there can be science of logic, distinct from an analysis of formal systems, so too there can be a science of law that is distinct from an analysis of systems of rules.

Just at that moment, Leo Apostel suggested my name to Prof. Dr. Willy Calewaert, who was looking for an assistant, “a lawyer with some knowledge of philosophy.” Calewaert taught natural law at the University of Ghent. That was rather odd because he thought that natural law is nonsense and that of all the philosophers that he mentioned in his course only Machiavelli seemed to know anything about politics. However, he added, it was important that he hold on to the course lest some reactionary Catholic got it. Calewaert was best known as a politician of the ultra-progressive wing of the Socialist Party. However, he had accepted Apostel’s recommendation of me, perhaps because Apostel was the leading figure in the Philosophy Department and a well-known Marxist.

Apostel knew of my interest in the philosophy of law. He liked my position that law, properly speaking, is not a state-imposed social order but an “order of freedom among equals.” However, his interpretation of that sequence of words was radically different from mine. Like so many at the time, he was devoted to egalitarianism but oblivious to the enormous inequalities in the distribution of political power that the implementation of his egalitarian ideal would require. Eventually, he conceded that real socialism, even democratic socialism, was “really only fascism with a human face,” but, he added, that merely proves the need for continuing theoretical investigation into the true foundations of socialism. He was convinced that my interest in freedom and equality would bring me eventually to the conclusion that Marx was right. So was Calewaert, although I had told him beforehand that I was not a Marxist. “That’s alright with me,” he had answered magnanimously, “as long as you study Marx seriously, because within ten to fifteen years the whole world will be Marxist.”

Apostel defended what he called a “libertarian”—in my terminology, a liberationist—interpretation of Marx. He thought of freedom in the Marxist way as being in control of one’s own destiny, without fear of frustration. For him, freedom was the great promise of the final stages of communism. For me, freedom was the fact that one is ultimately responsible for one’s own actions. That freedom implied the risk of frustration at every moment of one’s active life. I thought it made good sense to think of it as a basic, indeed natural, human right because it was a common and, in my view, respectable property of actual human beings.

The Marxist notion of freedom obviously did not apply to actual human beings. One might think of it as referring to a property of a new species that one day in the distant future would supersede *Homo Sapiens*. However, I failed to see how the hypothetical properties of a non-existent species could be taken for the rights of the members of another, actually existing species. Why should one believe that the order that would exist among a non-existent species defines the law of human kind?

It dawned on me that there was something fundamentally wrong with the idea that law is essentially a norm, something that ought to be regardless of whether it was or even could be real—something, therefore, that logically speaking could be anything. I was moving fast toward a natural law position. I began to think of law not as a norm but as a condition of order in the human world that could be specified fully, at an appropriate level of abstraction, in terms of objective, natural properties of human beings and the world they lived in. If such a natural order could be identified, there would be an unequivocal

answer to the question “What is law?” even if it still would be possible to argue that perhaps it was not an order that human beings ought to respect. However, such an argument would imply a defense of the thesis that human beings owed no respect to one another. Would it be possible for a self-respecting person to defend that thesis in a coherent way? Here was an opportunity for putting my interest in logic and dialogues to good use in the philosophy of law.

Another consequence of my discussions with Apostel was that I began to doubt the validity of the time-honored definition of man as a social animal. Suppose that to be free from frustration is indeed man’s fundamental right. Then it would seem to follow that one’s basic right is to be shielded from the consequences of one’s own actions. But who should provide the shield? Apostel agreed that it would be inconsistent to answer that others should do so. Instead, he gave the quintessential socialist answer: society! To me, that answer begged too many questions to be taken seriously even for one moment. What society? Which society? What were societies if not organizations of particular human endeavors? Some were useful tools, some were stifling impediments, even prisons—but all of them were artificial orders, constructions, involving numerous artificial distinctions among social positions, roles and functions. Throughout history, societies had come and gone, but the human species and human nature had endured. Consequently, I thought, nature had to be the key to understanding the human condition, not some particular existing or proposed social convention. Saying that man is a social animal sounded like saying that man is a clothed animal, as if, when all is said and done, the clothes do make the man and therefore all the problems of the species will be solved once the clothes that make him perfect will have been designed.

Unfortunately, the premise of my formal schooling had been that because there were so many conventions there could not be a human nature—or if there were one, it could not be of any relevance except in those sciences for which humans are merely physical objects or organisms. Understandably, when I began to work at the law faculty, I did not feel very comfortable. In those days, Kelsen and Hart were all the rage as far the science of law was concerned and John Rawls had just sown the seeds of what rapidly was becoming a multinational academic fad. None of it came close to my own interests in law.

Already working for Calewaert was Boudewijn Bouckaert, who then was something of a leftist but an unusually open- and quick-minded one. In the course of our daily discussions, I found numerous opportunities to present and refine arguments that eventually eroded his faith in socialism completely. Together we began to produce what later would be called libertarian critiques of the prevalent view of law and economics.

At the time, I was not aware of the existence of a Libertarian movement. That changed when another colleague, the sociologist Willy van Poucke, surprised me with the announcement that “apparently, you are no longer alone.” He had seen a small display of books by Hayek and a few other authors—all of them with Liberty or Freedom in the title—in an optician’s shop. The books were there because the shop was part of a chain owned by Fred Dekkers. Together with Hubert Jongen, Fred had assembled a small circle of Dutch-speaking Randian anti-statists and free market enthusiasts. Because of van Poucke’s chance remark, I got to know Dekkers and Jongen personally. I also discovered the writings of Murray

Rothbard, the most creative and prolific intellectual light of the American Libertarian movement. I found his *Man, Economy, and State*, his *Power and Market*, and *For a New Liberty* enormously helpful and stimulating. I also read Ayn Rand but did not think that her philosophy added much to my understanding.

I did not feel at ease with the arguments of the Chicago School of economics and the Public Choice School, which were prominent in the American libertarian literature. I also did not feel at ease with the Law & Economics movement that was emerging at the time. When an invitation came to join a European branch of that movement, Bouckaert accepted it, but I did not. I felt that those approaches had embraced an irreparably faulty methodology, sacrificing realism to formalism, substituting the derivation of implications of mathematical models for the painstaking analysis of what people actually do, why they do it and what effects it produces in the human world.

In particular, I thought those models expressed the desire for a technology of want-satisfaction rather than for an understanding of how order in the human world is possible. Consequently, I became apprehensive about the technocratic illusions that were being propagated under the banner of the emerging neo-liberalism. I did not think the schemes for human resources management that the neo-liberals were peddling to the politicians, bureaucrats and managers of large corporations in the public, the commercial or the non-profit sector were more compatible with human realities than were those of the leftist ideologues. I distrusted the neo-liberal free market with its centrally organized structures of incentives, even if they were presented as property rights and rights of contract. I thought that, as long as I had not sufficiently worked out my own philosophy of law, it would be imprudent to get involved with movements that I instinctively felt were wrong. True, they often came up with policy recommendations that I could accept, but their manipulative, Hobbesian flavor remained an insurmountable obstacle.

When it became clear to Calewaert that my dissertation would not be a vindication of Marx, he withdrew his support. I realized that my position at the university rapidly was becoming precarious and that there was a chance that there never would be a written testimony to my intellectual efforts. I decided on a gamble. Putting aside the research notes that I had assembled in the previous eight years, I wrote my dissertation in a period of six weeks in December 1981 and January 1982. I worked round the clock, producing one hand-written chapter a week, which I left with the typist on Saturday and took home again for a single revision a week later. The result was *The Fundamental Principle of Law*. It was a defense of individual sovereignty as the sole principle of law that was consistent with the assumption that men and women are finite, limited beings in a finite, limited world and the sole principle the respectability of which could be defended in a rational dialogue.

It was not an elegant book, but it said what I had wanted to say. The writing may have been hasty but the thinking on which it was based had taken a long time to mature. Except for a few details and marginal issues, I still stand behind its positions and arguments.

I sent a complimentary copy to Prof. Dr. Rudolf Böhm, who had been one of my philosophy professors. I knew that he would not agree with it—he was an early exponent of the now fashionable green left—but I also knew that he could hardly disagree with the philosophical premise of my entire argument: that human persons are finite beings. A week

later, he called me to his office. As he handed the book back to me (he did not want to keep it!), he said: “It is a strong book, but I can tell you one thing: do not expect any critical response, it will be ignored completely.” I did not discover what he had meant until a few weeks later when Apostel sent me a forty-page hand-written commentary. Near the end, there was a revealing passage: “I agree with the premises,” Apostel wrote “and I agree with the reasoning, but I do not agree with the conclusions.” He also agreed when I replied that his comment indicated that perhaps his problems were greater than mine.

The book did not save my position at the University of Ghent. As Böhm had predicted, it was largely ignored—but not completely. Bouckaert made good use of it. Andreas Kinninga, a Dutch liberal (now a conservative) political philosopher, compared it favorably to Rothbard’s *The Ethics of Liberty*, which also had appeared in 1982. Notwithstanding my misgivings about labels, I got used to, and did not mind, being labeled a libertarian.

My parents were proud of my work, although they thought that it primarily meant that I would now vote for the Liberal Party. I do not think they took me seriously when I said that I would not vote for any party, but they believed me when I said that not a word in my thesis contradicted any principle they had taught me. ■

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 MARC J. VICTOR
 

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## MY JOURNEY TO LIBERTARIANVILLE

I’VE ALWAYS BEEN A LOUD MOUTH. Even as a young boy, my mother would often say, “Someday, that mouth of yours is going to get you in trouble.” Today, as a criminal defense attorney, I use that “mouth of mine” to help get people OUT of trouble. It wasn’t always that way.

Like most other loud mouths, I was always interested in politics. However, like almost all other Boston area Jews, I was surrounded by long-time, liberal Democrats. Although there may have been a time in my youth when I was in the presence of a Republican, such unpleasantness was always kept from me. I had always been informed that Democrats were “for the people” and Republicans were “for big business.” If there was more to the analysis, I never heard it.

Being most comfortable in the midst of any controversy, I think my youthful pronouncement that I had decided to be a Republican was more of a reaction against the Democrat Party monopoly than a statement of principle. To their credit, my parents informed me that my Republican leanings were OK so long as I did not publicize them in front of the elder generation. I think they believed it was just some crazy phase I was going through. Ultimately, they were correct.

At some point, I became a Republican because I agreed with what Republicans were saying. In addition to sounding whiny and wimpy, the Democrats always struck me as needing a babysitter to help with living their lives. The Republicans were talking about individual responsibility and low taxes. I really bought into the limited government concept. I started arguing with Democrats about everything; whether they wanted to argue or not.

I began my college career as a political science major at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. The school is not known for its great libertarian bent. I don't know if being a socialist was a requirement to become a professor, but it sure seemed like it to me. I recall the permanent Marxist information table being a popular spot among many of the students. Everyone in my political science classes knew me. Some knew me as the loud-mouth Republican idiot. Others just knew me as the loud mouth. I loved it.

Somewhere in the midst of my battles with liberals, I began to notice there were some pesky issues where the liberal Democrat voices made some sense. I couldn't deny their good points on various individual rights issues such as free speech, sodomy laws, homosexuality, pornography, and separation of church and state.

Being tired of shoveling snow and a fan of the summertime, I transferred to Arizona State University as a justice studies major. In addition to having a few conservatives around, there was no Marxist table to be found at Arizona State University. Although my Republican views had started to moderate on some individual rights issues, I was still fool enough to extol the virtues of the war on drugs.

