



Libertarian Autobiographies

Moving Toward Freedom
in Today's World

Edited by
Jo Ann Cavallo · Walter E. Block

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
	Jo Ann Cavallo and Walter E. Block	
2	With Liberty and Health Everything Is Possible in This World	7
	Gloria Alvarez	
3	A Voyage of Discovery	13
	Philipp Bagus	
4	A Beltway Odyssey	19
	Doug Bandow	
5	Out of India: From Wretchedness to Capitalism	25
	Jayant Bhandari	
6	Forty Years Sniping at Leviathan	31
	James Bovard	
7	One Person Changes the World	35
	Connor Boyack	
8	From Meager Means to Market Anarchism: The Political Evolution of an Ordinary Swede	41
	Per L. Bylund	

9	My Transformation into a Teacher of Liberty Gerard Casey	47
10	“To Study and at Times to Practice What One Has Learned, is that not a Pleasure?” Jo Ann Cavallo	53
11	My Path to Becoming an Economist and Peacemonger Christopher J. Coyne	59
12	A Young American for Liberty Lauren Daugherty	65
13	Family, Freedom, and Flourishing: An Educator’s Journey Marianna Davidovich	69
14	Moments That Led Me to Libertarianism in South Africa Dumo Denga	75
15	The Libertarian Mission of a Catholic Priest Beniamino Di Martino	81
16	Thinking About and Working Toward a Less Cruel World Brian Doherty	89
17	From Growing Up Under Socialism to Becoming Libertarian Lukasz Dominiak	93
18	My Life as an Austrian Economist and Classical Liberal: The Starting Point and Early Years Richard M. Ebeling	97
19	Maverick Scientist, Libertarian Capitalist Robert B. Eckhardt	107
20	Mommy Was a Commie: My Personal Voyage from Intellectual Depravity to Libertarianism Gene Epstein	113
21	My Journey to Liberty Rafi Farber	121

22	A Vocational Road Toward Liberty	125
	Bernardo Ferrero	
23	From Philosophy to Economics	131
	David Friedman	
24	Libertarianism as a Path to Life	139
	Alan G. Futerman	
25	Born Wanting to Be Free	145
	Sean Gabb	
26	Live Free and Thrive!	151
	Carla Gericke	
27	Luckiest Guy on Wall Street	157
	James Grant	
28	<i>Human Action</i> and My Austrian Economics Journey	163
	Haijiu Zhu	
29	A Life Among the “Econ”	167
	Steve H. Hanke	
30	The Making of an Anarchist: Rothbard’s <i>For a New Liberty</i> at Fifty (1973–2023)	179
	Hans-Hermann Hoppe	
31	The Growth of a Christian Libertarian	183
	Norman Horn	
32	My Life as a Libertarian	187
	Jacob G. Hornberger	
33	Intuitive Libertarianism	193
	Michael Huemer	
34	Austro-Libertarianism’s Existential Lessons	199
	Allen Jeon	
35	Learning from Libertarian Disappointments	205
	Marc Joffe	
36	Building a Community of Leaders for Liberty in Africa	211
	Kavuka L. Kiguhi	

37	My Story as an African Libertarian Rowland Kingsley	217
38	My Life as an Austrian Economist and Entrepreneurship Scholar Peter G. Klein	221
39	If You Are a Tyrolean... Barbara Kolm	227
40	My Life Without Liberty Mitchell Langbert	233
41	It Began with Richard Nixon Peter T. Leeson	239
42	Discovering a World of Hope for Liberty Brad Lips	245
43	Some Notes in View of an Intellectual Autobiography Carlo Lottieri	251
44	From Moscow Toward Liberty Yuri Maltsev	257
45	No Greater Love Than Choice Lipton Matthews	261
46	A Libertarian Literary Lawyer Allen Mendenhall	265
47	A Woman of the Libertarian Right Ilana Mercer	271
48	Confessions of a Proto-Austrian Libertarian John Mosier	277
49	My Intellectual Journey in Search of a Social Order Beyond the State and Politics Antony P. Mueller	283
50	A Presumption in Favor of Liberty Michael C. Munger	289
51	How I Became an Austro-Libertarian Robert P. Murphy	295

52	A Sower of Freedom in Latin America	301
	Hector Naupari	
53	Opening Minds and Sharing the Passion for Liberty	307
	Radu Nechita	
54	From African Socialism to Libertarianism	315
	Wanjiru Njoya	
55	Anarchy, Minimal State, and Job Utopia	319
	Johan Norberg	
56	Russia, My Journey, and the Hayek Foundation	325
	Yuri Petukhov	
57	An Unconventional Odyssey	331
	Roger Pilon	
58	Dazzled by Murray N. Rothbard	337
	Guglielmo Piombini	
59	Building a Libertarian Think Tank	341
	Robert W. Poole	
60	From Leftism to Liberty, a Personal Journey	351
	Michael Rectenwald	
61	The Culinary Libertarian: Combining My Passion for Food and Liberty	357
	Dann Reid	
62	And I Will Finally Know What Freedom Is	363
	David Chávez Salazar	
63	A Scottish Lefty Becomes a Libertarian	371
	Antony Sammeroff	
64	A Survivor's Story	377
	Li Schoolland	
65	Making Life Less Lonely for Canadian Libertarians	383
	Karen Selick	
66	Challenging India's Socialist Mindset	389
	Parth J. Shah	

67	Living the American Dream	395
	Ilya Shapiro	
68	The Fall of Communism as Only the First Step Towards a Free Society	401
	Josef Šima	
69	From Social Democrat to Libertarian	407
	Jo Ann Skousen	
70	My Declaration of Independence	413
	Mark Skousen	
71	Thinking Like an Austrian	421
	Barry Smith	
72	Beyond Philosophy: Libertarianism as a Way of Life	427
	Jacek Spindel	
73	From the Soviets to Classical Liberalism	433
	Krassen Stanchev	
74	Physics and Libertarian Philosophy	441
	Frank J. Tipler	
75	Law, Voluntarism, and Being Libertarian in Uninviting Africa	447
	Martin van Staden	
76	Christian Libertarianism	455
	Laurence M. Vance	
77	The Life of an Unlikely Libertarian	461
	Richard Vedder	
78	My Non-Ideological Path to Becoming a Libertarian Thinker	467
	Richard E. Wagner	
79	Why I Am a Big Government Skeptic and Small Government Advocate	473
	Michael A. Walker	

80	Building the Future Together	479
	Nena Bartlett Whitfield	
81	Opening the Taxpayer's Eyes	485
	Hiroshi Yoshida	
	Index	491

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Introduction

Jo Ann Cavallo and Walter E. Block

It is our fervent belief that libertarianism is the last best hope for humankind with regard to economics, liberty, justice, prosperity, and even survival (pardon us for hyper-ventilating, but we maintain this is indeed the case). This belief of ours is predicated upon the crucial importance of the non-aggression principle (NAP): proper law should allow all people to engage in whichever acts they prefer, with the one exception being any behavior that violates this precept or any threat thereof. Thus, murder, rape, theft, kidnapping, fraud, and similar harmful actions should be prohibited, and virtually everything else should be legally permitted.

But why assemble a collection of autobiographies penned by libertarians? Why not, instead, offer a collection of scholarly articles demonstrating the benefits of liberty? Many of the contributors to this volume have published just that sort of work on numerous occasions. Why not do so one more time? Although people may gain an understanding of

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this philosophy via rational argument, it cannot be denied that autobiographies, too, are important for the promotion of liberty. The personal touch may reach some people not approachable via any other means. Additionally, we all want to know the libertarian stories of people such as those who appear on these pages. Indeed, we find that libertarians have the most interesting stories to share because they often embrace this philosophy as the result of intense encounters with foundational texts or life-changing experiences.

One of the big “problems” we have with some of the best-known libertarians throughout history—such as John Locke, Lord Acton, Ludwig von Mises, Isabel Paterson, Henry Hazlitt, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray Rothbard—is that they never wrote an autobiography.¹ Of course, if they had, alternative costs being what they are, they would likely not have been able to write other precious publications of theirs. But what about libertarians alive today? Would they be willing to share their stories? We already have the example of two volumes of libertarian autobiographies: *Why Liberty: Personal Journeys Toward Peace & Freedom* (Cobden Press), with 54 autobiographies edited by Marc Guttman, and *I Chose Liberty: Autobiographies of Contemporary Libertarians* (Mises Institute), with 82 autobiographies edited by one of the co-editors of this volume, Walter Block (available as a free pdf at <https://mises.org/library/i-chose-liberty-autobiographies-contemporary-libertarians>). Both volumes were published over a decade ago, however, in 2010. We wanted to learn more about the lives of contemporary libertarians not covered in these two volumes and of others who have emerged since the time of these publications.²

We therefore reached out to a number of influential scholars, activists, professors, journalists, and cultural icons who have worked toward a

¹ Luckily, some book-length autobiographies have been penned, such as those by Laura Ingalls Wilder (*Pioneer Girl*), Milton and Rose D. Friedman (*Two Lucky People: Memoirs*), Thomas Sowell (*A Personal Odyssey*), Walter E. Williams (*Up from the Projects: An Autobiography*), and Tibor R. Machan (*The Man Without a Hobby: Adventures of a Gregarious Egoist*). Then, too, there are relevant biographies, such as Justin Raimondo’s *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard* (2000) and Guido Hulsmann’s *Mises: Last Knight of Liberalism* (2007).

² We have employed a strict rule regarding inclusion of authors: no one who appeared in either of these previous two volumes will be found in this volume. We wanted to include as many libertarians as possible, and repetitions would have reduced coverage. This is why Jo Ann Cavallo’s story appears here, but not Walter Block’s.

freer society across the globe, inviting them to write a brief autobiography for this collection. We asked them to articulate, for example, what their lives and thoughts were before they embraced libertarianism; which people, texts, or events most influenced their intellectual formation; what experiences, challenges, tribulations, and achievements they have had as participants or leaders in this movement; and how this philosophy has affected their personal or professional lives.

A volume of autobiographies on the part of libertarians immediately raises the question of precisely what constitutes this political economic philosophy. In our “big-tent” view, it comprises several strands. They all have something in common, such as an appreciation for individual liberty, private property rights, the rule of law, and free enterprise, but there are also discernible differences. That is why if you get ten libertarians in a room and ask them a question, you’ll likely get eleven (or more!) different responses. In this volume, we invited libertarians across the following political-philosophical spectrum:

1. Anarcho-capitalism. This position is predicated upon the non-aggression principle and private property rights based on homesteading virgin territory and all voluntary commercial activities thereafter. No government is needed at all, and all “public services” would be provided by private entrepreneurs. The name most associated with this position is Murray N. Rothbard.
2. Minimal government libertarianism, or minarchism. Here, the government has only one justification and three legitimate branches so as to be able to fulfill its proper role. The justification? To protect the lives and property of its domestic citizens and other legal residents. The three branches? Armies to ensure that foreigners do not attack us (but not to export “democracy” anywhere else), police to deal with local criminals (but not to stop victimless crimes), and courts to oversee justice. Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick are perhaps the most famous people associated with this perspective.
3. Constitutionalism. Adherents of this position believe that the legitimacy of any government is predicated on its representatives observing the limitations of power as stated in its foundational documents. In the case of the United States, for example, this would grant to the government not only armies, police, and courts, as in minarchism, but also additional powers specified in the U.S. Constitution, such as the establishment of post roads and post offices.

- This would necessarily entail, moreover, a strict adherence to the letter of the constitution as advocated, for example, by former Congressman Ron Paul, rather than a loose interpretation in the manner of many present or even past Justices of the Supreme Court.
4. Classical liberalism. All of the other government functions mentioned above are accepted, and a few others are included as well: correction of “market failures” (e.g., antitrust legislation to prevent monopolies), positive externalities (e.g., public education), negative externalities (e.g., pollution controls), and some public services (e.g., welfare payments to the poor). This perspective is most heavily identified with the contributions of Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek.
 5. Thick libertarianism. Supporters of this view can occupy any of the four positions mentioned above, but they add additional concerns to the mix, such as anti-racism and LGBTQIA+ issues. A useful explanation of this position from a left-wing perspective can be found in Matt Zwolinski’s article “Bleeding Heart Libertarians: Free Markets and Social Justice” (June 1, 2020) at <https://bleedingheartlibertarians.com>.