One day after class, I participated in a heated argument about the drug war. During my long walk to the poor man's parking lot, the economic based argument against the drug war started to sink into my hard head. I could feel myself having to change my deeply held view about the drug war and adopt a pro-legalization position. Later, I realized those great Republican pronouncements about individual responsibility were not compatible with a war on drugs.

When I entered law school at Southwestern University in Los Angeles, I was a confused conservative; not comfortable with either the Republicans or the Democrats. In one sense I was better off because I could argue with both the Republicans and Democrats. Merely rejecting both parties didn't stop me from being a loud mouth. Although I had positions on various issues, I lacked a coherent philosophical base.

One day, I met Professor Butler Shaffer. He told us to refer to him either as "Butler" or "God" if we weren't comfortable using his first name. I figured out quickly this guy wasn't a typical law professor. He showed up to class one day wearing a tee shirt with the word "anarchy" on it. I was intrigued.

Butler posed questions about self-ownership and the legitimacy of the constitution. He insisted that all political questions were really different versions of the same question,

“Who makes the decision over property; the owner or someone else?” He boiled all questions down to a property analysis. I harassed the guy.

After endless hours kicking around the questions Butler posed, I started to understand. Butler gave me a book by Murray Rothbard that discussed the monetary system. I also read *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry Hazlitt and *Libertarianism in One Lesson* by David Bergland while I was poring through the required law school reading. Butler invited me to two discussion groups entitled the Mencken Forum and the Nock Forum respectively. I attended both faithfully and became a libertarian junkie. I couldn’t get enough of the freedom philosophy.

After flirting with the Libertarian Party, I came to the realization that such a party is a contradiction in terms. Although I sympathize with political Libertarians, I do not count myself among them. On the other hand, I do not believe there is or can exist a centralized plan for freedom. I have come to believe there are two groups of people: those who coerce others and those who do not.

After almost ten years as a practicing criminal defense attorney, I can say few libertarians have fought the state more regularly. I am a libertarian on the front lines in the war against tyranny—an epic multigenerational and honorable struggle. My law firm is strongly pro-freedom. I have hosted regular discussion groups, given speeches, hosted a radio show and sponsored debates. In 2000, I co-founded the Freedom Summit with my partner and libertarian guerilla warrior Ernest Hancock.

Although neither the Mencken Forum nor the Nock Forum continue, the Freedom Summit exists to hopefully rescue lost libertarian souls from the intellectual chaos that prevails today. In the end, my mom was right. It is my loud mouth that will most likely get me into trouble. On the other hand, I wouldn’t have it any other way. ■

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PETER WALTERS

WALTER BLOCKIZED

I WAS BORN IN VANCOUVER, British Columbia, the year “How Much is that Doggie in the Window” topped the charts: 1950. That makes me a boomer, a fact only important when we jump forward to 1968.

I was 18 when the cops started busting heads at the Democratic National Convention. I hated the cops. I had the right emotion but for all the wrong reasons. They were not

letting young people take part in the democratic process. You see, I was already a budding socialist. My parents, who were idiots when I was 18, were none the less card carrying members of the NDP, Canada's socialist party. Even though they were idiots, they were my parents and that made me a socialist too. University didn't help either. Within a year, I was a long hair on campus with a copy of Marx in my bag and a Mao badge pinned on my army surplus jacket.

After graduating with a degree in political science for no particular reason whatsoever, I too went into the world with a hate for the capitalist insect that preys upon the people. At 23, I joined the party and spent afternoons silk-screening lawn signs for our local NDP candidate. Power to the people!

In 1980, I was between jobs and looking to get into the advertising business as a copywriter but not looking too hard. Then something happened. While in a conversation with an old high school buddy he suggested I rethink my attack on capitalists. According to him, there was nothing wrong with capitalism at all. He said a girlfriend had turned him on to someone called Ayn Rand and that I should read her book, *The Virtue of Selfishness*. Oh yeah, I'd read her book alright, then I'd rip it to pieces and tell him off.

I got the book. Strange way to spell Ann, I thought. Right away, it was hard going. At first I thought she was crazy. Then I wanted to collect all the copies and burn them. By the time I was finished, I was a raving Randroid. My gawd, my world had been turned upside down. Everything I had believed was wrong. I began apostatizing immediately. Now people thought I was crazy.

I got a free-lance advertising assignment, wrote a tag line, and spent my earnings at the university book store. I bought everything Rand had ever written, fiction and non-fiction. I spent several weeks reading the collection non-stop. I was born again. But still unemployed.

One day, I was flipping through the Vancouver newspaper and the title to a letter-to-the-editor caught my attention. It read, "Plea for housing rights will lead us all into a moral swamp." Was Rand writing letters-to-the-editor now? No, it was signed Walter Block, Senior Economist, Fraser Institute. Senior Economist? Senior Plagiarist would be more like it, I thought. I called the Institute to give this fellow Block a piece of my mind.

I got to the point right away. Was he aware that his position on housing rights was identical in logic and suspiciously close in style to Ayn Rand's position? He agreed that his point of view was the same, claimed it wasn't plagiarism, noted that he knew Rand, and added that her name was pronounced Ayn (Ain). I suggested we meet in person.

I wore my hand-fashioned, dollar-sign button to the meeting. Walter was polite enough not to comment on it. I shook the hand that shook the hand of Rand. Life was good.

But wait, there was more. Walter wanted to talk about *The Virtue of Selfishness*. How did I like the article about Woodstock and the moon landing? I thought it was great, all that "man's reason can take us to the moon or we can turn it off and roll around in the mud stuff." He agreed but asked me if I knew who paid for the moon landing. Nobody, really was my response. Okay, then, taxpayers. Theft? What do you mean by theft?

Walter recommended I read two books: *Economics in One Lesson* and *For a New Liberty*. I did. By the time I finished the Rothbard book, I was an anarchist and on my way back

to the Fraser Institute for some more direction. Next, Walter sent me off to a libertarian discussion group. Three people showed up at this guy's apartment. By the end of the evening, we had split into two factions. I knew then that I was on to something.

A series of Libertarian Supper Club meetings followed. Quickly I learned that the Supper Club was a get together for political libertarians. Hum, anarchists running for office? Didn't feel right to me. So, after the first couple of meetings, I began playing thorn in the side of the tiny, libertarian community.

I started writing my own little tracts: "Limited Governmentalists—Trapped in a State of Mind." I came to the conclusion that it's what we don't do that really affects change: don't get a social security number, don't pay taxes, don't vote. I called it, Apathy in Action. A guy at the Supper Club suggested I contact Robert LeFevre who, he said, shared my point of view. I did. Bob turned out to be a quite a guy. He answered every one of my clumsy, rambling diatribes with long, beautifully written letters. He was patient, encouraging, and always positive. I miss him.

At the same time, my contact at the Supper Club turned me on to the voluntaryists. I wrote to Carl Watner. He and the other two voluntaryists funded a League of Non-Voters I formed during the provincial election. And Carl traveled to Vancouver to debate the political Libertarians at our Supper Club. As time went on, I lost touch with Carl, the Supper Club and even the movement. But Walter has always been there for me.

I find a good deal of personal satisfaction from the fact that I have personally converted a handful of people to libertarianism over the last 20 years. And I thank Walter Block, Robin Guillespie, Bob LeFevre, Carl Watner, and Murray Rothbard for making this crazy world make some sense. I still don't like what I see on the nightly news. But at least now I understand why. ■

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RICHARD W. WILCKE

## MY INTELLECTUAL ODYSSEY

MY FIRST MEMORY OF POLITICS is from 1948. When I was told one night that my father would be late for supper because he had to vote, I excitedly met him at the front door to ask for whom he had voted. The reason this incident remains in my memory is that I was hurt and disappointed when he declined to tell me, saying only that he had voted for "the best man." I was anxious to know because I had begun kindergarten that year and was

desperate to declare my political allegiance. My mother, who was born in Brooklyn, had kindly explained that we were Dodger fans rather than Yankee fans, and I now wanted to know whether we were Dewey fans or Truman fans. But my father was a family physician who was still building his practice in our city. While his attitude changed markedly in a few years, at that time he still kept his politics private. He imagined, I suppose, that my classmates would run home saying, "Wilcke is for Dewey!"

In 1952, we spent hours of a family vacation in the mountains listening to the national Republican Party convention on the radio of our station wagon. My family was in favor of Taft, but I am sure we were not upset by the nomination of Eisenhower. I had learned by then that my father had voted Democratic only once in his life, when he cast his first-ever presidential ballot for Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, a fact that he, like H.L. Mencken, always regretted. By the time Ike was running for president in 1952, my father had openly declared his political affiliation. In fact, he even had a GOP "I like IKE" campaign poster hanging in the waiting room of his office. Apparently, he had enough patients by then that he no longer was worried about offending local Democratic sensibilities, which were pretty deep-seated in our mill and factory town of upstate New York. In school, we soon divided ourselves by party, but it was never as important to us as our endless arguments about the relative talents of Mickey Mantle and Duke Snider.

Thanks to my family, I survived the 1950s with a strong identity as a Dodger fan, a Lutheran, and a Republican. I read everything I could about the Dodgers, and, thanks to Sunday school and confirmation class, knew quite a bit about being Lutheran. But there was no substance to my political identity until 1959 when my father brought home two issues of *Human Events*. They had been given and recommended to him by a patient who had urged him to study the lengthy profiles of U.S. Senators John F. Kennedy and Barry Goldwater. My father, unless he were on vacation, never had much time for reading non-medical material, although he did own many books, including some favorites by John T. Flynn. I cannot imagine what impelled me as a high school junior to read these papers, but the ideas of individual freedom in the laudatory essay about Goldwater appealed to me. From that moment on, I was a self-aware conservative and, to the extent that I understood it, a believer in individualism. In adolescent pretentiousness, I immediately informed my father that I was interested primarily in ideology, not in blind allegiance to the GOP.

During the 1960s, as the saying goes, I forgot nothing and learned nothing. I went to Kansas State University and joined Collegiate Young Republicans, a huge club on that campus, hence a wonderful place to meet girls. In 1962, I joined the Marine Corps and endured a summer-long Platoon Leaders Class (PLC), the initial step toward becoming a Marine officer. My platoon mates and I were shocked to discover that, while we had assumed America was at peace, the Marine Corps was actively preparing to send many of us to Vietnam, a place we knew nothing about. Over the next 18–24 months, of course, that southeast Asian country emerged as a foreign-policy crisis area. Although I graduated with excellent scores from the PLC, my new goal became to attend college in California. Therefore, I resigned my chance at a commission and opted to become an enlisted reservist. By the fall of 1964, I was going to school at San Luis Obispo, where I volunteered for the Goldwater

campaign. I read the *Conscience of a Conservative*, but that's all. Satisfied that I was a conservative, I supported the Vietnam War, as did most loyal Marines.

By the late 1960s, I was married, teaching high school and coaching football, and growing uneasy about the justification and number of American deaths in Southeast Asia. As a Republican, I hadn't trusted the Johnson administration, but I was beginning also to doubt Nixon. Then, in 1968, my last few months as a Marine Corps Reservist, I went on a large regional exercise in the Catskill Mountains. By the remotest of chances, I ran into a member of my original 1962 PLC platoon, who, unbeknownst to me, had also chosen enlisted duty rather than second lieutenant bars. I was shocked that he, also a high school teacher, was now openly and fiercely opposed to the war. Standing there in our Marine uniforms, we seemed sort of disloyal to be discussing it, but then he told me that he had looked up the service records of our platoon. Of the 42 graduates, including him and me, 30 had been killed while serving as combat officers in the initial years of Vietnam. He produced for me a typed list of their names, and as I read them, suddenly remembering their faces and the experiences and laughs we had all shared, my feelings about the war were altered from unsettled to firmly against. He and I reminisced and talked about foreign policy for several hours.