The contributors to this volume range over the five main viewpoints mentioned above, and also fill in the gaps between them. Their essays express different perspectives on many issues even while articulating the same core principles. In fact, it is our desire that their very differences of opinion on some matters will invite readers to think for themselves. What we have sought to present is a sampling of the myriad individual journeys toward libertarianism, however defined.

It is the hope and expectation of the editors that by bringing together a range of contemporary voices from outside the dominant left–right paradigm, this volume will contribute to the viewpoint diversity that is crucially needed in today’s public discourse. Moreover, these personal and intellectual journeys not only offer compelling insights into their individual authors and the state of the world in our lifetime, but may also serve as an inspiration for the next generation who will feel called upon to make our society a freer one.

Although the majority of contributors to the volume live in the United States, we are grateful to the libertarians from around the world who accepted our invitation to share their stories. This volume thus includes voices from Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile,

China, Colombia, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Ukraine.

Sadly, four prominent libertarians who had agreed to contribute to *Libertarian Autobiographies* have since passed away. We grieve for them and feel the absence of their stories in this volume. In order to nonetheless acknowledge their life and work, we offer below a one-sentence biography similar to those that conclude the essays of the other contributors.

Becky Akers (1959–2022) was a freelance writer and historian whose publications include two novels about the American Revolution, *Halestorm* and *Abducting Arnold*.

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Paul A. Cantor (1945–2022), Clifton Waller Barrett Professor of English at the University of Virginia, was a literary and media critic whose pioneering research ranged from major English authors the likes of Shakespeare and Shelley to popular American television series such as *Gilligan's Island* and *South Park*.

David J. Theroux (1949–2022), was the founder, president, and chief executive officer of the Independent Institute and publisher of *The Independent Review*.

Before the volume reached print, sadly another champion of liberty left us, Yuri Maltsev. We miss him dearly and are honored to include his essay in the volume.

The eighty autobiographies in this collection represent only a small number of the countless libertarian journeys to be told. We therefore plan to co-edit a follow-up volume without letting another decade go by. Please reach out to us if you are interested in either sharing your story or reading the autobiography of someone not included in this collection or in the two 2010 volumes mentioned above.

We are grateful to everyone who shared a part of their lives in *Libertarian Autobiographies*. We would also like to thank Anthony J. Cesario, graduate of Loyola University New Orleans and Walter Block's research assistant, for his help in putting this volume together. Our lives were enriched in the editorial process, and we are delighted to bring this book to the general public in the hope that it may contribute to the understanding and spread of liberty.



With Liberty and Health Everything Is Possible in This World

Gloria Alvarez

“I know what I’m gonna do with my life. I’m gonna open a drug store,” I told my Austrian Economics professor when I was a sophomore at Francisco Marroquín University (UFM), the world-renowned libertarian university in Guatemala. I had chosen to pursue my BA degree there not because I had any idea of Mises, Hayek, or Rand, but rather because it was the only university in my country that offered a program in International Relations and Political Science at that time.

Little did I know that this decision would radically change my life. Sure, my Cuban grandparents had taught me everything there is to know about the terrors of communism which they had escaped while losing half of the family inside the regime. And although my Hungarian grandfather had died when I was only six years old, I knew of his struggles escaping the Soviets after the failed revolution in 1956. Although I therefore knew communism doesn’t work, I entered UFM believing, as most of us do, that it is the sacred duty of the government to “do the right thing”

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regarding education, health, and injustices to poor people constantly in a country as dysfunctional as Guatemala.

That is why after two years of courses on Hayek, Mises, Public Choice, classical liberalism, and world history and politics, I told my professor my solution was opening a drug store. To which he replied: “And for what?” And I said: “So that every time someone comes with a problem, an ache, an illness, a challenge, I’ll provide them with a little paper that will say: “Do not worry, the free market solves everything.” This sarcastic anecdote is one of many known by my professors while I was a student at UFM. I questioned everything. And it was really hard for me to understand how, through the magic powers of the free market—if only the free market would be allowed to function—the 50 thousand dollar necklace that Paris Hilton purchased in Los Angeles would increase the quality of life of a 6-year-old child dying of diarrhea in rural Guatemala due to malnourishment.

The “one size fits all” solution of freedom was not clear to me. That’s why I studied hard. And it was during my studies that Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty* offered a philosophical approach that made sense beyond economics: being free means that nobody has a say in your decisions but you. This idea emancipated me, for instance, from the opinions of some judgmental friends about how I should live my life, from personal situations that I was going through with my parent’s divorce, and from Catholicism after studying its political history of accumulating power and aiding abusive governments. This single idea of freedom as emancipation from others was so tremendously powerful that it provided me with a sense of liberty that I had never experienced before. And through that philosophical emancipation, finally, I understood the importance of individual liberty and why economic freedom is such a large part of it.

Nonetheless, at the age of 22, with a part-time job as a music radio DJ and in contact with other realities in Guatemala, I graduated from UFM thinking these ideas are “cool” but absolutely out of touch for Guatemala’s cruel reality. We were decades away from global progress in many areas, I thought. We were simply “not ready for freedom.” While indigenous people own a cell phones and have access to internet, they don’t have healthcare or education.

With that mentality, I went to study politics and economics at Georgetown University with a scholarship from The Fund for American Studies (TFAS). I also had an internship at the Cato Institute for the Center of Global Liberty and Prosperity with Ian Vasquez and Tom Palmer, who

were great teachers. At Cato I learned how to put these ideas into practice. The way they would give a solid libertarian analysis of every single public policy pursued in the United States, be it from the Democrats or the Republicans, was a game changer for me. That was where I learned that these ideas are practical.

Still, I was an idealist. I wanted to pursue a Masters degree in International Development. Although I was accepted at NYU, American University, and Brandeis University, my father and I didn't have 50 thousand dollars to spare on those places. So I ended up at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Belgium undertaking a Masters for 1,500 euros on "Anthropology, Cultures and Development" My goal? To teach those bastards at the UN, the World Bank, and IMF that aid is not what the Third World needs. Rather, it is trade. But it was during this time that I learned that no one in the aid industry is interested in ending Third World poverty because they live as millionaires thanks to it. That was in 2009, still years before the documentary *Poverty, Inc.* (2014) which greatly influenced me. But there were already important works available, such as William Easterly's *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*, Dambisa Moyo's *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*, and Hernando De Soto's *The Other Path: The Economic Answer to Terrorism*. From these books I learned a great deal about a cruel reality: after trillions of dollars spent on aid, there's more poverty precisely where that aid was sent.

I never graduated with a Masters degree because, as I was told, my thesis proposing a new approach for the World Bank and IMF in Latin America was written as if none of the courses I had taken made an impact on me. They were right about that. All their socialist teachings about the good savage had no impact whatsoever because I could see the hypocrisy clearly therein.

I went on to take an applied anthropology course at the Sapienza University of Rome with Senegalese immigrants working and living in the city. During this experience, I learned the final lesson that I needed in order to convince myself that liberty is the key to human development. It was a 19-year-old Senegalese immigrant who said to me: "You know what I can't understand of Europeans? Their hypocrisy. When it comes to U2 concerts about 'saving Africa' or giving money to Oxfam, Unicef to 'save' us, they are all in. Yet that money goes straight to the dictators in Africa who perpetuate the conflicts that make working and living

impossible over there. But when people like me come to this country to sell Chinese bags outside the opera, they persecute us. They insult us and they don't grant us work permits. Instead, they deport us even though our money goes straight to our families through Western Union and not to a dictator. No corruption." His words were those of millions of immigrants in this world. Plus, it was in Rome where I finally read Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. Her brilliant philosophical approach took liberty beyond a matter of economics and politics for me. Inspired by Rand, I understood that it was a matter of how you live your entire life. There was no way back. The only way forward for me was defending liberty.

Frustrated and sad and undergoing a true existential crisis, I returned to Guatemala after two years of living and studying in Washington, D.C., Belgium, and Italy. I remember thinking: "I don't want to be part of this mafia. I don't want to contribute to perpetuating poverty in this world for my own sake or that of some aid agency, NGO or political party." I didn't want to work on anything related to what I had studied. Thus, I went back to being a music radio DJ. This time, however, my boss, after looking at my CV, told me, "I want to see who is Gloria ON AIR. You've studied so much, there must be something you gotta say." Although I warned him that my message would make the right-wing angry because I was not a conservative and the left-wing angry because I was not a socialist, he nevertheless told me "go ahead." That is how my radio show "Morning Glory" was born in 2010. The show, which provided libertarian ideas to the people of Guatemala along with the greatest music hits, was an instant success in the ratings. Giancarlo Ibarguen, the Dean at UFM, would call me in his final years to tell me how proud Manuel Ayau, the brilliant founder of UFM, would have been. The reason UFM had been created was precisely to inspire young people like me.

That radio job opened up other opportunities for me: I worked in a cell phone company as PR Manager which made me understand the power of this mode of communication for self-education, I worked for a bank as a community manager of social media where I further learned the strategies of massive and effective communication, and I became an activist for sound public policy in Guatemala by constantly making protests and proposals to congress. In 2014, a speech I made at an Iberoamerican Congress in Zaragoza, Spain, went viral on YouTube and garnered more than 1 million views in three days throughout Iberoamerica. Since then, I have gone from being the crazy libertarian on the air in Guatemala to being a crazy libertarian in the Spanish and English speaking worlds.

I moved to Mexico City in 2018, and I've written three books over the past decade. The English translation of the Spanish titles would be *How To Talk To a Socialist: Why Social Democracy Enhances Poverty instead of Eliminating It* (2013), *The Populist Deceit: How Our Countries Get Ruined and How to Rescue Them* (2016), and *How To Talk To a Conservative: Why the Libertarian Ideas Are Way More Effective and Solid than Conservative Ideas for a Youth Seduced by Socialism* (2019). I've given more than three thousand presentations at conferences and conducted classes all over Latin America, Europe, the United States, Hong Kong, and Australia in the last few years. I've worked alongside great libertarians and Objectivists such as John Stossel, Deirdre McCloskey, Yaron Brook, Harry Binswanger, Ron Manners, Juan Pina, Antonella Marty and Roxana Nicula with Atlas Network, and Javier Perez with FEE. The places I've spoken range from Socialist Venezuela, to the European Parliament in Brussels, to Burning Man. I'm currently running for president of Guatemala. My campaign is predicated on the basis of fifteen separate libertarian proposals.

Although I never opened that drug store, if there were a message I would give on that little slip of paper, it would be the same one I've tried my hardest to deliver across the expanse of the globe. As my mother has recently put it with simplicity and brilliance: "With liberty and health, everything is possible in this world."



A Voyage of Discovery

Philipp Bagus

To be honest, my journey to become a libertarian was straightforward. It happened on October 1, 1980, in Wiesbaden, Germany, the day when I first saw the light of the day. I was born a libertarian.

Here, the autobiography could end. It would be quite short. For the essay not to end here, let me explain how I discovered my libertarian nature. While I had this libertarian nature since I was born, I was not always fully aware of it and its consequences. I had to discover this nature over the years. While I believe most people are born libertarian, unfortunately many people never discover their libertarian essence or are influenced by their social environment to deny their very nature.

Let me start with my political awakening. While I had been very much interested in history from a young age, I first became interest in politics and questions of political economy when I was probably 15 or 16 years old. In the second half of the 1990s Germany was the old man of Europe with high unemployment, staggering growth, and a widespread deception after a not so economically successful unification of the former communist GDR and the more market-oriented West Germany.