I ended the decade of the 1960s believing that, in general, our choice was to be a conservative and support America's wars, or to be an anti-American. However, I had convinced myself that this particular war was an unfortunate exception to previous glories, and so I opposed it. In January of 1970, we moved back to Topeka, Kansas, where I took a job with a radio and television station. Several months later, following a regional fair committee meeting during which I had spoken in defense of free enterprise, a man who owned several area grocery stores approached me. He asked if I were familiar with the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). When I said no, he offered me several back issues of *The Freeman*, and informed me that there would be a weekend seminar in Topeka soon, to which there would be scholarships available. If I had any interest, he would be happy to help me qualify for one of those. I took the magazines home and looked at them with only moderate interest, as I recall, but I called the man a few days later and I told him I would consider going to the seminar, as long as there would be no out-of-pocket costs for me.

A local hero of mine at the time was Kenneth McFarland, one of the most spell-binding speakers in the country. He lived in Topeka, but traveled the country as part of a General Motors speakers program to sell "Americanism" to Americans. On the morning of the FEE seminar, as I was signing in, I happened to hear a man behind me say, "Hello, Leonard, welcome to Kansas." As I knew the name of the president of FEE was Leonard Read, I listened intently. Read informed his greeter that he had just had breakfast with Kenneth McFarland, a fellow he had never met but with whom he had corresponded off and on for years. I hadn't been totally comfortable that I understood FEE's mission, so I was happily relieved to hear that the head of the organization was a personal friend of my hero. However, to my shock and amazement, I heard Read say, "It was a total waste of my time. That guy is nothing but a narrow-minded flag-waver." I could not believe my ears. What on earth was I getting myself into? Maybe friends were right when they warned against falling in with radicals. Because of this, I was primed to listen extra carefully.

Because of this mindset, I absorbed every word and every nuance of every speaker—Read, Hans Sennholz, and Ed Opitz—as if I were a desert plant desperate for moisture. That weekend for me was not a discussion of economic ideas as much as it was a life-changing experience. It seemed to me that I had been preparing all my life to hear these ideas and almost everything that was said seemed to filter deep into my consciousness. In a flash of insight, like Paul on the road to Damascus, I understood principles that would explain Goldwater and Vietnam and free enterprise and McFarland and everything else I had been unclear about. I became a loyal disciple of Leonard Read and began devouring every book and magazine that FEE had available, and every book in the Topeka Public Library by anyone whose name I came across in these books and other publications.

A year or so later, I attended a second FEE seminar in Salina, Kansas (at my own expense this time), where I recorded every word. Involved in agriculture, I met some young farmers from Nebraska. They were the first to speak to me about FEE's "foolish" beliefs in a limited government, and recommended that I read such authors as Robert LeFevre and Murray Rothbard.

Also on that weekend, I met George Pearson, a Grove City College student of Sennholz who was working in Wichita for Koch Industries and fundraising for the Institute for Humane Studies. We became friends and I absorbed a great deal from him about the history and personalities of the movement. In those years, he and Charles Koch were much enamored of Murray Rothbard's strategic vision, and George gave me a number of books and booklets from Murray and from IHS. About that time, he and Charles started a Libertarian Supper Club in Wichita. It was about 120 miles from Topeka but I always tried to go. There, I met and heard LeFevre for the first time. I had my wife, Janny, with me that night, and he converted her to anarchy in about 30 minutes. Others I heard and met for the first time at that club included Ben Rogge and Lew Rockwell, both of whom later became good friends. All of these experiences, in combination with my continual study—I even began taking more economics courses at Washburn University to make up for the things I had ignored as an undergraduate—developed and firmed up my philosophy.

By 1976, I had conceived a novel organization that would analyze food, farm, and development policy from a distinctly market perspective; an area that I felt the USDA-Land Grant system would never explore sufficiently. After all, most agricultural economists were sequestered in special departments in the agricultural schools and working for the USDA. My dream was an independent institution. Naturally, I was hoping that Charles Koch, who was by then launching the Cato Institute, would see fit to fund my project as well. In 1977, I left my job in Kansas and Janny and I took our three kids and moved near our parents in upstate New York to work full time on this project, called the Institute for the Study of Market Agriculture. I was privileged to be invited to Cato's first summer seminar at Wake Forest where I met many who have remained my friends. My favorite lecturers, without question, were Murray Rothbard, Leonard Liggio, and Walter Grinder. In the meantime, I began graduate study at the State University of New York under Arthur Ekirch, libertarian intellectual historian, taking every graduate class that he taught.

In 1979, several businessmen including Koch asked me to set aside my agricultural institute and go to Washington to serve as the president and spokesmen for a new business

organization to be called the Council for a Competitive Economy. The primary goal was to create a visible distinction on Capitol Hill and within the business community between the terms “pro-market” and “pro-business.” For five years, we struggled to enlist corporations and executives as members and donors even as we continually and openly criticized any of their actions that seemed to us to undermine the case for a free market.

We also put forth the best possible solutions to business issues, regardless of political feasibility, from repeal of Glass-Steagall to elimination of the corporate income tax. Thanks to my committed and like-minded staff, I was able to keep the Council pure enough that both LeFevre and Rothbard became supporters and cheerleaders. My staff included, at various times, such notables as David Boaz, Joe Cobb, Cindy Ingham, Tom Palmer, Sheldon Richman, Katsuro Sakoh, Fred Smith, and Barbara Stevens. While in the end the Council did not survive, the experience for me was an uplifting one, and the culmination of my intellectual odyssey. How many ever get to advocate anarcho-capitalism there within the belly of the beast? ■

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ANNE WORTHAM

## KNOWING MYSELF AND EARNING AUTONOMY

SINCE I AM BLACK AND GREW UP IN segregated Jackson, Tennessee, attended college at the famous Tuskegee Institute, and was in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963, one might have expected me to join 250,000 people participating in The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Instead, having just completed my part time job at the Peace Corps headquarters, I was leaving the city, to visit my family in Tennessee before reporting to Syracuse University for training as a Peace Corps teacher in Tanzania, East Africa. Despite my landlady’s insistence that I delay my departure (“Everybody is going to the March”), I just couldn’t overcome my reasons for skipping the historical rally at the Lincoln Memorial, which is known more for Martin Luther King’s famous speech than for its welfare statist demands for what amounted to democratic socialism. First, I was suspicious of mass collective action in general. In 1960, when the sit-in movement, led by students at black colleges, spread to more than 55 cities in 13 states, I witnessed a herd mentality at the campus

rallies at my alma mater Tuskegee Institute that was disconcerting and scary. Secondly, although I didn't then know how to analyze the civil rights movement's message, I thought its leaders were unjust to demand antidiscrimination legislation that assumed the collective guilt of whites. I also questioned the movement's approach to the legal redress of private racial discrimination.

I thought the better way to end racism was with the approach of the intergroup relations movement that preceded the protest movement but was still active. Its emphasis was not on government imposed racial equality, but on the promotion of interracial understanding and cooperation, and the reduction of racial tension and conflict through communication and interracial and transcultural activities such as interfaith events, summer camps and international activities. One such organization was the interracial Intercollegiate Council on Campus Life that I had been a member of. Another was Operation Crossroads Africa, an international student project founded by a black minister in 1957, after which the Peace Corps was modeled. In the summer of 1962 I participated as part of an interracial group of 10 Americans and 2 Canadians who were joined by as many Ethiopian college students in adding a classroom to a village school in northern Ethiopia.

It was in the spirit of interracial fellowship that a fellow Crossroader from Wesleyan University-Connecticut and I convinced our universities to sponsor a Tuskegee-Wesleyan Student Exchange Program that enabled students from the respective universities to participate in week-long visits with each other's student bodies. In 1963 eighteen Wesmen and a dozen Tuskegees traded places for a week at a time. According to the *Wesleyan Olla Podrida*: "Tuskegee offered the Wesleyan student the opportunity of breaking from his New England ivy-tinged grind for a week to . . . catch the mood of revolution which underlies the lethargic appearance of today's South. To the Northern white student who has assumed the civil rights problem as one of his own concerns, a trip to Alabama . . . becomes a trip into a country on the eve of revolution. . . ."

Although these and other interracial and transcultural experiences broadened my horizons and expanded my knowledge, those benefits were offset by having to deal with the strange collective guilt that whites of my generation had inculcated. I was baffled by their eagerness to extend to all blacks through me an unwarranted level of esteem, a version of what Jim Sleeper calls "liberal racism." Although I agreed with them that our friendship and cooperation illustrated what was possible between the races, I could not accept their tendency to view themselves and me as embodiments of our respective racial groups. The interaction script was always the same: I was to play the role of the oppressed bearing scars of slavery and racism; my counterpart played the part of the enlightened liberator bearing the guilt of the oppressor, and seeking the relief of "your people" while being absolved by me of sins I did not believe were theirs to claim. It was bewildering at first, but during the successive years that I continued to associate with whites, I learned how to respond to such collectivistic altruism.

Earlier that summer I wrote in an essay that although the world was paying tribute to the Negro, "and this [racial] aspect of my being is constantly being thrown at me, . . . I cannot respond; I cannot feel what they [other Negroes] feel. . . . I do not feel unequal . . . I cannot make my heart hate [all] whites . . . I can feel sadness . . . I cannot be a part of

them.” Clearly I needed help in articulating my misgivings, and in how to cope with being a dissenter from the general consensus. I needed to know who I was, and who “they” were.

Seventeen years later in a graduate school paper on the social and political context and meaning of black identification, I was able to confidently argue that since there is no singular consciousness or mind, there is no collective identity such as black identity. “When a group of individuals is guided by a shared frame of reference the result is group identification. It is in this broadest sense that identity as culture is socially bestowed. . . . But an individual’s self-identity—his personality and character—may or may not be congruous with the identification of the group of which he is a member.”

How did I develop intellectually from the confusion and unhappiness of my early years to the confident clarity of 1980? The idea of socially-bestowed identity came from my professor Peter L. Berger who viewed all socially-assigned identities as exercises in “bad faith.” I would not have fully comprehended Berger’s argument had I not understood its source in existentialism and, more importantly, recognized his use of “bad faith” referring to the substitution of the man-made for the metaphysical. I learned the latter from Ayn Rand whose works I encountered while serving in the Peace Corps. Ironically, Rand would have condemned my Peace Corps affiliation. “Those selfless little altruists of the Peace Corps who play the role of big shots in the jungle, at taxpayers expense,” is how she characterized the volunteers in a 1962 column. In fact it was not selflessness that motivated me, but the desire to expand my overseas experience and continue teaching myself French to prepare for a graduate program in international relations I had been admitted to at George Washington University. But by the end of my tour, I agreed that most of my fellow volunteers were selfless altruists whose patronizing benevolence I found reprehensible, and abandoned my plans for a career in international relations.

My fateful encounter with Ayn Rand came in 1964, midway into the first year of my Peace Corps tour. A fellow volunteer had read her interview in the March issue of *Playboy*, and recommended that I read it because, he said, my “weird” ideas sounded a lot like hers. I didn’t understand much of the approach in Rand’s comments, but I recall being struck by her observations about the debasing features of altruism—especially her example of Christianity as based on the crucifixion of its most virtuous and perfect embodiment.

Although my lack of knowledge and experience stymied my effort to see through the clouded lens of my religious upbringing and grasp the profundity of Rand’s analysis, I was unsettled enough in my thinking to take note of her indictment. Some months later while on vacation in Kampala, Uganda, we found a used paperback copy of *Atlas Shrugged* at a rummage shop; still later the British manager of a tea plantation gave me his unread paperback of *The Fountainhead*.

I identified immediately with the protagonist in *The Fountainhead* and was so impressed by Rand’s characterization of his individualism that I wrote to the Nathaniel Branden Institute (NBI) in New York for copies of the NBI lectures that were advertised on the cover of the book. In his reply the NBI manager informed me that the lecture series was not available in print, and sent brochures that described the Institute’s offerings, including books that could be purchased from NBI’s Book Service. He also wrote: “I am somewhat startled by your interest in the Peace Corps and in Objectivism. If you

have understood Miss Rand's books, I am sure you will understand the contradiction." I did understand, and attempted to resign from the Peace Corps, but was told that if I left before the end of my tour, I would have to finance my return to the U.S. I had no choice but to stay.

Despite the manager's castigation, I ordered pamphlets by Rand, hardbacks of her 4 novels, *For the New Intellectual*, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, NBI's *Objectivist Newsletter*, Ludwig von Mises's *Anti-Capitalist Mentality*, John Herman Randall's *Aristotle*, Brand Blanshard's *Reason and Analysis*, and others. With these works, I began an adventure of intellectual expansion that continues to this day. I remember reading *Anthem* and being brought to tears by a mixture of joyous confirmation and indignation and sadness for the state of the world. The empirical evidence of John Galt's speech in *Atlas* and Mises's *Anti-Capitalistic Mentality* was all around me; I had but to look out my window and see the consequences of collectivism in the lives of Tanzanian peasants.

A very important ingredient, in the form of Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*, was also thrown into my intellectual cauldron. The book was in our Peace Corps-issued library, and I became interested in it when I read Rand's endorsement of Goldwater's presidential candidacy in the *Objectivist Newsletter*. His criticism of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, and Rand's essays, "Collectivized Rights" and "Man's Rights" spoke as clearly to me as the first paragraphs of *The Fountainhead* had. Rand's natural law defense of individual rights confirmed my misgivings about the civil rights movement and gave me the language of freedom and justice with which to integrate my questions about civil rights policy into a coherent perspective.

It is difficult to explain what it meant to be able to conceptualize at last what I had been staring at both internally and externally since my college days! I felt the glorious and ennobling torment of self-liberation that Frederick Douglass said he knew upon teaching himself to read. He said he sometimes felt knowledge to be a curse rather than a blessing, and almost envied his fellow-slaves for their stupidity. Now that he was free from ignorance, his soul was ever wakeful and he could not cease thinking of his condition. Douglass eventually fled his enslavement, but fortunately, I had only to extract my mind from the perplexities of contradictions and false premises.

Let me pause to note that the roots of my quandary over civil rights issues and my affinity for the analyses of Rand and Mises were located in the circumstances of my family background and the teachings of my father. Born in 1941, I was the first of five children born to Bernice and Johnny Wortham, a high-school educated housewife who had studied Latin in school and wrote religious poetry, and a self-taught laborer who later became a self-employed traveling salesman and self-ordained minister. Our family was not poor because, despite rationing during the war, my father always had a job, and the postwar economy was fairly good, so an industrious family could manage quite well. My Mom died in 1952 at age 32 when I was almost 11 years old. Fearing that my 35-year-old father would saddle us with a stepmother, I insisted that I could help him take care of my sister and three brothers, the youngest of whom was 3 years old. My confidence came from the fact that my mother had taught me homemaking skills that women of that time were expected to teach their daughters. My Dad's great gift to me was that he believed me, so I became the

other head of our family and remained so even after he remarried twenty years later to a young woman 20 years his junior and began a second family.

Ours was a very religious home organized around what conservatives refer to as “family values.” Before my mother died, every Thursday night after supper we went to the living room (that was otherwise off limits) where my Dad instructed us in what he, my mother and God expected of us. He expected us to be “self-supporting, independent, law-abiding citizens.” God’s expectations were spelled out in the Ten Commandments, as well as in various verses he read of Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians. He mixed religious rules with secular expectations regarding the devotion to productivity that were similar to the moral sayings of Benjamin Franklin that Max Weber found so exemplary of the “spirit of capitalism.” Not knowing that his were the words of Franklin, he repeatedly reminded us that “time is money.” Franklin wrote that “For six pounds a year you may have the use of one hundred pounds, provided you are a man of known prudence and honesty.” In my father’s words Franklin’s insight became: “There’s no substitute for a good reputation,” and “Remember, your record follows you.” Like Franklin he believed that to tend one’s money was also to tend one’s soul, and thereby cleverly evaded the traditional Christian dogma that money is the root of all evil. When they were old enough he made my brothers work as newspaper boys so they would “learn how a dollar is made.” Like the Puritans he viewed work as a moral principle that tied men to spiritual salvation; a person’s work was his “calling” and hard work, commitment to excellence, and good works were signs of inner grace. Looking back, I see that in my Dad’s work habits I was witnessing the farmer’s ethic of deferred gratification, the craftsman’s ethic of self-sufficiency, and the entrepreneur’s ethic of market success.

I vividly remember his suspicions of government and warnings to keep Uncle Sam out of our back pockets. He included racial segregation and discrimination among the sins of our society, but he spoke little of that. The only experience of racism he shared was the refusal of the manager of the Kroger store where he worked as custodian to allow him to take a company exam for promotion to a job in the produce section. The story was important because he had to explain to us why he was leaving the job to start his own business. My only memory of his reference to “White folks” as such was when he told my sister and me that we must not end up marrying for security or working in a white woman’s kitchen, even as (much to his chagrin) I did domestic work on Saturdays to earn spending money. He might have made other references, but whites were not the kitchen-table point of reference for our family, something I didn’t become aware of until I heard my college classmates talk about their negative perceptions of whites, and I had little to contribute.

As it turned out the power of Ayn Rand’s novels and philosophy was that the ideas and values they imparted fell on extremely fertile ground that had been cultivated not only with the teachings and examples of my father. As I document in my article, “Behind the Walls of Segregation: Playing Cowboys,” I was also greatly influenced by the Western hero as portrayed in radio, television, movies, and comic books of the 40s and 50s. Western cowboy and lawmen heroes, first on radio and later on television, rode into my imagination as embodiments of a mixture of moral strength and practical savvy to overcome injustice, solve social dilemmas, and face up to danger; they portrayed gallantry, dedication to

purpose, hard work, individuality, and self-reliance. Since I wanted to grow up to be like the western hero, it did not take a great leap of imagination to experience immediate affinity with Randian heroes.

The unsavory baggage I brought to my encounter with Rand was primarily religious. Thus, one of the first things I did after reading her works was to write alternatives to each of the 107 verses of the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5–7). A couple of years after my return to the United States, I self-published it as a booklet under the title, *An Answer For Man*. It was the first of many of my essays motivated by my policy that if I disagreed with an idea, I was obliged to know why and produce an alternative idea.

When I first read the title of Ayn Rand’s column, “Check Your Premises,” in the *Objectivist Newsletter*, I reacted defensively to her stern admonition as though it were a rebuke of Original Sin. It was all I could do to avoid turning errors of knowledge and judgment into moral self-indictments. However, I came to see checking one’s premises as the all-important vigilance that is essential not only for the maintenance of psycho-intellectual autonomy but for the preservation of political liberty.

Another order I gave to myself which became the guiding principle of my teaching is: “*Know What you Are Talking About!!!*” I wrote those words in the margin of page 91 of *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*. I doubt I would have moved beyond the lowest level of intellectual independence without an understanding of this demanding intellectual responsibility. Yet my understanding would hardly have been actualized were it not for my study of Nathaniel Branden’s extension of Objectivism into his theory of biocentric psychology in *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*. While Rand taught me how to think, and how to arrive at empirical and moral judgments, Branden taught me how to be myself. From his analysis I learned that I could not know myself as a unique personality and character until I understood the cognitive, emotional, moral and behavioral dimensions of the human self.

Synthesizing the thought of Rand and Branden gave me conceptual tools with which to interpret and evaluate the public discourse and events of the times. My first critique of the collectivist assumptions of civil rights policy was published in the article, “Individualism Versus Racism,” in the January 1966 issue of *The Freeman*. That was followed by several articles in *The Freeman* and *Reason* that I wrote while I worked as an editorial researcher for such media organizations as *Esquire* magazine, NBC News’ “Huntley-Brinkley Report,” ABC Radio News, and King Features Syndicate. For a few months I even delivered a five-minute news commentary on WNYU, New York University’s student radio station. My most extensive written application of their ideas occurs in my book, *The Other Side of Racism: A Philosophical Study of Black Race Consciousness* (1981). Using Branden’s typologies of the social metaphysician, I showed how race and ethnic consciousness and other types of subjective responses to interracial contact and conflict are transformed into political strategies and policies that undermine intellectual independence, individual rights, and economic and political freedom. However, writing the book made me increasingly aware of the inadequacy of relying primarily on philosophy in general and Objectivism in particular for generating questions and explanations regarding the structure and dynamics of social and cultural phenomena. It was one thing to understand the value judgments and theories of reality and knowledge underlying social action and cultural trends that

undermine rationality, individuality, limited government and a free economic system; it was quite another to understand how this activity is organized and legitimated into systems of social interaction, from the level of interpersonal relations to societal systems of politics and economics. To achieve the latter, after fourteen years away from academia, I enrolled in Boston College to pursue a doctoral degree in sociology.

It was no easy ride to partake of a discipline that emerged as a conservative reaction to the Enlightenment and whose primary intellectual history has been devoted to defining human nature out of explanations of human behavior. Yet, despite sociology's serious flaws, that it shared with other social sciences, its various perspectives enabled me to see more clearly the historical, cultural, and structural origins of competing worldviews, theories and social practices. I also attained a deeper and more critical understanding of Ayn Rand's depiction of the relation of the individual to society and her account of the emergence of modern civilization and trends in societal evolution. Almost every paper I wrote for graduate courses involved first writing about the subject from a philosophical perspective, then producing a sociological analysis for the submitted paper. This involved moving beyond Objectivism to the works of thinkers like Murray Rothbard, Tibor Machan, Robert Nisbet, David Riesman, Peter Berger. Rothbard's book *Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature and Other Essays* (1974) and his monograph *Individualism and the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (1979) were just what I needed. Tibor Machan's *Human Rights and Human Liberties*, Peter Berger's *Invitation to Sociology* and *Social Construction of Reality*, Robert Nisbet's *The Sociological Tradition*, are just a few of the works I tapped into as I grappled with the ideas of classical and contemporary sociologists. The work that has had the greatest influence on my conception of American history is Arthur Ekirch's *The Decline of American Liberalism*.