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I asked myself, why is it that some countries are richer than others? I had observed differences. During my first visit to the U.S., in a three-week exchange program with a school in Perryville, Missouri, I was impressed by the wealth in the country and astonished by the sheer size and the possibility of choices in Walmart. It seemed to me that the U.S. was richer than West Germany. At the same time, I had seen that the GDR and Poland had been much poorer than West Germany. So how come these differences? That was an intriguing question. What was the way to make all people better off? Another question pertinent in Germany at the time was the following: Why was there this unemployment problem? There were some discussions on television. I remember that I liked a politician named Guido Westerwelle. He made sense to me when he argued in favor of free markets and liberty. He was from the F.D.P, the so-called classical liberal democratic party.

Later I found out that it would be more appropriate to consider this party a social democratic party as it was and still is in favor of public education, public health care, and public pensions. Nevertheless, this party employed free market arguments and was less socialist than the other established parties at the time. I liked its lines of argument. I must confess that I became a member of the F.D.P and its youth organization, the Junge Liberale. In 1999 I was a candidate for the local council of our village, Mettingen, where I grew up. Probably for the best, I did not enter the council.

It was shortly thereafter that I became disgusted by politics, particularly by party intrigues. It was not about finding the best policy but about making alliances and compromises to get “your people” elected for party positions. I became convinced that politics was not an appropriate strategy toward liberty. I wanted to use my energy more effectively.

Instead of engaging in party maneuvers, I was longing for an explanation of the questions posed above. I wanted theory. It happens that the F.D.P., like all political parties in the German parliament, has a foundation, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung. The Stiftung organizes conferences on classical liberalism and publishes books. I was very eager to get a hand on their books. I wanted to know more. Responsible for the publications at that time was Detmar Doering. He sent me German editions of Rothbard’s *Ethics of Liberty*, Mises’ *Bureaucracy* and *Liberalismus*, and some lecture notes by Adam Smith on law. A superb selection. It is still beyond me how a foundation of an interventionist party can publish these books. Anyway, there they were. Rothbard’s book soon became a lifetime

favorite and fulfilled the discovery of my libertarian nature. It spoke to my heart and reason at the same time. It was as if Rothbard were saying something very obvious, something that I had always felt was right. It was probably in 1999 that I read *The Ethics of Liberty*. I also read with great joy Mises' books and I searched the internet for forums about libertarianism and free markets. I found a German forum which was very useful to sharpen arguments, which was called www.der-markt.com and which had been founded by Michael Kastner.

I wanted to study more of this and to dedicate my future to the cause of liberty. I thought that advancing the cause of liberty could be something that would give me meaning. But how to do it? I came to the conclusion that the best way for me to contribute would be to become a professor of economics. I decided to study economics in Münster which is a one-hour drive from our village. One advantage was to be close to my parents, brothers, and tennis club. My parents always supported me in everything I did. Thus, from this side I had their full support when I later moved to foreign countries. They understood. In any case, living far away from home in foreign countries also comes with subjective costs.

But in the beginning, I was still studying near home. Before starting my studies, I had to go through 10 months of compulsory military service, which was a difficult time for me. I considered the compulsory military service as slavery. My comrades who were not libertarians fared better because they considered the service just as a kind of unpleasant duty to their fatherland. I felt powerless against the chicanery, especially during the two months of basic military training. The advantage I got out of that time was that I started to love liberty and detest the state even more.

It was probably during these months that I contacted Hans-Hermann Hoppe. It happens that Hoppe had written a superb biographical sketch of Mises as an introduction to Mises' aforementioned book *Liberalismus*. I was very excited to learn about the scholar Mises who had endured so many personal sacrifices for his unwavering pursuit of truth and liberty. I admired also all his contribution to science. In addition, I was excited to find out that the Misesian tradition and the Austrian School were still alive and that a fellow German was one of its leading members. Therefore, I searched for Hoppe's email address on the internet. At the time, Hoppe was still living in the U.S. and teaching at the University of Las Vegas. I told him by email that I wanted to study Austrian economics and asked him where the best place would be to do so. Hoppe replied straight away.

He recommended that I attend Mises University, the one-week introduction into Austrian Economics and libertarianism at the Mises Institute in Auburn, Alabama. He told me that when I applied to attend Mises University, I should just say he had recommended me. When I received Hoppe's email, I had a strong feeling that this would be a life-changing moment. It would include some costs going down this road and flying to the U.S. in order to attend Mises University. I did not hesitate.

After my first semester at Münster University where I had to skip one or two exams because they would have coincided with Mises University, I flew to the U.S. in July 2001. I was greatly blessed and impressed to get to know outstanding scholars such as Hans-Hermann Hoppe, Guido Hülsmann, Joseph Salerno, Ralph Raico, Walter Block, Jeffrey Herbener, Tom DiLorenzo, Roger Garrison, Mark Thornton, Peter Klein, and George Reisman, among others. At Mises University a new world opened to me.

To my surprise three people in Auburn told me the same thing about a future path to follow. The best place to study Austrian economics in Europe would be with Jesús Huerta de Soto in Spain. These three people were Gabriel Calzada, a student of Huerta de Soto and a one-year research fellow at the Mises Institute at the time; Ingolf Krumm, a fellow German participant and also a student of Huerta de Soto, and Guido Hülsmann, who was a resident fellow at the Institute. I thought that there must be something to it if three people recommended to me a person I had not heard of before.

When I returned to Germany, I decided to improve my high school Spanish and eventually did a three-week Spanish language course in Salamanca. I had planned for a year of study with Huerta de Soto because I still wanted to become a professor of economics in Germany at the time. The way to do it was through the Erasmus program, which is an inter-European student exchange program. One only had to establish a bilateral contract between the two Universities and then students could go for an Erasmus exchange. I contacted the Münster Erasmus office and Prof. Huerta de Soto was so kind to help on the Spanish side. Before I went on that exchange, I spent six weeks in the spring of 2003 at the Mises Institute under the guidance of Guido Hülsmann to work on what was to become my first academic publication, "Deflation: When Austrians Become Interventionists." Then in the fall I went to Madrid and began to study under Huerta de Soto. Since that time he has always been of tremendous support and generosity.

As a consequence, I can proudly say that the three Hs, all leading Austro-libertarian scholars, have been important mentors to me and influenced my path. Hans-Hermann Hoppe was the initiator by inviting me to Mises University. Later he invited me to the Property and Freedom Society and unforgettable private seminars in Bodrum, Turkey. Guido Hülsmann became my mentor with my first stay as a fellow at the Mises Institute, invited me to the University of Angers in France, and helped me in many other regards. And finally, Huerta de Soto became my mentor in Spain and has had an enormous influence on my thinking.

The academic year 2003–2004 was wonderful. I lived in a flat with two Austrian students from Italy, Max Neri and Francesco Carbone, both of whom had also come to study under Huerta de Soto. It was a year of systematic study of the Austrian literature and also many libertarian discussions. The circle around Gabriel Calzada, who later would later establish the Instituto Juan de Mariana, also provided much inspiration. When I returned to Münster in order to finish my Bachelor and Diplom (Master's) Degrees, I felt like in a diaspora. There were basically no Austro-Libertarians which contrasted with the atmosphere of Madrid where I had lived in an Austro-Libertarian bubble.

I realized that I would not be able to freely write what I wanted if I were to write my Ph.D. thesis in Germany. I would have had to make compromises as there was no Misesian professor in Germany. As a consequence, I realized that I had to go back to Spain and write my Ph.D. under the direction of Huerta de Soto, who I knew would always support me. Huerta de Soto was very helpful again, and, at the end of January 2006, just after my *mündliche Prüfung* (oral examination) for the Diplom, I left once more for Madrid, which has become my intellectual home. In December 2007 I defended my Ph.D. thesis on deflation. Already in February 2007, I had started teaching at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos where I still teach today.



A Beltway Odyssey

Doug Bandow

I was a Cold War baby. My parents met in the US Air Force. During the Korean War my father, from a small town in Iowa, joined up when his army induction notice was on the way. As he later told me, he figured he wouldn't have to march so much in the Air Force. My mother was one of the rare women who joined the military at that time: she hoped to escape life in Morgantown, West Virginia, dominated by coal mining and tough times. She left the service when they married, however, since the armed forces at that time made little effort to keep uniformed spouses together. I was born in Washington, D.C., while they were stationed at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. In one of life's great ironies, I was born on April 15, Income Tax Day, in 1957. Nearly a decade later my sister joined our family.

We moved shortly thereafter and spent time in Germany when I was very young. I lived my elementary and junior high years near Omaha, Nebraska, with my dad, a weatherman in common parlance, posted at Offutt AFB, headquarters of Strategic Air Command. He forecast weather for military operations in Vietnam. Thankfully, his commander blocked his deployment there. We at Offutt joked that it would be one of the first

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installations vaporized if the US and Soviet Union started shooting at one another. Although young, my classmates and I were aware of the gravity of our parents' work. Even then I was a history buff and found Nebraska pleasant but hopelessly boring.

In 1970 our family received orders for England. My birthday gift that year, before we headed overseas, was a visit with my dad to the mid-Atlantic Civil War battlefields. I was transfixed by a conflict that had ripped families and communities as well as an entire country apart. And I was intrigued by what could motivate men to face almost certain death, charging blazing gunfire from fortified lines.

At that stage I had few defined political beliefs. Nevertheless, I recognized the wrongness of slavery, holding people in bondage, and sensed the idiocy of war, in this case killing people who simply wanted to separate politically. The latter struck me as a very bad reason to invade and occupy the South, especially since most northerners then favored leaving the evil of slavery undisturbed.

My high school years were spent in England on a couple of different air force bases near the city (and university) of Oxford. It was a fabulous posting—I traveled with my parents all over the United Kingdom. There was both tourism and antiquing, with castles to visit and collectibles to peruse. I poured my earnings from odd jobs into amassing inexpensive chess sets, old weapons, and other historical oddities. Whatever money was left over went into books, mostly on history, many on World War II, which still remained a powerful reality for the British at that time. I also traveled to “the continent” with both my family on holiday and my classmates for forensic competitions.

My politics was conventionally conservative, aligned with that of my parents, though not particularly intense. Service personnel couldn't play an active political role, so there was little election activity on the base and I observed the 1972 presidential campaign from afar. I was nominally pro-Richard Nixon without much understanding of George McGovern beyond the superficial news accounts that I read about the race.

Back in the US in 1973, my family ended up at Eglin AFB in Florida's panhandle. I attended community college and became active as a volunteer in local Republican Party politics. It was an interesting time, with Florida one of the southern states that would vote GOP in national elections and was beginning to shift Republicanward in state and local races. However, the Watergate scandal helped warn me of mindless partisanship: I angered some of my political friends by backing Nixon's impeachment.

I finished college at Florida State University, which I chose in part because it was in Tallahassee, the state capital. During my senior year I worked part-time in the state senate minority office, which offered me an inside glimpse of actual government operation. While at FSU I was also active in campus and local politics and wrote for the student newspaper. Still conservative, I met my first avowed, open libertarian, whose name I long ago forgot, who talked up *Reason* magazine. I was intrigued but unsure what to make of the apparition.

After receiving unexpectedly good LSAT scores, I headed to Stanford Law School in 1976. (For anyone keeping track of dates, I was on the young side, having skipped a couple of high school grades and completed college in three years.) I quickly realized that I was more interested in politics than law—I was elected to the student senate, president of the Conservative Student Union, and president of the College Republicans. I was a columnist for the *Stanford Daily* and editor of the *Stanford Arena*, the quarterly CSU publication. And I volunteered in local Republican Party politics. During my second year I began writing for national publications, and got published in the *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Conservative Digest*, and *Human Events*, among others.

While at Stanford I shifted philosophically, viewing myself as a conservative my first year, a libertarian conservative my second, and a libertarian my third. The fall of Iran's Shah, who'd come to power in a coup supported by the US, gave me a final push on international issues. I decided that if I didn't believe that politicians, lawyers, bureaucrats, and the like were capable of intelligently ordering America's economic and social life, how could I believe they would positively transform other nations and the entire world? I penned an article in the *Arena* entitled "No Tears for the Shah," highlighting my move toward a noninterventionist foreign policy.

While at Stanford I was contacted by a graduate student by the name of Williamson Evers, an early libertarian notable. He said I should meet some folks at the recently formed Cato Institute in San Francisco. I drove up one day and saw not only Ed Crane and David Boaz but also Charles Koch. I didn't have any inkling at the time about how important they would prove to be for my future career.

By my third year of law school I desperately wanted to find something other than law as a career. I was spending most of my free time writing and politicking, while taking all my courses pass/fail and rarely attending class, instead relying on notepools to prepare for my final exams. During

my final year through a friend I ended up as a research assistant at the Hoover Institution, where I met Milton Friedman, then in residence.

I worked for Darrell Trent, who ended up as Ronald Reagan's deputy secretary of transportation, and through him got to know Martin Anderson. The latter had played a key role in the Nixon White House on ending conscription, and in 1976 served as Ronald Reagan's domestic issues adviser. I assumed his presence at a meeting with Trent in the fall of 1978 was happenstance, but Anderson later told me that he had been reading my articles in the *Stanford Daily* and asked Trent to put us together. He thought I might be a good addition to the incipient Reagan presidential campaign. Never had I imagined that writing for a student newspaper could trigger such a dramatic career move.

Anderson set me up doing ghost-writing for Reagan, drafting some of the latter's newspaper columns and radio commentaries. I was amazed: I was getting *paid* to write for one of the country's most famous politicians and a potential president. In early 1979 Anderson left for Los Angeles to set up the campaign operation. After I received an offer from the Pacific Legal Foundation—a conservative public interest law firm which put its legal efforts to ideological use—I contacted Anderson. He responded with a campaign job offer. So, after taking the bar exam in late July, I headed down to LA and started with the campaign on August 1, 1979.

Along the way Ed Crane offered me a similar role in the campaign of Ed Clark, the Libertarian Party presidential nominee. I figured it would be fun, but nothing could quite match being in a major party campaign. Although Reagan's unexpected loss in Iowa made me briefly wonder if I had made a mistake, he recovered in the New Hampshire primary and I ended the campaign at the victory party at the Century Plaza Hotel on November 4, 1980.

It was an amazing ride, filled with rallies, motorcades, air travel, emergency research, embarrassing gaffes, and dramatic triumphs. Throughout the many highs and occasional lows I gained great respect for Reagan—though not a detail man, he was bright and knowledgeable, and presented a liberty-oriented vision that he communicated better than any of the other candidates. Although my libertarian sensibilities conflicted with Reagan's prescriptions at times—on the drug war and military spending most dramatically, as well as other controversies—he articulated a freedom message, was the strongest candidate on domestic spending, and was the only one to oppose President Jimmy Carter's reinstatement of draft registration. Indeed, I drafted the campaign statement opposing registration,

which Reagan edited and approved. Perhaps as penance for the occasional ideological compromises required by my job, I indulged my hardcore libertarian beliefs with continued freelance writing on the side, including for the incomparable Roy Childs, then editor of *Libertarian Review*.

I ended up in the White House with the exalted title of Special Assistant to the President for Policy Development. I had a nice office suite in the Old Executive Office Building, down the hall from the vice president, enjoyed access to the West Wing, where my boss, Martin Anderson, was located, and worked on numerous issues, ranging from draft registration (which I lost, in large part because the administration wanted to look tough after the Soviet-inspired crackdown in Poland), to the Law of the Sea Treaty (an international redistributionist scheme that I helped spike), energy issues, budgetary matters, and more.

I didn't last long in government. I grew frustrated with the compromises being made and Anderson left early, little more than a year into the administration. He liked developing policy but disliked the bureaucratic battles that always followed. I had stayed in contact with the Cato folks and they soon moved to Washington, D.C. Indeed, taking advantage of my perks I invited Ed Crane to lunch at the White House Mess shortly after his arrival in the imperial city. After Anderson announced his departure, I spoke with Ed and left to edit *Inquiry* magazine. Cato had spun it off, but Ed was still on the board and the Koch brothers still backed it.

The magazine folded after only two years. That sad story must be left for another time. So I joined the Cato Institute, first as an independent contractor, and later as a staff member. However, I always worked at home and ranged across many issues. A couple of decades along the way I exited—among other things, serving as issues guru for Bob Barr's 2008 Libertarian Party presidential campaign—but later returned to Cato.

On the side I have worked with a several other libertarian organizations, including the Foundation for Economic Education, the Competitive Economic Institute, and the Future of Freedom Foundation. I have also spoken widely for the national and state Libertarian Parties, the Federalist Society, colleges and universities, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, the Acton Institute, academic associations, business groups, among many others, and more recently for the next generation of libertarian organizations, such as Young Americans for Liberty. Finally, I have written for mainstream and libertarian publications and produced several books, some collections of articles, a couple on the Koreans, and even one

on religion and politics, entitled *Beyond Good Intentions: A Biblical View of Politics*.

Along the way my work shifted toward foreign policy. Domestic issues had become just boring to me. In law school I had written about Social Security, minimum wages, national health insurance, fiscal excess, and more. All those issues continued, barely changed despite the passage of years, even decades. Only on drug policy were the gains notable. In contrast, foreign policy, while still a challenge, had been dramatically transformed. And going back to my early years, I found the world ever interesting. As I pen these words, I have just returned from South Korea, with trips to Mongolia and Norway planned in the coming weeks.

The battle continues, though my career is in its waning years. It's tempting to retire, but liberty remains under assault from both right and left, perhaps even more savagely than when I first entered the political fray. As has oft been said, if not us, who? If not now, when? If we don't work to protect this frail good, what kind of future will we leave for those coming behind us?



Out of India: From Wretchedness to Capitalism

Jayant Bhandari

One of my earliest memories is of sleeping on the rooftop during the sweltering summer days, watching the sky with tears in my eyes, thinking that it was the same sky that connected me with Americans. I was perhaps ten years old. This occurred in the city of Bhopal in central India in 1977.

We grew up around massive USSR propaganda conducted by the obsequious Indian government. But we—and I was not alone—looked up to the US. However filtered, the truth has a way of shining through for those looking for it and with the correct moral values to perceive it. Our understanding of the US and the West was vague and very distant. “London” often meant everything outside India. There were no English movies in those days. I had never seen a white man except in a random Hindi movie. We had no objective yardstick to judge our culture—there was nothing to show us any alternative. Radio was very restricted. The government tried everything possible to keep us ignorant and weak.

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I had no concept of TV or the refrigerator. We traveled by horse-driven carts. Telephony existed, but hardly anyone had a connection, so we had to visit unannounced to talk with someone. Calling someone in another city was not only extremely expensive and time-consuming, but required the help of a telephone executive and often political connections. We needed a ration card to get sugar. We usually ate under an oil lamp. Cow dung and kerosene were our kitchen fuels. My granddad owned one of the rare scooters in the city, something that was a matter of pride. The only entertainment we had were Hindi movies and the sole ice cream parlor in the city.

Our teachers and elders had no inhibitions about beating us and imposing their dictates on us. Questioning teachers was a sure-shot way to get an immediate slap. If one student made a mistake, the whole class was beaten up. It was irrational, but irrationality was encultured. When my classmates were brutalized, they went on to harass anyone weaker; if they found none, they harmed animals. The grown-ups got scammed and cheated, then perpetuated the same ways “to recover” what they had lost. This was one strand of irrationality. Real life was a blob of entangled irrationalities.

There was no concept of right and wrong driving society’s behavior. It was a society of non-stop stupidities, immoral behavior based on might-is-right, and sadism. It was hard—if not impossible—to find anyone with self-awareness. They felt better by harming others, taking their frustrations out on them, and having lose-lose interactions. Envy and other sins were unrestrained and openly expressed in a society where the ten commandments were unknown. We were vehemently asked to be honest and truthful, but hypocrisy ruled the roost. Integrity, keeping promises, and having honor were conspicuous by their absence. I had no clue about the concept of truth. We did use the word, but reflexively, to lie, save our skins, manipulate others, or gain an unfair advantage. I was to learn the real meaning of “truth” only when I moved to the UK.

As a reflection of the underlying culture, the authorities were, without exception, utterly venal, exploitative, and unaccountable. No public servant cared for his job. The government was a bribe-collection agency, where every single bureaucrat existed to humiliate the citizen. Even the lowest of the government servants continuously showed off their power—you would not get a train ticket or telephone connection repaired if you didn’t plead. The sight of people groveling, prostrating, and self-flagellating in front of the bureaucrat was universal in India. On your first

meeting with someone, your job was to gauge where the other person was in the social hierarchy. Status was all about power, not skills or personality traits. That was the day-to-day, moment-to-moment reality of social interactions.

Despite his heavy-handedness, my dad gave me glimpses of other possibilities in life. He was dogmatically honest in a society where getting away with crime was respected. My granddad and my dad both ran their own printing presses. Both worked hard and were suckers for providing the best quality products to their customers, irrespective of whether they appreciated it, and they did not cheat in order to maximize profit. From a very early age, I started working with them. As a kid, I maintained machines, debugged electrical circuits, did accounting and proofreading, and participated in printing. You might say I was engaged in child labor, but I was being grounded and getting a real education.

My granddad was a gentle person but a failure at making money. My grandmother, who was from an immensely wealthy family, had class and honor despite our poverty. She constantly reminded us that there was no free lunch. Without the core values imparted by my family, the foundations of moral values, I could not have put in place an intellectual superstructure of respect for private property, honesty in transactions with others, and an understanding of how intellectual and financial wealth is created.

I was too young to understand the nuances of economics, politics, or ethics, if I knew these words at all. But deep in my heart, I knew something was fatally wrong with India. What was wrong had nothing to do with the lack of technology, for we knew nothing about it, but rather with social interactions. That intuition, cultivated with time, pushing against the xenophobic nationalism gaining prominence in society, became the bedrock for my rational thinking and, in later years, my assimilation of Western values. It gave me a compass to navigate the landmines of venality, amorality, and might-is-right.

Missionaries constituted the backbone of prestigious Indian schooling and their schools were highly in demand. My failure to gain admission in my early years meant I had to move from one lousy school to another as my parents attempted to find a suitable one. This was a blessing in disguise. My peers changed constantly, and I had no clue what I was supposed to believe or whom I could trust. I thereby developed an independent way of thinking. I was passionate about more profound things

in life than the materialistic ones that surrounded me. There was a flicker of truth-seeking in me.

My family instinctively favored the free market. Anyone grounded in real life, in India or the West, must be. As time passed, I realized that capitalism is not just about the free market, monetary transactions, or business. It is an attitude deeply embedded in the ethics of respect for the individual, liberty, personal sovereignty, a revulsion for trying to run others' lives, and freedom from tyranny and oppression. Without capitalism, logically, there is no freedom from oppression. India was anything but a free market. Pretty much everything required the permission of someone who wouldn't give it unless he was bribed. But bribes were never enough. He also wanted the supplicants to grovel, beg, plead, and kowtow.

The stories that my granddad and dad told me about how well the British treated us and how honest they were, the rare glimpses of the West that I saw in Hindi movies, the desperate existence of being a vulnerable child in an atrocious society, and the stories of America that trickled in made me nurse my ambition to experience the West. At the age of 24, I went to study in the UK. I had little money, but I had convinced the British High Commission that I had enough. This society eventually would put me on a path to honor its trust and teach me the meaning of "truth."

But I was staring at hunger and poverty during my stay in the UK. When my bank account had been easily opened, I couldn't believe it. I was unconvinced that my account had really been opened in such a short time. The clerk had to ask me to depart. When a plastic card came later, I had no clue as to what it was. When I asked an Indian friend, he suggested we keep quiet about it to avoid looking stupid. When I told the school director about my hardships, he allowed me to defer my fees. He expected no gratitude for his help—I didn't know how to react. This was a shock to me, having come from a society where everyone, including me, judged everyone else based on money, power, caste, and class.

It was not my MBA but my everyday experiences and encounters with the British that provided me with my most important education. It took me a few months in the UK to start realizing that no one was assaulting my senses or infringing on my personal space. It took many more months to understand that people in the UK spoke the truth for the sake of it. As time passed by, I fell in love with the UK.