My articles and essays introduced me to libertarians, conservatives and objectivists, among whom I found friends and supporters without whose help and encouragement I would have had no academic career. Leonard Read and Paul Poirot welcomed me to pages of *The Freeman*; so too did the editors of *Reason*. Rothbard encouraged my return to graduate school, and thought my book "can make a real contribution, since you are the only articulate black individualist around today." In his response to an outline of the book, Roger Lea McBride, then the 1976 Libertarian Party presidential candidate, noted my intellectual growth: "From looking at your earlier pieces in *The Freeman*, I would say that you have been growing toward a vitally needed better and fuller statement . . ." Another supporter, columnist John Chamberlain called the book "her declaration of independence." During my second year of graduate school, I was invited to my first Liberty Fund seminar. Participating in the seminars, sometimes as the only female in attendance, was a much needed source of sustenance as I wended my way through the treacherous academic world during and after graduate school. My greatest benefactor was businessman, economic journalist, and speechwriter George Koether who had been a member of the original Ludwig von Mises circle in America. In his determination to see that I completed my graduate studies, George solicited donors around the country to contribute to fellowships that were awarded to me through an assortment of libertarian foundations and institutes.

The addition of libertarian influences and associations, and persistent queries from academic opponents about my views made it necessary to be clear in my own mind where

I stood on the ideological spectrum. As it was necessary to know myself vis-à-vis those who share my racial and gender categories, so it was to know my worldview vis-à-vis those who share my ideology of classical liberalism. Of the two major variants of classical liberalism, I am informed by individualist or natural rights liberalism which defends liberty as the requirement of human nature, in contrast to utilitarian liberalism which does so on the basis of liberty's utility for the common good. Among the natural rights liberals I am a proponent of limited government rather than anarcho-capitalism. Although I find much that is valuable in the analyses of classical-liberal economists associated with the Austrian School, public choice theory, and the Chicago School, I consider their value-free interpretations and conclusions regarding political economy in juxtaposition to my natural rights/normative perspective.

I never thought of myself as an Objectivist. My association with objectivists was limited to attending a few NBI lectures held in New York City. I didn't like Rand's rudeness toward people in the audience when they asked questions. She seemed cold, dogmatic, authoritarian, and lacking the benevolent sense of life that she wrote so eloquently about. As a member of the audience I felt I was in a congregation of *Atlas Shrugged*-quoting true believers who were more interested in quoting chapter and verse of Rand's novels than thinking for themselves. I stopped attending the lectures and went my own way, as it were.

The last time I saw Rand was in 1978 at her Ford Hall Forum lecture at Northeastern University in Boston. During the question and answer period following the lecture, Rand was asked to comment on why there were so few blacks in the audience. She was rightfully outraged by the question, but thought her answer was inadequate. In an article entitled "Individualism: For Whites Only," I wrote: "It has indeed, as Rand says, been harder for blacks (as a group) to preserve their dignity in a system that has denied or restricted their freedom than it has been for groups who, at the very least, have been guaranteed suffrage. But doesn't the philosophy of individualism rest on man's capacity to resist or transcend the social influences of a given historical era or of a given culture? The same logic that supports the possibility of an Ayn Rand rising out of post-Czarist Russia also accounts for the possibility of a Frederick Douglass rising out of the institution of slavery or an Anne Wortham rising out of segregationist Tennessee."

Freedom is not free, and neither is its defense, as I learned most brutally when I began my search for a university position in 1982. With the exception of Peter Berger, my professors exerted little effort on my behalf in the belief that as a "two-fer," possessing the categories of black and female, I would have no difficulty finding a position. Little did they know. The doctoral degree certified my eligibility, but I was tainted by negative reviews of *The Other Side of Racism* in which I defended the property rights of Georgia segregationist Lester Maddox who in 1964 said that he would close his restaurant rather than serve blacks, and 15 years of essays invoking the perspective of natural rights liberalism. The path leading to an academic career was a trail of ideological prejudice, stigmatization, ridicule and ostracism.

Evolving toward autonomy—thinking in principles and living by one's own independent rational reflection and critical judgment—is not done in isolation from others. Neither is striving for success in one's calling. Without my father, Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden

I would not have come within a foot of autonomy. Without my many friends among defenders of liberty there would be no career in defense of liberty, and I would not be included in this book. I have a lot of woulda-coulda-shouldas and hope-tos left on my plate, but I have no doubt about my purpose. It is and always will be the defense of liberty. ■

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STEVEN YATES

HOW I BECAME A *CHRISTIAN* LIBERTARIAN

ONE DAY, LONG AGO (sometime during 1995), I woke up in the morning and realized that I had ceased to be one of those agnostics or atheists I had known and interacted with while teaching in philosophy departments. Instead, I had become a Christian libertarian. That these two were compatible was one of the important realizations of my adult life. I wish more Christians would realize that initiating coercion to achieve desirable social goals is out of accord with true Christianity (see Rev. 3:20, which I will discuss below). And I wish more libertarians would realize that the freedom philosophy they rightly treasure cannot be made to last among a people who have no sense of the transcendent in their lives, because people just aren't like that. The story is a fairly long one, but we can hit the high spots. (I know, I know: famous last words.)

I think I've always been an instinctive individualist. By that I mean I don't recall a time when I wasn't aware of my individuality, whether it came from a sense of being somehow different from most of the people around me or a larger and not-yet-articulated sense that the word individuality touched on something important about the human condition. Individualism, of course, stands at the core of libertarianism, even before we get to issues about rights or proscribing the initiation of force. We are essentially individuals before we are anything else—family members, members of a community, citizens of a nation, members of an ethnic group or gender. That doesn't mean these other entities are imaginary or unimportant, of course. Individualism does not mean complete individual self-sufficiency. Strong families are important. So are stable communities. Individuality doesn't mean complete aloofness or aloneness. People involved with family, professional groups, and

community are both happier and healthier. Communities—villages—come about when the breadwinners in families settle together and transact with one another peacefully, each person trading skills, services or goods for compensation in a value-for-value exchange.

But individuality is still the bottom line for us. No two people are alike; none have the same levels of intelligence, skills, and motivation. This is why egalitarianism is impossible—a “revolt against nature,” as Murray Rothbard called it. This is why, should it turn out that there really are racial differences in intelligence, the claim doesn’t carry as much weight as either its advocates or its detractors think. Claims about average intelligence within groups are statistical abstractions and entail nothing about the intelligence of any particular individual. Likewise, men and women can be spoken of as members of a group. Perhaps in some sense men are more “logical” and women are more “emotional.” But again, even despite the obvious biological and hormonal differences between men and women, this says nothing about any particular individual. I have encountered my share of “emotional” men (they usually become socialists, or “alpha males” like Al Gore). And I know or have met women whose “logical” abilities are as good as any man (they don’t become radical feminists!). Group identity is not a nothing. Most people prefer the company of those similar to themselves. This is normal. But group identity will not bear the weight placed on it by either neo-racialists or sexists of any stripe, or academic leftists, those purveyors of the “politics of identity.”

I was always a bookworm. My parents both having scientific and professional degrees, I grew up surrounded by books: on science, on history, on health, and so on. My neighbors’ collection of books eventually came to my attention while I was taking care of their cats. Among the volumes that I kept going back to was the small, dog-eared paperback edition of a book called *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand. One day I started reading it. The next thing I knew, three hours had gone by. Howard Roark had captivated me for that long.

Later, in college, the philosophy virus infected me, and I never recovered. How this came about is a story in itself. I had been casting about for a major I could propel myself into completely. I’d tried anthropology, history, and geology. None of them had worked. During one chaotic semester, at age 19, what little time I spent apart from a member of the opposite sex who had captivated me in a different way, I spent trying to figure out what the dickens I wanted to do with my college education and my life. Much of modern education, even then, struck me as a direct and concerted attack on the student’s individuality. College and university curricula had only molds to force-fit people into. Most people fit into them reasonably well, of course. But some of us did not.

Moreover, my hobbies—and the relationship I mentioned—consumed far more time than my studies which were then cure-alls for insomnia. One of my favorite hobbies was collecting information on what seemed to be verified facts that didn’t fit into anyone’s theories. I’d read my way through writers such as Charles Fort, Charles Hapgood, Immanuel Velikovsky, Erich von Däniken, Charles Berlitz, Robert Anton Wilson, and many, many others. Some of this stuff was not very good, of course. Von Däniken’s books are silly. But others—Hapgood’s *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings*, for example—were thoroughly researched and made a lasting impression. I became convinced there was something wrong with the “conventional” view of the human past, and possibly with the Darwinian theory itself. In

my senior year of high school I had done a research paper on flood legends and myths from around the world. I was amazed how prevalent variants of this story were. They existed all over the world, from the Middle East and Eurasia to North America and the Far East, even among Australian aborigines and other peoples who could not have had any contact with one another for thousands of years. Sometimes, in these legends, it was a single family that survived, as in the account of Noah, his wife and three sons (and three daughters-in-law) in Genesis; sometimes a single couple, sometimes a larger group. The names of the survivors were obviously different. But surely a legend this prevalent reflected a real event, possibly on a global scale. Add to this any number of curious discoveries, including objects clearly of human origin found buried in solid rock supposedly millions of years old (Charles Fort offers primary sources for such reports), and it paints a picture of the remote past that ought to disturb purveyors of the status quo.

The prevailing view in geology was then called uniformitarianism: “the present is the key to the past.” It completely rejected the idea of geological catastrophes. Its author was one of the founders of modern geology, Sir Charles Lyell, who lived in the early 1800s. Charles Darwin studied Lyell, seeing in uniformitarianism the long-term ecological stability necessary for evolution by natural selection to take place. In this view, there were no catastrophes. Yet authors such as Fort and Hapgood seemed to have assembled evidence, apparently unknown to my professors, that there had indeed been catastrophes. A variant on this idea began to catch on in the 1980s—that the dinosaurs, for example, had been wiped out by a global cataclysmic event such as a comet or asteroid strike on the Earth. The intellectual problem of what to do about geological anomalies—facts that don’t fit—had stuck in my mind as a kind of near-obsession that conflicted with my studies: studies whose working premises seemed to me dubious at best. I was supposed to be studying geology, but what I couldn’t take fully seriously, I couldn’t study. I considered taking a purely vocational attitude toward the subject: f’getaboutit and learn to explore for oil! Goes without saying, that didn’t fit my particular mindset, either.

I was miserable, and almost dropped out of college until the day of a conversation with a local pastor. We didn’t talk about Christianity. That came much later. But we did talk about ideas, especially questions about morality and its foundations, questions about science and its authority—including whether science was the sole authority over such questions as whether human beings really have free will. These, he pointed out, were problems of philosophy, not science. I went back, looked at my library, and realized I’d already begun collecting philosophical writings, especially the sort that would help sort out my questions about the nature of science. These came to include Thomas S. Kuhn’s ever-fascinating *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn’s ideas about paradigms seemed to fit my own observations, including the paradigm shift that began in geology around 1980. At some point I resolved to change schools and change majors—from geology to philosophy. I would specialize in the history and philosophy of science, because so many of my interests converged on the epistemic authority of science in one way or another.

So where did libertarianism enter the picture? Actually, it never left. It subsisted as an implicit demand from my mentors to be allowed to think for myself, even if this led to a rejection of the dominant paradigm (to use the Kuhnian term). It emerged openly through

a number of conversations with friends who sent me back to Ayn Rand and to the appropriate section of a top-flight bookstore, where I discovered works such as Murray Rothbard's *For a New Liberty*, Friedrich A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, Henry Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*, and Tibor R. Machan's anthology *The Libertarian Alternative*. (If anyone had told me that Tibor and I would one day be colleagues in the same philosophy department, at Auburn University, I would have said they were nuts.) These provided perspectives on the topic of liberty other than Rand's, whose philosophy of Objectivism differed in certain respects from libertarianism in any event. Finally I came across two works by respected academic philosophers: *Libertarianism* by John Hospers and *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* by Robert Nozick. I would also discover the two volumes of *The Open Society and Its Enemies* by Sir Karl Popper. I began to devour it all, and to attend a study group led by a member of the local Libertarian Party.