I was broke and often hungry. I couldn't afford the bus and walked everywhere. I bought rotten potatoes, boiled them, and mixed them with ketchup. I hand-washed my clothes, for I had no money for laundry. Despite my poverty, the next eighteen months proved to be the most enlightening time of my life. A strange, entangled cloud in my mind started to thin out. My eyes, literally, widened. Liberty was affecting me mentally and physically.

After my MBA, in 1993, I was fortunate to land a job with a British company that wanted to start operations in India. I was catapulted back to be their Country Manager. I worked for this firm over the next seven years and then did the same for a Swiss company for a couple of years. During that time, I discovered that my inner drive had always been to understand human psychology and ascertain why certain societies become rich while others are destined to remain poor.

At the time I did not know the words “objectivism” or “libertarianism.” When I was still living in Delhi in 1998, a friend told me that my thoughts matched those of some authors she had read. She brought me *1984* and *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *The Road to Serfdom* by Friedrich Hayek, and *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand. Those books not only gave me confidence in the values I had held, but also solidified my understanding of Western culture. I realized I had always been a libertarian.

I was among the better-paid executives in India, but my soul was agitated. My productive capacities had no value in India. I cannot remember if I changed the thinking of any Indian during those years. In 2003, knowing that I would have to accept the ways of India if I wanted to stay on, to save my soul I immigrated to Canada. My qualifications as Country Manager of two companies in India didn't have any value in Canada. Many told me that my public views—expressed through my articles published by the Mises Institute—weren't going to get me success in the West because my ideas were politically incorrect. But, given the relative freedom of Canada, I wasn't interested in hiding what I believed.

One day I received an email from a self-proclaimed speculator who invited me for lunch. In frustration, now becoming desperate for a job in Canada, I initially deleted his email. Later I learned that the writer was a well-known investor, Doug Casey. My lunch meeting with him led to a job with him. He turned out to be a fabulous mentor. Later, I found a job with a well-known Money Manager in the US, Frank Holmes. He was extremely generous in training me and sending me worldwide to meet

company representatives. I jumped at the chance to travel to places—Congo, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana, Ethiopia, etc.—that others probably weren't keen to visit.

In 2010, I started a yearly “Capitalism & Morality” seminar to encourage people to understand the importance of Western civilization's philosophy and core values. The values that might be taken for granted as universal are often conspicuous by their absence outside the West. Once these values have slipped away, it could take a few millennia to build back a civilization. The invited speakers are encouraged to speak their minds unhindered by political correctness. No topic is out of bound, be it IQ, feminism, or Islam. Some of the past speakers have included Doug Casey, Walter Block, Jeff Deist, Adrian Day, Rick Rule, John Hunt, Ian Plimer, Butler Shaffer, Roslyn Ross, Michael Edestein, Lawrence Reed, Jeffrey Tucker, Douglas French, Jay Stuart Snelson, and Stefan Molyneux. Around the same time, I became an independent consultant.

I see no redemption for the Third World, but I want to alert the Western one that adopting the feral values of “wokism” has the potential to destroy the West. I realized that the West's philosophical foundations are getting washed away. I also know that the free market cannot exist if not underpinned by an ethical, high-trust society where people mostly honor their contracts, avoid fraud, believe in fairness, and do not fight to get free stuff from the government.



Forty Years Sniping at Leviathan

James Bovard

I have spent decades trying to turn political dirt into philosophic gold. I have yet to discover the alchemist's trick, but I still have fun with the dirt.

I was born in Iowa and raised in the mountains of Virginia. My experience collecting, buying, and selling coins as a teenager vaccinated me against trusting politicians long before I grew my first scruffy beard. Shortly after my 15th birthday, the U.S. government drove the final wooden stake into the nation's currency when President Nixon announced that the U.S. government would cease redeeming any dollars for gold. The dollar thus became a fiat currency—something which possessed value solely because politicians said so.

Reading *Coin News* and other numismatic publications, I soaked up the rage at how the U.S. government was intentionally torpedoing the value of the dollar. When I got laid off from a construction job after graduating high school, I saw it as a sign from God (or at least from the market) to buy gold. I liquidated my coin collection and poured the money into gold. Nixon's resignation helped redeem my gamble.

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I didn't get rich but made enough to help pay for sporadically attending Virginia Tech, with some money left over to cover living expenses during my first literary strikeouts after I decided to become a writer. I watched inflation skyrocket after Nixon took the U.S. off the gold standard. The Watergate scandal and the bipartisan crimes of the Vietnam War helped me recognize that politicians as a class were scoundrels. My disdain for government intervention was fueled by reading authors such as Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, and my passion for freedom was nourished by many of the philosophers and historians I discovered via a University of Chicago Great Booklist.

After living in Boston and southern Illinois, I moved to Washington, D.C., in 1980 to try my luck as an investigative journalist. I sought to write articles that would awaken Americans to the growing threats to our rights and liberties. I thought that exposing damning facts would wake up enough Americans to stop the government from destroying everyone's freedom. At that point, politicians and their media allies usually portrayed the government as a hovercraft sailing along, kindly assisting people on the road of life. The State that I had met on my life's pathways was often oppressive, incompetent, and venal. I saw no profit in delusions about the benevolence of officialdom. Instead, I realized that idealism on liberty demands brutal realism on political power.

In ancient Greece, the famous cynic philosopher Diogenes purportedly scoffed at a rival who had "practiced philosophy for such a long time and never yet *disturbed* anyone."¹ I had the same view on writing. As the old saying goes, "Journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed; everything else is public relations." But in Washington, D.C., most of what passes for "journalism" is simply shilling for Leviathan. It is impossible to overstate the servility of reporters proud to serve as "stenographers with amnesia."

In contrast, I was a philistine who gave no credence to an agency's Mission Statement. After I wrote a piece in 1983 lambasting a new Reagan administration program to lavish subsidies on businesses purportedly to train workers, an assistant Secretary of Labor denounced my "callously cynical concept of the American free enterprise system" and wailed that "Bovard was determined to disparage all government efforts without giving President Reagan's reforms a chance." Actually, I

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 253.

was happy to “disparage all government efforts” doomed to repeat past failures.

I recognized that atrocities that went unchallenged set precedents to haunt Americans in perpetuity. After I wrote a *Wall Street Journal* piece detailing how an FBI sniper gunned down Vicki Weaver, a mother holding a baby at a cabin door in the mountains of northern Idaho, I was denounced by the FBI chief Louis Freeh for “misleading or patently false conclusions” and “inflammatory and unfounded allegations.” My articles helped demolish the Ruby Ridge cover-up, concluding with the feds paying a multimillion-dollar settlement for wrongful killings. But the FBI’s long record of outrages did not deter conservatives from exalting the agency after 9/11 or deter liberals from conferring sainthood upon the Bureau for its efforts to undermine Trump.

My disdain for prevailing pieties spurred plenty of denunciations. After my 1995 book dedicated to “Victims of the State” (*Shakedown: How the Government Screws You from A to Z*), *Entertainment Weekly* scoffed that I was “paranoid.” So I should have written “lucky beneficiaries” instead? In 1999, a *Los Angeles Times* book review castigated me as an “unvarnished example of the contemptuous attitude toward the American political system.” After I wrote an op-ed mocking the “night pay” bonuses for non-working Customs Service agents, the American Federation of Government Employees denounced me for “senselessly vilifying government workers” and planting “seeds in the minds of sick people such as Timothy McVeigh, resulting in tragedies such as the Oklahoma City bombing.” Hell, I have never even been to Oklahoma.

The 9/11 attacks toppled media courage as well as the World Trade Center towers. Three months after the attacks, Attorney General John Ashcroft proclaimed, “Those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty... only aid terrorists for they erode our national unity and... give ammunition to America’s enemies.” I wasn’t giving ammo to anybody—I was simply documenting how the Bush administration was turning freedom into a phantom.

I didn’t muzzle myself after 9/11. The harder my articles hit, the more rejections I racked up. My exposés lambasting Bush’s torture regime were as popular with editors as if I had advocated cannibalism. A 2006 book review in the *Washington Times*, where I had been a contributor for more than twenty years, derided me as a “bombthrower” who was guilty of “character assassination” of President Bush. Was it my fault that Bush never found those Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq?

The Obama era brought a fresh deluge of boondoggles, supplemented by bizarre power grabs including a new prerogative for presidential assassinations of Americans suspected of terrorist connections. After I repeatedly lambasted Attorney General Eric Holder in *USA Today*, the Justice Department press chief Brian Fallon pressured the paper to cease printing my “consistently nasty words about Mr. Holder.” Fallon bitterly complained that I had “authored pieces criticizing [Holder] on civil liberties, relations with law enforcement, and civil asset forfeiture.” Was it my fault if the Attorney General was a menace to the Bill of Rights? *USA Today* was unfazed and continued printing my exposes of federal law enforcement.

Over the years, my articles have been denounced by the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Postmaster General, and the chiefs of the Transportation Security Administration, International Trade Commission, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Federal Emergency Management Agency. My writings have also been condemned by the Sierra Club, the American Civil Liberties Union, Washington Post, and numerous congressmen and other malcontents. I have finally bitterly recognized that I will never win any popularity contests inside the Beltway.

From getting kicked out of the Supreme Court for laughing at Leviathan, to heisting damning documents at World Bank headquarters, to racing around East Bloc regimes one step ahead of the secret police, I’ve had more fun than I deserved. I appreciate the editors I’ve found who are still willing to publish pieces exposing official crimes and political absurdities. And maybe one of these years, the tide will turn in favor of individual liberty.



One Person Changes the World

Connor Boyack

“Sure, I’ll go.”

That decision changed my life. It was August 8, 2006, and a friend had invited me to see a preview screening of Aaron Russo’s documentary *America: Freedom to Fascism*. Sitting with a dozen others in a small, rented room of the local library, I listened to several speakers expounding on the myriad problems with the federal government. One person in particular stood out to me; he seemed like a wise person I could trust—and he was apparently a Congressman, which made his intellectual appeal all the more unexpected.

Like many others have done in the years following, I went home that night and googled “Ron Paul.” This was my red pill moment—an introduction into a whole world of information, insights, and ideas that I seemingly couldn’t get enough of. I read dozens of Dr. Paul’s speeches and books he recommended, and down the rabbit hole I went. I loved learning about American history, Austrian economics, and political philosophy. It rang true to me.

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It was also the first time in my life that I really enjoyed learning. I had just graduated from college three months prior, majoring in Information Technology. Looking back, I was never made aware of alternatives to pursuing a college degree, let alone the idea that I might not need a college degree at all. I hated being forced to learn things I didn't care about, and I cheated whenever convenient because the perceived purpose of the school was to get good grades—so I took shortcuts to attain that goal with the least amount of energy required. Learning, for me, had been a chore to suffer through. It wasn't until after I finally graduated that I had the free time, mental energy, and curiosity to dedicate to whatever interested me. Freed from the constraints of structured curricula with their time-consuming projects, papers, and exams, I began exploring libertarianism deeply. I wasn't learning for learning's sake—I was learning because it had personal meaning to me and helped me understand the way the world works.

Blogging was taking off at the time, so I started my own, called “Connor’s Conundrums.” I largely used this online space to share what I was learning about and defend the ideas I had come to believe in. To my surprise, many others started reading it—feeling that I was giving voice to what they also believed in. I took particular interest in simplifying complex concepts I was reading about, and trying to be as persuasive as possible in explaining the ideas of a free society.

A year later, in mid-September 2007, my newlywed wife and I were on our honeymoon together in Lake Tahoe. I received an email alerting me to an impromptu presidential campaign stop scheduled a few days later in Salt Lake City, near where we lived. It was scheduled on what was supposed to be the final day of our honeymoon. Fortunately, I have an amazing wife who agreed to cut our trip short so we could attend. We almost missed the event due to our flight schedule, but I made it just in time to shake Dr. Paul’s hand after the event. I was thrilled to meet my intellectual hero in person and get a photo together.

Five years later, as his final presidential campaign concluded, Dr. Paul was repeatedly asked—especially by young people, who took a great interest in his ideas—what they should do next. What was the next phase of the “Ron Paul Revolution”? For me, the answer was slowly taking shape. I had just created a new non-profit, Libertas Institute—a state-based “think tank” focused on policy reform in my adopted state of Utah. (I was a California refugee long before it was trendy.) Set up more as a “do tank”—writing whitepapers and holding conferences isn’t really how

you make change happen—we’re now recognized nationwide as being one of the most effective groups in the policy space. Since I started Libertas, we’ve been responsible for changing over 100 laws, with major reforms in criminal justice, property rights, education, medical freedom, parental rights, and much more. Several of the laws we’ve gotten passed were the first of their kind in the United States, and now we help elected officials across the country try to get similar laws passed in their state. Libertas is pursuing a “nail it, then scale it” model where we can incubate good policies in our state and then spread them nationwide.

Creating my own group seemed like the right way for me to apply what I had been studying and try to actually see these ideas implemented; like many in the “movement” I wanted action, not just conversation. But I had no clue what I was doing; no one gave me a manual on how to start a non-profit, let alone how to actually effect change. In fact, prior to founding Libertas, I was a web developer; I created websites and did online marketing for a living. I have no formal background in political science, economics, or the law—and yet these have become my profession and expertise. I find myself sitting in rooms full of lawyers who think I am also one. I tell them that I can do much of what they can, but I don’t have the school debt to show for it. They chuckle politely, but I don’t think they like it when I say that.

My wife and I have two children. When they were young I had a desire to share with them what their dad had been doing at work, but was clueless as to how to talk to a five-year-old about fighting eminent domain or the dangers of socialism. I turned to Amazon and came up short; there were books on the birds and the bees and potty training and almost everything else—but nothing on the topics of property rights, free markets, or liberty. I had begun talking about this with a friend of mine, Elijah Stanfield, who had done some animation videos in support of the Ron Paul campaign. He was a father of young children as well and had a similar idea: there ought to be material for kids to learn these ideas. We teamed up and the Tuttle Twins was born.

There was no grand vision behind the Tuttle Twins other than having a fun side project teaching kids about freedom. Not only did we have a new book and brand, but we also had to develop a new market category: teaching children about libertarian ideas. I recall sitting behind a booth at FreedomFest in 2014. Our first book, *The Tuttle Twins Learn About the Law*, had just been published. I was periodically receiving alerts on my phone for orders being placed on our website. During a lull in foot traffic

at the event, another alert popped up. Someone had placed an order for 50 copies! I was excited, but was astonished when I scrolled down further to see that the order had been placed by Ron and Carol Paul in order to provide a copy to each of their grandchildren. That was all the market signal I needed that we were onto something—the grandfather of the modern freedom movement had approved of our work!

In the years since, we have created a strategic campaign around this project to accelerate our work and its reach. At the time of this writing, we have sold over five million books and translated them into a dozen languages. We now have an animated cartoon series as well, helping us reach our goal of teaching over 100 million children in the next decade. We aim to become a household name so that every parent knows where they can turn to for help in teaching their kids about the nature of money, the importance of entrepreneurship, why the Golden Rule is so critical, what freedom actually means, and so much more.

This aspect of my work is deeply fulfilling, perhaps because it is also so neglected. For all of us working in the freedom movement, we've long been playing defense. I recall attending a conference put on by Atlas Network—a great organization that partners with libertarian/conservative groups across the world—and they had a slide showing the cumulative budgets of all of the organizations, in an effort to demonstrate the perceived strength of the worldwide network. It was an impressive figure, but I was actually disappointed. Nearly all of those resources were being invested in defense work—talking to adults about our ideas. But almost all those adults have formed opinions, shaped by two or more decades of time in school, subjected to propaganda and bad ideas, largely from individuals in an authority position who are our intellectual opponents. For too long we have been surrendering the minds of our youth to statists, and only reaching out to them when they are of voting age. I consider this a massive strategic blunder and something that needs to be remedied immediately. The Tuttle Twins team is doing our part, but we need many more allies investing in youth outreach and supporting parents in talking to their children about the ideas of freedom.

I had the fortune of interviewing Dr. Paul for our podcast a couple of years ago. I brought up the post-campaign questions from young people about what they should do next for the “Ron Paul Revolution.” He told me that he never once would have thought to tell me (or anyone else, for that matter) to start a think tank or write books for children. To him, there was a certain spontaneous order about it, letting people pursue

their lives in whatever direction it took them without any pretense of fatal conceit in thinking he had all the ideas himself. To me, it was a reminder of the impact one person can have on another. There would be no Libertas Institute or Tuttle Twins without Ron Paul's earlier influence on my life. And I wonder: who are the future freedom fighters and change agents whose impact on our world will be sparked by my work? What would the world look like in 20 years if every child today was exposed to the ideas of liberty by their parents and teachers? Standing on the shoulders of intellectual giants before me, I'm gratefully optimistic that I can change the world for the better, one person at a time. And, sometimes, 50 people at a time.



From Meager Means to Market Anarchism: The Political Evolution of an Ordinary Swede

Per L. Bylund

They say it usually begins with Ayn Rand. That was not my case.

I grew up outside of Stockholm, Sweden, in a home that was in every sense but the formal definition *working class*. My father was a car mechanic who had shifted gears to become a social worker. My mother had been a schoolteacher, but she left her job to stay at home with me and my younger brothers. My parents were probably among the very last with normal and low incomes to be able to do this. Sweden had already adopted policies intended to expand the workforce beyond what immigration could accomplish, which meant “incentivizing” women to have careers by making it near impossible to have a family with only one income. My parents’ decision, financially speaking, turned out to be nothing short of a disaster. They were barely able to make ends meet throughout my childhood and adolescence.

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The reason the family stayed afloat was that my father took on several odd jobs nights and weekends and my mother similarly worked on paid projects from home. No, those incomes were not always reported and taxed. In retrospect, that was probably part of why they could make it work—along with doing practically everything ourselves. My father patched our old house and fixed our beat-up cars; my mother sewed our clothes, baked our bread, and cut our hair to avoid those expenses.

As a child, however, our meager means were not very noticeable to me. At least, not beyond the not-so-fun comparisons with friends and classmates, who went on travels with their families and had all the cool toys and brand clothing. Those frustrations notwithstanding, I had a very happy childhood. My parents provided a stable, safe, and supportive home. Do I not wish we had had more money? Yes, because it would have lessened the burden on my parents. But I don't think more money would have made my upbringing any better.

I share my background for two reasons. First, this is an autobiographical note, so you probably expected it. Second, and more importantly, I want to challenge the unfounded caricature that libertarians come from wealthy backgrounds. Libertarianism has nothing to do with having money; it has only to do with freedom as a fundamentally egalitarian individual right. In my view, libertarianism is a much better fit for people of meager means than the statist ideologies that claim to represent them. So my finding libertarianism is not an exception.

But I wasn't born libertarian. I gradually warmed up to the idea of freedom and all the uncertainty and responsibility that necessarily comes with it. In my experience, the trouble with adopting a libertarian worldview is, much as it was for me, that it is very difficult to let go of the idea that there can be guarantees. The state's *raison d'être* is the impossible promise to offer such guarantees. Even though the state rather consistently fails to deliver on them, many choose to believe in the promises nonetheless.

My political awakening started in middle school because I had friends who were politically engaged. They were on both the left and the right, but the latter were the majority. I listened but I cannot recall identifying with either side.

In the fall of 1991, my first semester of high school, Sweden held a general election—the first one for decades in which the social democratic party risked losing (they lost). It was also the end of the radical period of the Swedish welfare state, which had managed in merely two decades to

run into the ground what was in 1970 the fourth richest country in the world. At the time, I was largely unaware of this.

Before the election, I encountered a flyer from the Swedish party Moderaterna's youth league in my locker. I filled out the enclosed membership form to join, as did a couple of my friends. Why did I seek membership? I'm not sure. I soon started going to meetings. One of the first I went to was an introductory course in ideology. It covered the ideals behind the Moderaterna's program, which is based on an awkward mix of classical liberalism and (European) conservatism. I quickly and ignorantly adopted a middle-ground position but leaned toward conservative in symbolic issues. I can truthfully say that my opinions on those issues were based purely on emotion and ignorance. The classical liberals in the party had all kinds of crazy views, to which I was increasingly exposed. They were difficult to argue against because they relied on logical arguments which I could not properly counter.

This is where my journey toward libertarianism started picking up speed. I intuitively liked the concept of freedom and increasingly appreciated logical consistency, so I soon started thinking systematically about my own opinions. This brought about a pivot from semi-conservative to classical liberal, fomented by spending my third year of college abroad. Being a serious student, I took the opportunity to spend two semesters at Hawai'i Pacific University (HPU) in downtown Honolulu. By chance, I ended up taking two courses in economics with Ken Schoolland in the fall of 1996. Ken's teaching on how markets and regulations work quickly helped me do away with any doubts I had about free markets.

Returning to Sweden and Jönköping University, where I studied business and computer science, I became a member of Fria Moderata Studentförbundet (FMSF), which is basically a non-partisan national debate club for students of classical liberal and conservative conviction who like to discuss ideas freely without policy concerns. In the debates, both online and in person, I became ever more hardcore in my classical liberal ideas. And I read lots of books by libertarians such as Robert Nozick, Ayn Rand, and Murray N. Rothbard. They were helpful, but one question remained to be answered: how to abolish the state. That it had to go was obvious to me, but I could not figure out the "how" of a stateless society. I was looking for guarantees.

In the September 1998 election I was a candidate for municipal council in my native Österåker for the Moderaterna, dedicated to pushing local policy in the direction of freedom. I campaigned during the day with a

dear friend of similar conviction, and we spent the evenings discussing the prospect of abolishing the state. We were convinced society does not need, and ought not to be based on, a monopoly on violence, but how might it work? We drafted different systems for a stateless but ordered society, but without coming up with a good solution. We could not figure out how to guarantee that people's rights were protected.

I finally left my remaining traces of statism on the wayside that fall after someone recommended that I read David D. Friedman's *Machinery of Freedom*. Its effect on my thinking was profound because it so simply and straightforwardly did away with the state. What an idiot I had been drafting all those systems!

So here I was, a newborn anarchist being elected to the municipal council. I did not quite fit in. I tried playing the game to get things moving in the "right direction," but the political system is biased against freedom—it is about power. If you believe politics could be a way to increase or reintroduce freedom, or even resist the expansion of the state, you are sorely mistaken.

All I accomplished while in office was making enemies, being ridiculed publicly as well as in the media, and being bullied by older establishment politicians. I resigned loudly and in protest in 2000 and left all of party politics behind. (No, I'm not going back.) But this was hardly the end of my story, but rather the beginning of my life as a radical anti-politics anarchist libertarian.

Being very active in the Swedish libertarian movement's handful of organizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I had gained somewhat of a reputation as "the anarchist." I was hardly the only one, but one of the few who were open and vocal about it. This turned out to be important: when people engage in open debate and clearly state their radical ideals, people get exposed to those ideas. Much as I had been exposed to the crazy ideas of the classical liberals. This helped spawn an anarcho-libertarian movement in Sweden that is still going strong. I would like to think that I played some part in the very beginning by getting the ball rolling.

While still in politics, I had co-founded the website Anarchism.net in 1999, which I ran for several years. The site, written entirely in English, was one of the very first gathering places for libertarian anarchists online and its discussion forum attracted hundreds of people eager to debate these ideas daily. (That was a lot back then.) It was with Anarchism.net that I started writing in English and I soon contributed to a large

number of websites, primarily strike-the-root.com, lewrockwell.com, and mises.org, publishing well over 200 columns my most productive year in the early 2000s.