As a result of this reading as well as my experiences with the sciences and with the philosophy of science, I became even more convinced that professional philosophy was where I belonged, and suddenly my goals seemed clear as a sunlit spring morning: attend graduate school, work toward a doctorate, and then become a professor of philosophy at a major research university. I set about doing just this.

I became a "lapsed libertarian" in graduate school in the 1980s. I was studying history and philosophy of science and cognate areas such as epistemology (the branch of philosophy concerned with the sources, nature and limits of knowledge). My course work was demanding, and politics was pretty much off my mind. But there were signs of things to come, had I been looking for them at the time. There were also very early signs of the eventual breakdown of my commitment to the atheistic, hyperrationalistic libertarianism many libertarians had inherited from Ayn Rand and her disciples.

After graduation in 1987, which began my full-time pursuit of a tenure-track appointment, what I ran into was what struck me as an irrational push to get more women into philosophy. I was told openly at a professional meeting that "our department is under extreme pressure to hire a woman." I ran into this again and again. Most of these women were either unpublished or had publications limited to the small but growing corpus of radical feminist journals. Some did not even have Ph.D.'s. Combining this with the fact that I'd had a number of articles and book reviews either in print or forthcoming before receiving the Ph.D., and was nevertheless bouncing around in non-tenure track positions from university to university to university year after year, my libertarian sensibilities began to reawaken. Their impetus was my growing battle with the affirmative action mindset that lay behind the aggressive push to hire women regardless of their (often marginal) qualifications.

They awakened fully when I came to Auburn University in 1988, where Tibor Machan had been teaching for several years. We became friends. He was instrumental in helping me return following a year of near-unemployment. During that year, a radical feminist the philosophy department had hired to a tenure-track job nearly tore the department apart. She had left after one year, having hated everything about the university, the town, the region (it was the South, after all!) and the climate. With her having washed out, I was able to return.

Auburn, Alabama became, to me, a fairly interesting place. It is also home to the Ludwig von Mises Institute, which was then housed in a tiny building literally in the shadow of the football stadium. Their facilities were small and cramped, but this wasn't stopping them. They were already publishing a monthly newsletter that was growing rapidly in circulation, *The Free Market*. I admired this sort of independent activity. While teaching in the philosophy department there and continuing to publish, I began to attend Institute events, where I met Institute founder and President Lew Rockwell and several libertarian academics, many of them in the economics department. I special-ordered a copy of Ludwig von Mises's *Human Action* and began studying it. One of my publications had been on philosophical theories that were refuted—made impossible—by their own internal logic. It came out in the 1991 issue of the journal *Reason Papers*, which Tibor Machan was then editing. I discovered Mises to have a similar argument in defense of what Austrian-School economists called the action axiom: the denial of the existence of human action would itself be an action, and thus be refuted by its own logic. This convergence of methods gave me an instant rapport with the Misesians. Soon, I was reading my way through other Mises works, as well as more by F.A. Hayek, Murray Rothbard, and eventually others. Rothbard was then still living, and it is one of my great regrets in life that I never took sufficient initiative to meet him.

The immediate issue was affirmative action. It affected me personally, since it was clear from my own correspondence—search committee chairs were sometimes surprisingly candid about who they hired—that women in particular were being awarded jobs that should have gone to men. I began to immerse myself in the scholarly as well as popular literature on affirmative action. Was this just? How could it be? Even if you dated the civil rights movement from 1964, the year the Civil Rights Act was signed into law, that meant that there were people coming of age today that hadn't even been born when institutional discrimination against women and minorities was being dismantled. I approached the topic as an individualist and a libertarian, and began to observe the response. I was not the only one. A number of solid, forthright scholarly works critical of affirmative action had begun to appear. Philosopher Nicholas Capaldi's *Out of Order: Affirmative Action and the Crisis of Doctrinaire Liberalism*, sociologist Frederick R. Lynch's *Invisible Victims: White Males and the Crisis of Affirmative Action*, and political scientist Herman Belz's *Equality Transformed: A Quarter Century of Affirmative Action* were just three.

But in academia, a taboo had begun to fall over the discussion. It would gain momentum. None of these books received reviews in major journals, favorable or otherwise. It was the beginning of the era of political correctness, and horror stories were beginning to emerge of professors—some of them highly respected in their disciplines and popular with their students—getting into serious trouble over alleged “insensitivity” to minority students. The latter had come to have a power all out of proportion to their numbers, the power of inculcating guilt in white males and having it enforced through university administrations. It seemed to me almost self-evident that political correctness had been invented to protect affirmative action programs and the mindset behind them from the intense scholarly scrutiny they had begun to receive. The insinuation of political correctness was that anyone who had doubts about such programs was almost by definition a covert racist and sexist,

and therefore to be discounted rather than responded to. Critics of affirmative action found themselves shouted down. The attacks on white males and on “Western, white male-dominated culture” rapidly snowballed during the early 1990s. Jesse Jackson’s “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western Civ has got to go!” has become legendary.

I first did a policy study for a Chicago-based think tank, and then prepared a longer essay on affirmative action, much of it written in a kind of white heat. At least one established scholar who knew what I was up to warned me, “The left will eat you alive.” But I couldn’t stop. The truth had to be told! The essay kept expanding until it reached book-length proportions. One day I awakened with the title *Civil Wrongs* on my lips, attached it to the manuscript and began to seek a publisher. *Civil Wrongs* was rejected by something like 80 publishers until ICS Press accepted it (under the condition that I rewrite it for a more policy-minded and less academic audience, a condition I happily accepted since it was already clear that few academic philosophers would be interested).

The book came out in November of 1994. By that time I was no longer teaching in a philosophy department whose senior people were mostly sympathetic to the libertarian premises that underwrote my particular critique of affirmative action. It was official policy at Auburn University that tenure decisions had to be unanimous among senior faculty, and one senior person had blocked my promotion to a tenure line. The person hadn’t given a reason—and had even concealed his identity from me until I was out of the picture. I ended up at a more typically leftist department (at the University of South Carolina) under a fairly left-of-center administration. This department had needed someone at the last minute. The appearance of *Civil Wrongs*—particularly as it received a certain amount of local media coverage and was prominently displayed in the front window of an independent bookstore in downtown Columbia—turned out to be a kiss of death, so far as my remaining there or pursuing a tenure-track position in a philosophy department went. Part of no longer pursuing such was admittedly my own decision. I had had enough experiences with academic philosophy that I was less impressed by it with each passing year. I had also discovered the hard way that those few senior-level colleagues I could trust generally had no power in their departments. So I although I enjoyed teaching university undergraduates, I took an early retirement from the profession that was only partly voluntary at best.

Horrible experiences with philosophy departments had not taken away my interest in ideas, and I continued to write whenever possible despite the need to undertake “odd jobs” to survive. These included, at different times, clerical work as a “temp” in a state office, an assortment of technical-writing contract jobs, some ghostwriting, a stint in a health education department and later a consulting firm, and later as an obituary writer for the city newspaper. During this period—the mid-1990s and shortly thereafter—I occasionally did philosophical work with research institutes such as the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty. I had minimal contact with academia but kept in touch with the folks at the Mises Institute, attending the occasional Austrian Scholars Conference where I could interact with like-minded individuals. But during this period, something was happening. The fact that my involvement with the folks at the Acton Institute created no cognitive dissonance offered an important clue.

The near-atheism that had characterized my thinking when I had been at Auburn had disappeared, and been replaced by a renewed sympathy for Christianity. This happened for at least two reasons. First, there was my mounting puzzlement over something I had noticed more than once: there are people both in and out of academia (e.g., someone else I had known well at Auburn) whose hostility toward Christians and Christianity bordered on the pathological and literally suffused everything they did. Had I been a psychologist, I might have called this a defense mechanism. Without fully realizing it they feared that Christianity was true, and compulsively attempted to convince themselves that it wasn't. Not being a psychologist I don't know this, of course. But it was clear that something not rational was going on—one might call it the phenomenon of the “irrational rationalist” who is locked into a materialist and atheist view of the universe with what can only be described as a religious fervor. This fervor the “irrational rationalist” passes off as Reason (capital ‘R’).

The second reason was far more important, however. *Civil Wrongs* had been a secular tract. The somewhat Hayekian “theory of social spontaneity” it advocated as a solution to the problems affirmative action had failed to address was as much a product of Enlightenment thinking as any other current libertarian idea. The thought had begun to eat at me that this wasn't sufficient, that in the absence of some “deeper” grounding for moral action, being “socially spontaneous” wouldn't be good enough. I had begun to uncover arguments—going back at least as far as Edmund Burke—that the freedom I had attempted to describe would not make for social stability in an irreligious, hedonistic people, which arguably late-twentieth-century America had become quite independently of problems involving race and gender. I began to write long and meandering reams of material on this topic (supported by yet another small stipend from a non-academic source) under the working title, *The Paradox of Liberty*. Here's the paradox: genuine *liberty* requires some controls on individuals' actions. It cannot last if individuals are doing absolutely whatever they see fit. It cannot be confused with *license*. But to have *liberty* and not *authoritarianism*, the controls on individuals must come from within. Liberty and *objective morality*, that is, are *mutually dependent*. Either individuals learn through a process of education that must begin as small children to impose moral restraints on their own impulses—or restraints will be imposed on them from the outside. They will be restrained by strictures of expansionist government that will actually be endorsed by a majority of people who, whether rightly or wrongly, see expansionist government as a bulwark against social chaos.

*License*, that is, expands the state. This is an important reason why the unbridled hedonism that the materialist outlook on the world seems to encourage must be checked. The hedonism of the Epicureans played an important role in the transformation of ancient Rome from a republic to an empire, and today we have our own version of Epicureanism (think of the MTV culture or most of the evening programming on the Fox television network). A free society must keep license on a short leash no less than the state, to ensure stability. Liberty cannot exist without stability. As Burke argued, “Men are qualified for civil liberties in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites . . . . Society cannot exist unless a controlling power

upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without.”

Have atheistic libertarians confused liberty with license? Some have, some not. I have met libertarians who, if they were honest, would admit that their “libertarianism” is little more than an excuse for wanting to smoke dope legally. Some are stuck in a late-1960s time warp with regard to their dress and personal habits. What is worse than the aging hippie who wears a torn, unwashed and bedraggled T-shirt out in public that reads Libertarian Party in large, plainly visible block letters! It is hard to persuade such people that they are impediments to the struggle for liberty. They should clean themselves up and grow up. Be that as it may, many intellectually serious non-Christian libertarians do believe that a source for a morality strong enough to chain our appetites and human weaknesses can be had in *this* world, tied to our capacity for reason (here they follow Ayn Rand). I respectfully dissent from this. It had become crystal clear to me by 1995 that your capacity for reason by itself does not make you a better person.

Enlightenment-derived thought, which includes a lot of leading libertarian thought, has trouble with the Christian concept of sin. The Christian concept of sin conflicts openly with the Enlightenment ideal that through education, enterprise, etc., we can perfect ourselves and our civilization. I could look at history, however, and find the idea of sin easy to accept; conversely, the Enlightenment ideal came to seem naïve. Science had vastly expanded our knowledge; technology had vastly expanded our creature comforts and our mastery over our environment. *But neither had made us better people.* Even capitalism is fully capable of corruption. Consider the businessmen who went into investment banking, seeking to control the finances of the country and through them, the government. This led to the Federal Reserve, the IRS, and a decade later the Council on Foreign Relations, and finally the United Nations. Despite our legacy of constitutional-republicanism, the urge for power was very much alive! We still fought bloody wars, and with rapidly advancing technology, twentieth-century wars became increasingly destructive until we reached the appropriately named MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) with weapons having the potential to end civilization on this planet.