This also exposed me to criticism, which in turn introduced to me new perspectives. I grew increasingly fond of individualist anarchism and the “leftist” take on freedom. The structures that oppress people primarily oppress those of meager means or who are otherwise marginalized, which is why the quest for freedom is a quest for justice. The main culprit and oppressor is the State, but also those who collaborate with and benefit from it: large corporations, monopolists, the rich, and the political class. Abolishing the State means abolishing privilege; it means smashing the very structures of oppression that hold many down while lifting others up.

I thus moved Anarchism.net away from its prior focus on anarcho-capitalism, which was growing increasingly common online, and in the direction of “anarchism without adjectives.” The new aim was to produce a gathering place for all anarchists to discuss principles and strategy. It wasn’t very successful; too many anarchists are more interested in flying their tribal colors than in making real change. Anarchists on the left/right spend more time denouncing everything they dislike as capitalism/socialism than discussing the nature of freedom and strategies for attaining it.

My conviction was (and is) that a strategy for freedom cannot require political power, which is its very antithesis. I found and adopted Konkin’s *countereconomics*, which is a beautifully simple and effective prescription that is both individualist, voluntary, and productive. It uses, creates, and enforces individual freedom through market action. It is value creation on people’s own terms. In other words, the very opposite of politics.

Countereconomics is the intentional shifting of one’s actions from the destructive to the productive realm. It is as much about seeking opportunities for mutual gain, and partners to produce and share in that gain, as it is about moving beyond the realm of (and thus out of reach of) the State. In a sense, it is true entrepreneurship: find how to serve others to thereby serve yourself. And, as formalized in countereconomics, do so without feeding the beast.

As I later started studying economics and entrepreneurship in greater depth, including formally between 2007 and 2012 as a graduate student at the University of Missouri under the guidance of Peter G. Klein, the

simplistic beauty of the free market—also as a strategy for freedom—became ever clearer to me. It is not only productive and value-creative, a strategy for freedom, but deeply moral. As a truly free society is.

What does Ayn Rand have to do with all this? Not much, I'm afraid. I certainly read and was influenced by her writings, both fiction and philosophy, in the 1990s. But I quickly moved beyond the teachings of objectivism to follow the principle of individual liberty to its ultimate conclusion: market anarchism. The state is, after all, the very negation of freedom, peace, and prosperity. Even Rand struggled to come up with a defense of the state, however small.



My Transformation into a Teacher of Liberty

Gerard Casey

I was always puzzled by money. Not just by the fact that I never seemed to have enough of it, but why it was that people were willing to give me goods and provide services in exchange for unsanitary pieces of paper. And why *these* bits of paper and not the much more visually attractive (and sanitary) pieces of paper I could produce myself with the aid of a color printer.

I shared these puzzles with my academic colleagues, and one of them, no doubt has driven to distraction by my constant harping on the subject, gave me a copy of Ludwig von Mises's *The Theory of Money and Credit*. Now, much as I admire Mises's work, I have to say that this is *not* the first book I would use to introduce him to the uninitiated, but it was perfect for me because it answered my inchoate questions. As every teacher knows, you can't answer the questions that people don't have! The first task of a teacher is to bring questions to life in the minds of

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his students. Reading *The Theory of Money and Credit* not only demonstrated how money came into being, but also what money is, and what it must be.

Having discovered Mises, I immediately started reading his other books, including, of course, *Human Action*. The first 140+ pages of this book, which give mental hernias to some people, were to me like being given the golden ticket to intellectual paradise. I found this outline of praxeology so exciting that several times I had to put the book down and take a little walk. Human action is purposeful behavior. The incentive to act is always some uneasiness, some dissatisfaction where an agent believes that purposeful behavior can remove, or alleviate, the dissatisfaction; and so on.

Later, I learned that uncoerced exchange is positive-sum, not zero-sum, and that this is so, not just as a matter of fact, but something that is necessarily so. We may not be able to tell empirically what partners in an uncoerced exchange subjectively value, but we know that it has to be the case that each partner rates his position at the end of the exchange, higher than he did at the start. This scale of value may be momentary (how many of us have made impulsive purchases—“It seemed like a good idea at the time!”) but at the point of the exchange, it is operative. Now this may not seem like much of a revelation. As a philosopher, I was familiar with the notion of the a priori, but examples of the a priori came only from the areas of logic and mathematics. The shock of finding the a priori relevant to matters of human practice was psychically electric!

From Mises to the Mises Institute was but a short step, with all the wealth of resources the Institute makes available. I read many of the authors on the Mises site, and listened to many of its podcasts, but, of course, I found myself gravitationally attracted to the work of Murray Rothbard. Beginning with his *The Ethics of Liberty*, I wound my way through the rest of his voluminous publications, in particular the 4-volume *Conceived in Liberty*, and the enlightening (and entertaining) *History of Economics*.

In 2007, I felt bold enough to offer a paper to the Austrian Scholars Conference, and so I found myself at the Mises Institute in Auburn, in the company of such luminaries as Tom Woods, Joe Salerno, David Gordon, Hans-Hermann Hoppe and many others. In 2010, I was honored to be invited to deliver the Lou Church Memorial Lecture in Religion and Economics at the Austrian Scholars Conference, which I did under the

title of “Two Roads, One Truth.” [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoQ6vQf3X6Q>] Also in 2010, I published an intellectual biography of Rothbard (entitled, daringly, *Murray Rothbard*) in the 20-volume series, *Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers* (Continuum/Bloomsbury); and, two years later, my *Libertarian Anarchy* came out with the same publishers.

My conversion—I can use no less a term—to libertarianism came to me relatively late in life, but it is one that has radically affected everything I have thought and done ever since. Conversion occurs when all the same data are present to the convert, but the point of view has shifted radically, as it were, by a kind of intellectual “phase change,” as happens, for example, in chemistry, when water shifts suddenly between solid, liquid and vapor. When a conversion occurs, what was previously unthinkable suddenly becomes, for the first time, thinkable. While the preparation for conversion can take some time, conversion, when it comes, is usually sudden and precipitate. In conversion, everything remains, in one sense, the same and yet, in another sense, becomes totally different. The world is, as it were, seen through different spectacles; the significance, meaning, and values of things are shifted, not piecemeal, but systematically. As Thomas Kuhn thought was the case in a scientific revolution, we have a paradigm shift, so that we go from a paradigm lost to a paradigm found which involves a new way of looking at everything, with radical discontinuities and incommensurabilities between the old and the new.

Of course, my conversion to Libertarianism affected my teaching. I had taught many courses over my career (Aristotle and Aquinas on the Soul; Wittgenstein; Eastern Philosophy; Logic) but now I devised a course “Anarchy, Law and the State” which I then inflicted on my undergraduate students and, in a slightly different form (“Law, State and Liberty”), on my graduate students. This was so much fun to teach that I found it hard to believe I was getting paid to do it! I had people with all sorts of political viewpoints in these courses, including some from the hard left, but, since I never considered it part of my job to grade students in direct proportion to their agreement with my own views, students, regardless of their commitments, were encouraged to engage honestly, even polemically, confident they would not be academically punished for having the “wrong” views.

Two quotes from some feedback I received may give some idea of how things went in these courses. This, from an undergraduate:

I think the most enriching lectures I attended throughout my time in UCD was your Anarchy, Law and the State series. I found the material interesting and provocative but also profoundly relevant to me and what I want to do. The material you presented did lend itself to debate, but the class would never be as lively without the way you accepted criticism and encouraged contributions from the floor. It was the class I looked forward to the most because it was liberating.

The last four words of this email—“because it was liberating”—are the kind of response every teacher longs to get from his students but which we so rarely do. And from a graduate student, I received this:

I am an old student of yours and I was just writing to say I really enjoyed your interview with Jeffrey Tucker on Mises Media. You repeated a lot of the points you made in our Law, State and Liberty class last year but it's amazing how different ideas will ring true as you change your paradigm of thinking. I came into your class a dedicated Marxist and had been active with the Socialist Party for years. It goes without saying that I put up my mental walls to the vast majority of stuff you taught in the class! However your style of putting out awkward questions scratched the surface of doubts I had been having about my thinking ...my readings of Mises and Hayek were devastating to my way of thinking. As an economics student the role of price in providing information (Hayek) and the only means of economic calculation (Mises) was blatantly obvious to me when so clearly explained. It's amazing how anti-socialist thinkers of all hues have not yet made that a consistent critique of socialism. If they had, I fear my days as a Marxist would have been very much numbered!....I think it was not....a big jump for me to move from the far left to libertarianism. As Rothbard said in his article “Left and Right” the spirit of most left wingers, one of a hatred for privilege and political power and injustice, has gone down a mistaken path in state socialism....

I would love to lay the flattering unction to my soul that these responses, typical of many I received, were inspired primarily by my wonderful teaching (modesty, Casey, modesty!) but, truth to tell, as both citations indicate, it was the very nature of the material that was presented to them that moved so many students to take seriously, for the first time in their lives, a viewpoint on the world so different from the one that they effortlessly absorb from their social environment.

In 2013, at the urging of Tom Woods, I devised some lectures for his LibertyClassroom on the history of liberty. I later revised and expanded

these until the completely ridiculous and monstrous *Freedom's Progress?* finally saw the light of day in 2017. This book has multiple uses: as an offensive weapon (both intellectual and physical) and as a doorstop. The idea of the book was to give an account of the history of liberty from a libertarian perspective, considering not only the writings of various thinkers, of course, but also putting some flesh on these intellectual bones by situating these ideas in their social, political and religious contexts.

After *Freedom's Progress?*, I undertook a research project in applying libertarianism to current issues. This resulted in three books: *ZAP* (2019)—a libertarian approach to freedom of speech, especially, a discussion of the dangers freedom of speech faces when assailed by the three ugly sisters of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity. *ZAP* was followed by *After #MeToo* (2020) which, as the subtitle indicates, concerns itself with feminism, patriarchy, toxic masculinity and sundry cultural delights; and, finally, there appeared *Hidden Agender* (2021), which discussed some fundamental problems with transgenderist ideology.

Where do I go from here? Given my age, probably not very far and not for very much longer. But the ride so far has been fascinating, and libertarianism has been responsible for much of what has been best about it.



“To Study and at Times to Practice What One Has Learned, is that not a Pleasure?”

Jo Ann Cavallo

When I replied to Walter Block that I wouldn't be contributing an autobiography to our co-edited volume, he used his notorious powers of persuasion to convince me otherwise. I've written elsewhere about how I first came to libertarianism in 2011 because of Ron Paul's presidential campaign and, subsequently, to the Mises Institute thanks to Walter's invitation to join his “Literature and Liberty” panel at an Austrian Scholars Conference the following year.¹ I'll therefore use this opportunity to reflect both further back to my family and individual history as well as forward to my libertarian life in recent years.

The seeds can be traced to my immigrant ancestors who left their homelands in Western and Eastern Europe to seek a new life in America and who, in different ways, suffered at the hands of governments on both sides of the Atlantic. My paternal grandparents left southern Italy along

¹ “How Ron Paul Rocked Our Family (Unabridged)” and “From Ron Paul to Murray Rothbard: My Road to the Mises Institute,” respectively.

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with waves of other immigrants to escape starvation during the decades following the annexation of the South by the House of Savoy (generally known as the Unification of Italy). During the Second World War, they were branded as aliens by the U.S. government while, at the same time, their oldest son had been sent to fight as a U.S. soldier stationed in Italy. My maternal grandfather was born to a Romanian mother and Hungarian father who had emigrated during a time of tension between their governments in the early twentieth century. My maternal grandmother's great-grandparents arrived from Germany as a young couple in 1852 only to be separated forever in January of 1864 when the husband became a musician for the Union in the War between the States, most likely as a result of the federal conscription law of 1863.² He was captured in June and died in Andersonville Prison a few months later, leaving behind his wife and five children, including a baby girl who would become my great-great-grandmother.