The idea that building a better civilization could happen if only we elected the right politicians into office—something Libertarian Party libertarians were only repeating in a different guise—came also to seem to me naïve. Though government was bad enough as a destructive, parasitic entity, this wasn’t the whole story. Many of its same characteristics—greed, lack of principle, hunger for power, etc.—could be found in huge corporations, after all. There was something wrong with human nature itself that kept us from building the moral utopia of the Enlightenment philosophers. It stands in the way of any global elite building a utopian New World Order today. Now to be sure, Mises, Hayek, and others offered sound explanations why the centralization of socialism could never be made to work. But even if centralization could somehow work, human corruption would *still* get in the way.

What is wrong with human nature is sin, and this is where Christianity enters the story. Sin affects us all (Rom. 3: 23). It is separation from God—the sort of separation that makes the Christian-theist worldview seem incredible to a certain kind of mind. Jesus Christ forgives sins when one becomes a Christian, but this does not mean the Christian ceases to sin. This

is why Christians are not necessarily better politicians than non-Christians. The temptations of power involve one significant set of human sins, the wielding of state-sponsored force by some over others. But does the introduction of sin mean that libertarianism is as futile as anything else we've tried? If we embrace this sort of view, what becomes of libertarianism?

Libertarianism is rooted in a philosophy of natural rights that inhere in individuals, not groups. By calling them natural, we mean that they antecede legal pronouncements made by those in governments. They are not created by government. They are encoded by government and sometimes protected by government. But what a government gives, it can take back. There's an old saying: any government powerful enough to give you whatever you want is also powerful enough to take away everything you have. This means that if we subscribe to the doctrine that government is somehow a necessary evil, its being a necessary evil means keeping it on a very short leash: hence, the idea of *limited* government.

I fail to see why this must be at odds with Christianity. If anything, it complements a Christian theist's worldview. A Christian libertarian contends that rights originate not with anything essential to human beings, such as their (fallen and fallible) capacity for reason, but from God. This view has considerably more intellectual power. Most libertarians (following Ayn Rand on one of the points where she was entirely correct) stress the need for a metaphysical philosophy incorporating the idea of an objective reality capable of being known by us, at least in part. But why should anyone believe this? Through experience? What is this "experience"? Isn't it very different for different people?

According to a philosophical tradition going back at least as far as St. Thomas Aquinas and kept alive by those in the Thomistic and related traditions today, God created a universe of many entities with objective properties that interacted with one another in specific ways. He also created human beings with minds designed to function in specific ways, to apprehend reality sufficiently well to solve the problems they needed to solve in order to survive and build a prosperous civilization. According to this tradition, our minds are capable of knowing objective reality because both were created "in sync" with one another by God. Our knowledge of reality is not perfect. There is much that is real that we do not experience visually because our eyes aren't attuned to it; some of these realities nevertheless affect us if conditions are right (ultraviolet radiation is an example; we can't see it but we *can* be burned by it).

According to Kuhn, inquiry is a team effort of sorts. Participation in large organizations can *impede* the growth of knowledge, however. Those in them are too busy fitting into the organization and being obedient to its rules, including its taboos. A well prepared, highly motivated and highly self-disciplined outsider is sometimes, even often, actually better off! If individualism best describes the human condition, this is precisely what we should expect. Ayn Rand had this much right: there is no such thing as a collective brain. Organizations, even those organized around scientific inquiry, do not have collective brains, either. (These observations should lend at least some comfort to Austrian-School economists, who despite a number of gains over the past decade remain, by and large, outsiders within academic economics generally, just as philosophical libertarians, with rare exceptions such as Robert Nozick, have been outsiders within academic philosophy.)

The upshot: aspects of the Christian tradition supply not just the objective moral outlook philosophers beginning with Edmund Burke have argued is necessary for a free

society. They also offer to libertarians the idea that in this life we also really do answer to an objective reality, about which we can have at least some firm, decisive knowledge. The prevailing academic alternative today—postmodernism—is disintegrating into an orgy of skepticism, nihilism, and politically correct politics. From the standpoint of social, political, and economic philosophy, a population most of whose members subscribe to moral views obtained through a Christian education will act in the ways F.A. Hayek, in *The Constitution of Liberty*, says they must act for liberty to be possible. As he puts it (pp. 61–2): “a successful free society will always in large measure be a tradition-bound society. . . . We . . . are able to act successfully on our plans [involving others] because most of the time members of our civilization . . . show a regularity in their actions that is not the result of commands or coercion . . . but of firmly established habits and traditions.” History has shown us no better source for these traditions and habits than the Christian faith.

But aren't you advocating a kind of theocracy (perhaps in a way that will allow you to squirm out from underneath it if challenged)?

The answer is No; that is why this is a Christian *libertarianism*. I have argued, in effect, that there are things libertarians can learn from Christians, such as the need for a transcendent morality as necessary for the liberty and the extremely limited government libertarians espouse. There are, however, I am sure, Christians who believe we would all be better off if we simply had a Christian government. I made the point above, however, that Christians are no more fit to rule than anyone else. We're all sinners. On a large scale, this suggests one of the most important theses a Christian libertarian ought to advocate is decentralization, the idea that power should be as widely dispersed throughout society as possible. That way the damage humans with power are capable of doing can be minimized. On a smaller scale, it underlines some important lessons Christians can learn from libertarians if they are to avoid the charge of being closet theocrats.

Christianity abjures the use of force no less than does libertarianism. Begin with the Christian concept of salvation through faith itself. God does not force His saving grace on anyone; the person must come to Him, genuinely desire to be absolved of punishment for sin via Jesus Christ, and ask for salvation, which only then is granted. Here is the verse I mentioned close to the outset: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3: 20). I consider this to be one of the most libertarian verses in the entire Bible. It implies directly that Jesus does not force His will on anyone. He does not command coercion against anyone, least of all that anyone be converted by force. This has important implications for the Christian libertarian attitude toward any of a number of social phenomena of which Christians do not approve (and of which many libertarians either do approve, accept, or are neutral toward).

Consider homosexuality. Homosexuality is condemned outright in both the Old and New Testaments. Hence no Christian can condone it. Christians have the right, in a free society, to make their case against homosexual conduct. What Christians should not do is advocate force to be used against homosexuals. No Christian should advocate violence or imprisonment or any other such action. Citizens will be secure enough in their own beliefs

and confident enough from their own successes in practice that they can allow those who want to be different to go their own way in peace, so long as the latter (1) are not bothering anyone else, (2) not using anyone else's financial resources to fund their deviant practices, whatever they may be, or (3) not making appeals to the government to use the financial resources of the productive to fund whatever it is they are doing.

Christian libertarianism is not a widely promulgated philosophy of society and life, not even on the World Wide Web (although Vox Day, a weekly columnist over on *WorldNetDaily.com*, also characterizes his views in this way). I believe that reconciliation between Christianity and libertarianism has much to offer. Christianity can check any libertine tendencies hiding within libertarianism—tendencies to moral relativism, subjectivism and latter-day Epicureanism. Libertarianism can check any theocratic impulses hiding inside the veneer of the so-called “religious right.”

Thus the story of how I became a Christian libertarian. I became a libertarian out of consciousness of my need for freedom and sense of my own individuality, a need and sense I share with my fellow human beings. I became a Christian out of consciousness of my sin and a need for redemption—again shared with my fellow human beings. The marriage between the two—Christianity and libertarianism—is bound to be an uneasy one at least for a while yet because of longstanding tendencies within each that lead to distrust of the other. Too many libertarians are too close to Enlightenment rationalism and can become “irrational rationalists.” Too many Christians succumb to the temptation to seek state-sponsorship for their goals. A marriage between the two would benefit both. That such a marriage would strengthen the movement to restore our rapidly diminishing liberties in this country is and continues to be my hope. ■

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FERNANDO ZANELLA

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## AN AUSTRIAN ECONOMIST BY ACCIDENT

I WAS BORN IN VOLTA REDONDA, State of Rio de Janeiro, where my father worked as an engineer for one of the most famous Brazilian state companies, i.e., Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN). CSN was founded in 1941 as the first steel producer in Brazil. The U.S. funded it after the then Brazilian president, the dictator Vargas, threatened to join the

axis powers instead of allowing American military bases in Brazil. CSN was, and still is, considered a watershed in the Brazilian industrialization process, an industrialization with central command. Government, in the words of Vargas, had the duty of organizing the “market anarchy.” My father died when I was three years old and my family moved to Porto Alegre.

I always had a passion for economics; I am not sure why. I used to buy books about economics even before going to the university. When I was thirteen years old I used to do my mother’s income taxes, my first concrete experience with the “mafia’s” work. Brazil was not yet a democratic country in 1982, the year that I entered a public university to study economics. After years of hampered economy, Brazil had a widespread system of inefficient state-owned companies, all kinds of regulations, and uncontrolled debts at all levels of government. CSN was finally privatized in 1993. Its net income jumped from US\$ 22 million to US\$ 154 million in 1994.

My undergraduate studies were pretty much focused on Keynes, Marx, and neoclassical economics. It was then fashionable to study Marx. During my studies, Brazil went through an external debt repudiation, several price controls, and a relentless inflation process. Everything was quite amazing for an economics student. However, I could not make much sense from what I learned in the academy besides ending up deeply disappointed with the Marxist rhetoric and the Keynesian models (and their variants).

I pursued a master’s degree in economics. After the first year, and the traditional micro, macro, math, and econometrics classes I was again a little disappointed. I was mastering how to deal with math models and textbooks tricks without creating connections with the outside world, actually, the real world. Then I came across, by accident, books on Austrian economics.

Walking through the university library I saw a shelf with books which were being given away, for free. I was struck by two new books, recently translated to Portuguese, on that shelf. They were *Unemployment and Monetary Policy* by F.A. Hayek and *The Essential von Mises* by Murray Rothbard. I asked the librarian why they were giving away those books. She told me that they needed more space on the shelves and those books were duplicates and no one, ever, took them out to. My first surprise was that Hayek was a Nobel Prize winner in economics whom I had never heard of before. Those two books were just fascinating. For the first time, economics made sense to me. The theoretical approach was coherent, solid, and quite applied to the Brazilian reality. Later, I met the head of the graduate program and asked if he knew about Hayek and Austrian economics. He said that he did not know much but he believed that Hayek was “a kind of monetarist.” I talked with another professor, a neoclassical economist who held a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt. He said that he did not know about Austrian economics, but actually had brought from the U.S. a book that he never read and he believed would be of interest to me. He lent me *The Foundations of Modern Austrian Economics*, edited by Edwin Dolan which consists, mainly, of articles by Kirzner, Lachmann, and Rothbard. After that I read *The Capitalist Alternative* by Alexander Shand and all the Austrian books available in Portuguese. They were *Human Action* and *Liberalism* by Ludwig von Mises, *Competition and Entrepreneurship* by Israel Kirzner, *Denationalization of Money* by Hayek, and *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry

Hazlitt. Economics was no longer a disappointing science. Actually, it was now fascinating. Perhaps it was even more than that. I was searching and reading Austrian books in an almost frenetic way. Austrian economics became the subject of my master's thesis.

In 1991, I spent a few months in Buenos Aires studying Austrian economics at ESEADE, a graduate school. ESEADE has the best Austrian program in South America. There I had access to a wide range of Austrian books and others in classical economics, political science, methodology, law, and history with several outstanding professors. There I met the best Austrian economist in Latin America and one of the best professors I ever had, Juan Cachanosky, who got his Ph.D. under Hans Sennholz. There I also was introduced to public choice and neoinstitutional economics.

Back in Porto Alegre, I had the opportunity of attending seminars and exchanging ideas with Israel Kirzner, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, and Walter Block. It was time to pursue a Ph.D. I was accepted at both Auburn University and George Mason University. Several factors made me choose Auburn. One of them was the proximity of the Mises Institute. The most important, perhaps, was a nice exchange of emails with Professor Robert Ekelund about my research proposal, to investigate how Brazil fell behind the U.S. in terms of economic performance. Ekelund was my adviser and his teaching made an extraordinary contribution to my economic way of thinking.

Curiously, during my first two years in Auburn I never visited the Mises Institute. I had decided to focus on my formal studies. By the middle of the program I was taking an excellent externalities class. Andy Barnett, my professor, realized that I knew about Austrian economics. He encouraged me to be in touch with the Mises Institute. I started to attend some seminars and soon got a scholarship from the Institute. It was very helpful at that moment because my studies were funded in reals—the Brazilian currency—and Brazil had 50 percent currency devaluation. There again I came in contact with Rothbard's ideas, which I had put aside for several years. I read *Man, Economy, and State*. If I had to choose one of his books I would pick *Power and Market* as the most striking.

I am teaching at one of the biggest private universities in Brazil. My university, as are all others, supposed to follow Education Ministry guidelines. That narrows a little what is possible to teach and what to research. For instance, by the end of the economics course, all students must go through a national system of evaluation. The national exam is basically mainstream economics. The economics department got an A in this exam. Despite that, recently I was elected, by direct vote of students, as the best professor of the department. I cannot deny that the clear way of thinking of Austrian economics explains a good deal of this recognition. It seems that the students realize the advantages and the pleasure of studying the real world with coherent deductions instead of fooling around with math models. It is something that the status quo of the academic profession seems to have lost. I cannot stop thinking what I would be doing today if I were not at the right place and at the right time to see, accidentally, those free Austrian books. ■

## MEMORIES OF MURRAY

I CALL THIS “MEMORIES OF MURRAY,” because my interactions with Murray Rothbard have been the most stimulating of my 40+ years of involvement in the libertarian movement.

But first, Walter Block has asked me to write about myself. I’m 61 and grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Queens. My parents were civil servants, and they (and my older brother) were standard-issue Jewish liberal Democrats. For those of you who inhabited New York in the Fifties and the Sixties, the political mood in our household can best be summarized by my telling you that they read *The New York Post* every day. (I hasten to add that the Murdoch-owned *New York Post* of today is 180 degrees different from the Dorothy Schiff-owned *Post* in my youth!) And they voted for Adlai Stevenson.

Since I was seven, I wanted to be a journalist. When I turned 17, I began work as a copy-boy (that was before liberals morphed the term into “copy-person,” of course) at a Newhouse daily, *The Long Island Press*. At 19, in 1964, I graduated to my dream job there: I became a reporter. After covering local news in Queens and Nassau counties, I was named New York City Hall reporter and deputy bureau chief for *The Press*.

In time, I also contributed free-lance articles to several publications, including *The New York Times*; as a lifelong devotee of *The Times*—not its politics, but its journalistic standards—this was a high point of my life. But free-lancing rarely pays the bills. And when I lost my life savings (\$750) in a poker game in 1973, I had to get a job. (I will mention college below, during my Rothbard reminiscences.)

Let me interrupt to mention two jobs in my life that were decidedly NOT libertarian. (1) In 1966 I was drafted into the United States Army; I served mostly in the Canal Zone as a photographer. (2) Beginning in 1970, I worked in the public affairs office of New York City’s Housing and Development Administration, eventually becoming its director of public affairs. (This was under Mayor John V. Lindsay; talk about “NOT libertarian!”)

Soon thereafter, I took a job as vice president of the politically connected public relations firm Howard J. Rubenstein Associates. After 11 months I quit Rubenstein (in August 1974) and formed my own public relations firm. I have been very active in my industry, including holding many leadership positions in our professional society. My heart remains in journalism, but I am better at public relations than I was as a newspaper-man.

Perhaps as penance for the two un-libertarian things I mentioned above, I named my public relations firm after Mises; the firm is called “LVM Group,” and our clients—3M, Channel 13, the Empire State Building, and others—have no idea what the name stands for.

Which brings me closer to a subject most of you will want to know about: Murray Newton Rothbard.

If you were to ask me, 11 years after Murray died (and many more years since I last spoke with him), what was the first thing that comes to mind when I think about Murray Rothbard now—I'm skipping for the moment the extraordinary brainpower, the powerful books and essays, and the infectious personality—then it would be his cackle. It was not the timbre of the cackle, nor its loudness, nor its length; indeed, it was not a particularly unusual cackle at all. What made Murray's cackle noteworthy to me was its *frequency*. Predicting precisely when Murray would cackle was not necessarily easy; what was easy, though, was predicting that it would surely emerge from him very often.

When I think about Murray's cackle, I am reminded of the title of a long essay he wrote about one of our mutual heroes, the journalist H.L. Mencken. The headline for Murray's piece referred to Mencken as a "joyous libertarian." Anyone who spent time with Murray and had frequent exposure to his cackle realized pretty quickly that the mantle "joyous libertarian" had switched easily from Mencken to Murray. (When I attended the Mises seminar in the early Sixties, by contrast, I found Mises anything but joyous; indeed, he appeared extremely dour. Of course, this may have something to do with the fact that I was still a teenager, while Mises was then over 80; such an age difference can be quite intimidating!)

But back to Murray. How did I first meet him? I became interested in the conservative movement after, as a high school student, I heard a speech by an unknown Senator named Barry Goldwater (I can even now hear Murray shouting "fascist!" at the mere mention of Goldwater's name) at Hunter College in May of 1960; he was introduced by William F. Buckley, Jr., by the way. So notable was the occasion that I even think I remember the date: May 14, 1960. I was piqued enough by Goldwater's passionate speech to buy *Conscience of a Conservative*.

This was also about the time that I was thinking about college. Just about when I first encountered Goldwater, and I was trying to figure out what to major in, an uncle of mine suggested economics; as a journalist, my instinct was to major in English, but my uncle told me that economics might be more practical for me.

That decision, and my growing interest in the conservative movement, gradually led me to the names of Mises, Hazlitt and Hayek. And I did indeed get my bachelor's degree in economics at Queens College, which seemed a hotbed of Keynesians to me, and I got half of an M.A. in economics at New York University.

I may have been a sophomore at Queens College when my childhood friend Larry Moss and I started to attend the Mises seminar at New York University. (Larry has gone on to a distinguished career as an author, economist—with a decidedly Austrian bent—and professor at Babson College.) At some point around that time, someone mentioned the name Murray Rothbard to me. I don't think I had ever heard of him. I remember well that he was described to me as—I am not joking!—"an anarchist dwarf." And so, of course, I thought that this guy Rothbard must be some kind of wacko, and I hardly gave him another thought. (When I met Murray and saw that he was certainly not unusually short, I discounted the noun—but not the word preceding it.)

As I delved more and more into Austrian economics, I began to wonder about this fellow Rothbard. At some point someone (I cannot recall who) suggested a meeting with him. And so Larry and I trudged to 215 West 88<sup>th</sup> Street (sometimes one's memory can still be good; even now, decades after I last called him, I easily recall the phone number at his apartment: SC-4-1606) for what turned out to be the first of many memorable evenings.

Often those evenings stretched to 3 a.m.; in those days (the early Sixties), New Yorkers did not worry about taking the "A" train back to Queens at such forbidden hours. Larry and I met many memorable people at Murray's and (his wife) Joey's apartment, including Edith Efron and Leonard Liggio.

But, of course, it was the "anarchist dwarf" himself who was the engine, the soul and the heart of those evenings. He seemed to love being a host and observing the give-and-take of his guests. Nor was he ever shy; if he ever lacked an opinion about anything, I certainly can't recall such a moment!

One of the most (of many) notable things about Murray was his occasional reaction when you asked him a question or raised a topic for discussion. His attitude always seemed open and, charmingly, quizzical—I say "charmingly" because Murray was of course quite fixed in his opinions, and yet he didn't always seem so. (This was quite unlike Mises, from whom Larry and I learned the word "apodictic"; Mises not only loved [and used] that word, but he *lived* that word himself. But not Murray.)

Let me invent an example, because I can only recall the general phenomenon, rather than a particular instance: I say to Murray something with which the great majority in our circle would accept, such as "Well, of course, Adam Smith has to be one of libertarianism's greatest 18<sup>th</sup> Century heroes." Murray cocks his head, looks puzzled (NOT angry, not upset, not a hint that he might even slightly disagree) and says, good-naturedly, "Really? Why do you say that?"

It was exactly as if he were questioning something that I had said that was utterly uncontroversial and indeed banal and of virtually no significance—such as, "Well, of course, Washington is the capital of the United States," "My eyes are brown," or "Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman starred in *Casablanca*."

In other words, one could say things in the presence of Murray with which (it later became obvious to me) he *furiously*—and apodictically!—disagreed, and yet often his reaction would be the kind of mild response your grandmother might give you if you asked her what kind of flowers she liked.

In contrast, Murray could excoriate like few others. One of his favorite nouns was surely "fascist"—and he used it very liberally indeed.

Typically, the evenings at Murray's and Joey's apartment were long; I don't recall his ever asking me and Larry to leave, and the conversations were lively. The talk was almost always fascinating, with much back-and-forth debating and a great deal of humor and, of course, many cackles.

Joey, Murray's wife, was a charming hostess. My chief recollection of the apartment itself was the seemingly never-ending array of bookcases—row upon row upon row of bookcases that seemed fully 100 feet high and topped off mere inches from the ceiling.

In addition to those enjoyable evenings with Murray and Joey, I have of course spent countless hours immersed in his books and articles. The first book of his that I read was probably *Man, Economy and State*; I have read it 2 ½ times altogether.

While often provocative, Murray's opinions were indeed apodictic. This is most obvious, of course, in his theoretical tomes. In some cases, such as *The Ethics of Liberty*, I find him frequently unpersuasive. Even in such cases, however, he rarely fails to provoke intellectually; consider, for example, his distinction between copyright and patent (with which Mises disagreed) and his thoughts on what he called "Kid Lib." And of course he could be delightfully un-politically correct, such as when speaking of certain feminists.

Clearly, a lot of research went into his not-so-theoretical works, such as *America's Great Depression* and his delightful two-volume history of economic thought. Someone wrote somewhere that Murray seemed to have read EVERYTHING ever published about EVERYTHING; as one picks through his extensive footnotes, one can believe it.

Both in person and in his writings, Murray was one of the most exciting and inspiring people I ever met in my life. I'm glad I had the chance to know him.

---

David Grant runs his own public relations firm, the LVM Group.

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**A**utobiographies are important. Our movement consists of more than merely the ideas of Austrianism and libertarianism, no matter how important those undoubtedly are. It is comprised of people, real flesh and blood creatures who extend beyond, far beyond, the thoughts they hold at any given time. The proportion of words written by us, about our ideals and about ourselves, is, overwhelmingly in favor of the former. The present compilation of autobiographies will, in some small way, tend to right this imbalance.

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