My heritage history resembles that of so many American immigrant families in search of liberty. In fact, the ancestors of my closest childhood friends had also left desperate conditions caused more or less directly by the political regimes of their birthplace. What this meant for me growing up in northern New Jersey, however, was the pleasure of learning about other cultures (and my own) through food and traditions. I ate *arroz con pollo* and learned Spanish by singing Cuban songs at the home of a friend whose parents had left everything behind to flee the Castro dictatorship. I learned to paint Easter eggs with a Ukrainian friend and to say "Christ is risen" in Ukrainian while attending a pre-dawn Easter mass. At the bat mitzvah of a Jewish friend, I discovered cheese blintzes and learned that Hebrew is read right to left. And the mother of my Polish friend would often make *pierogi*, which reminded me of *ravioli*, when I went over for dinner. The mixed-immigrant neighborhood led us naturally to appreciate each other as individuals with diverse origins and customs to discover.

All of the absorbed and accumulated history from my ancestral heritage and childhood environment gave me both a vague distrust of government and a natural inclination to approach others with an open mind. All the same, it did not permit me to clearly see what Machiavelli called the *verità effettuale*, or the truth beneath the surface of appearances. That would only begin to occur decades later upon hearing Ron Paul speak during

² See Tom DiLorenzo, *Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War* (New York City: Three Rivers Press, 2003).

one fateful Republican Party primary debate that my son had asked me to watch with him. In hindsight, I'm tempted to liken the experience to that harrowing moment in *The Truman Show* (1998) when the protagonist realizes he is living in a reality tv program and breaks out by weathering a storm at sea in his tiny sailboat, desperately piercing the wall of the giant painted blue dome surrounding him. In actuality, however, my incremental intellectual journey of discovery played out over an extended period of time, providing a lens that brought into ever sharper focus a world that until then had remained murky and seemingly contradictory.

For anyone who comes out on the other side of a manufactured reality, the question then becomes, what does one do with the rest of one's life? At mid-career in the Columbia University Department of Italian, I couldn't feasibly start over as an Austrian economist or libertarian political philosopher. But I could surely be a libertarian literary critic—that is, continue pursuing the kind of humanistic endeavors that I loved while bringing this newfound theoretical perspective into my work. Truth be told, I had previously been averse to using theory in my academic writing. The Marxist-inspired critical theory that I was assigned during my graduate student days at Yale in the 1980s left me utterly unconvinced, stemming from the feeling that a narrow doctrine was being forced upon works of the imagination. Granted, not all required readings were Marxist-oriented. I remember my excitement at encountering Carl Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* for a course called *Magic and Religion in the Renaissance*. Although this led me to countless hours reading his collected works, it did not inspire me to become a Jungian literary critic. Another course, *Literary Analysis and Psychoanalysis*, with its heavy dependence on Freud and Lacan, made psychoanalytical literary analysis unappealing to me. My solution at the time was thus to not subscribe to any theory and rather to investigate literature through philology, that is, a close reading of texts with attention to their particular literary and historical contexts. As I now understand, it wasn't that I disdained theory altogether, I had just not found a theoretical lens that rang true to me.

Looking back at my previous scholarly work, moreover, I realized that it was already libertarian in spirit and simply lacked the theoretical grounding that Austro-libertarianism offered. My attention had been instinctively drawn to power elite analysis (although I had not called it that) in my prior publications on Italian literature. For example, in my 2004 book on Italian Renaissance epic, subtitled "From Public Duty to Private Pleasure," I had traced the shift from an early humanist emphasis

on civic duty to a later vindication of personal liberty against an oppressive state. And in a 2008 essay on Dante, I had written about how the poet's political vicissitudes could have shaped his depiction of anger in the *Divine Comedy*.

During the transformative period in which I was watching Ron Paul videos with my children and delving into a treasure trove of publications and free pdfs from the Mises Institute, I was also completing a book about the portrayal of the world beyond Europe in two Italian Renaissance romance epics. It gave me immense joy to be able to slip in an opportune reference to Murray Rothbard as well as a call for a “libertarian, or a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative, perspective” that I had unexpectedly found in my late Columbia colleague Edward Said's introduction to *Orientalism*.

I also relished adding an Austro-libertarian perspective in my teaching. I had been accustomed to beginning my course on Machiavelli by describing the nefarious political climate surrounding him as well as the imprisonment and torture to which he was subjected under Medici rule. I proceeded to add Rothbard's *Anatomy of the State* and Friedrich Hayek's chapter “How the Worst Get on Top” as required reading for the first two weeks of class. I had long delighted in discussing the humanist aspects of Confucius and Mencius in the global core course *Nobility and Civility: East and West*, but now I began to recommend Roderick Long's study of libertarian themes in early Confucianism. And when rereading primary texts for my courses on Italian Renaissance literature, I began to notice aspects that only an Austro-libertarian lens could bring to the surface.

Seeing seemingly familiar works of literature in a new light also led me to draft a series of articles and book chapters—on Marco Polo, Machiavelli, Renaissance fiction, chivalric literature, and Italian popular traditions such as Sicilian puppet theater and folk operas of northern Italy—using Austro-libertarian analysis. Especially in my main field of research, Italian Renaissance epic and its performance traditions, I enjoyed studying the ways in which chivalric stories played out the tensions between individual rights and political oppression.

My most fun academic project—the present co-edited volume excluded—was the collection of essays I co-edited with Carlo Lottieri, *Speaking Truth to Power from Medieval to Modern Italy* (2016). Our Call for Papers explicitly stated that “attention to intellectual traditions that valorize the individual, such as libertarian theory and the Austrian School of economics, is especially encouraged.” Admittedly, in the end

there were only two essays that actively drew from Austro-libertarianism (that of myself and my daughter), but we were nonetheless able to bring together a full range of essays that followed the anti-statist intentions of our proposal. Moreover, our outline of the Austrian School in the introduction would reach readers who had probably never before heard of Mises or Rothbard.

I’m grateful for the libertarian friendships I’ve made during this past decade and the exciting scholarship I’ve encountered, such as the late Paul Cantor’s pioneering studies of canonical literature and popular culture, Ryan McMaken’s *Commie Cowboys*, and Allen Mendenhall’s *Literature and Liberty: Essays in Libertarian Literary Criticism*, to name just a few examples. To highlight the fact that there is more libertarian scholarship in the humanities than it may seem at first glance—as well as to facilitate the consultation of libertarian-leaning studies—I assembled a bibliography and placed it in a Google Doc that can be updated indefinitely.³

My newsfeed on social media and the various newsletters to which I subscribe bring home the grim state of the world at every turn. But I also believe that freedom-minded individuals can have a positive impact in myriad ways that don’t necessarily make headlines. Researching and writing about literature and the arts through an Austro-libertarian lens have given added meaning and purpose to my academic career and life in general. After all, as Confucius says in the *Analects*: “To study and at times to practice what one has learned, is that not a pleasure? To have friends coming from afar, is that not a joy?”⁴

³ See “Austrian Economics, Libertarianism, and Academic Writing in the Humanities” at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eD6vIW89mpYZCfPljqJhhXb3wCNu0cdhl-a1r5rmKbA/edit>

⁴ Confucius, *The Analects*, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, volume 1, 2nd edition, edited by William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 45.



My Path to Becoming an Economist and Peacemonger

Christopher J. Coyne

My intellectual story began in 1997 when I was a junior undergraduate student at Manhattan College in Riverdale, New York. During that year, I was focused on completing the required electives to finish my degree. I chose to take elective courses in Comparative Economic Systems and Public Economics with Peter Boettke, a professor who had just joined the faculty. Those courses would change the trajectory of my life and career.

In Comparative Economic Systems, Pete introduced us to Ludwig von Mises and F.A. Hayek. We learned about the socialist calculation debate and the importance of property rights, market-determined prices, and profit and loss for the allocation of resources and for improvements in human well-being. In Public Economics, Pete introduced us to James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, and their work in the field of public choice economics. Combined, these two classes transformed the way I

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viewed the world and made me fall in love with economics, a love that remains strong to this day.

For one of the classes, Pete wrote a message on my midterm exam along the lines of, “If you are interested in this material, really interested, come see me during my office hours.” I did, and he gave me several books to read and told me about the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), an organization that offered summer seminars for students interested in liberalism, Austrian economics, and public choice. Pete left Manhattan College after the 1997–1998 academic year to move to George Mason University (GMU), but his lasting impact on me remained.

Because of Pete’s influence, I added economics as a second major (I was focused on finance prior to meeting Pete) and completed my degree at Manhattan College in 1999. Based on Pete’s advice, I attended an IHS seminar over the summer. I also began spending my free time reading Mises and Hayek. Some people are introduced to Mises and Hayek through the political writings of Ayn Rand or Murray Rothbard. My own path was different. I began by reading Mises’s and Hayek’s work in economics. As I made my way through their work, I came across Mises’s *Liberalism* and Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* and *The Constitution of Liberty*. These books made me realize the importance of political philosophy and the power of economics for understanding politics (economics limits utopias, as Pete Boettke always told his classes).

In reading more about Mises and Hayek, I came across Henry Hazlitt and Murray Rothbard. I read Hazlitt’s *The Foundations of Morality* (still one of my favorite books, and still underappreciated in my opinion), which reinforced the important connection between economics and ethics. Rothbard’s work was equally important in my intellectual development. His *Man, Economy, and State* was a fundamental part of my economic education. *For a New Liberty* opened my eyes to the beauty of human creativity and social cooperation in a way I had not thought of previously; if given the space, private people can figure out ingenious ways to live together peacefully, without relying on government force. Reading this book made me question the need for government for a functioning and prosperous society. Rothbard’s chapter on “war and foreign policy” was especially impactful in terms of clarifying the pernicious effects of government-executed wars and the possibility of peace through social cooperation. Although I didn’t know it at the time, years later this would become a major focus of my scholarship.

Pete Boettke and I kept in touch when he moved to GMU. After graduating from Manhattan College in 1999, I worked in finance, at J.P. Morgan, for two years. During that period, I spent most of my spare time reading economics and political philosophy. After talking with Pete, I decided I wanted to pursue a Ph.D. to dedicate my life to the study of these ideas as a scholar and teacher. I applied to GMU because I knew I wanted to study Austrian economics with Pete as my mentor. Fortunately, I was accepted and began my graduate studies in the Fall of 2001.

The intellectual environment at GMU was a dream come true. I was fortunate enough to enter the Ph.D. program with an amazing cohort of students. The funded students in my year (we were called Buchanan Fellows then) included Peter Leeson, Ryan Oprea, and Abel Winn (all three had attended Hillsdale College as undergraduate students). We all shared an interest in Austrian economics, and interacting with them in classes and in our study group was crucial to my development as an economist. The classes ahead of me included Scott Beaulier, Benjamin Powell, Edward Stringham, and Virgil Storr. Although they were further along in their program of study, these students were welcoming to us first-year students and created a thriving intellectual environment to discuss the ideas we cared about. Ed Stringham was especially important in this regard.

During our first semester in graduate school, Ed approached us with an idea. In the 1970s, Gordon Tullock edited two volumes, *Explorations in the Theory of Anarchy* (1972) and *Further Explorations in the Theory of Anarchy* (1974), consisting of original papers on the economics of anarchy. Ed's idea was that we should each take a chapter from the original books and engage with the author's arguments. (Ed later collected our papers in an edited volume, *Anarchy, State, and Public Choice*, 2005.) We would meet regularly as a group, with Pete Boettke as our guide, to discuss working drafts of our papers. In addition to being a fast-paced and intellectually exciting experience, the project created an important opportunity for us to learn how to write academic papers while also giving us confidence that we could pursue topics we were passionate about, even when they were outside the norm of what other economists were doing.

This confidence was reinforced by another event that occurred during the spring semester of my first year in the Ph.D. program. As part of the project, Ed Stringham organized a panel at the Mises Institute's annual Austrian Scholars Conference, held in March 2002, to present working versions of our papers. After I arrived back in Virginia, I received an email

from Robert Higgs. I had not met Bob at the conference, but he attended our session and his message expressed interest in me submitting a version of my paper to *The Independent Review*, an interdisciplinary journal he edited at the time. I accepted the invitation and submitted a paper, and Bob was patient and constructive in working with me to get my paper into publishable form. This experience had an enormous impact on my confidence as a young scholar. More importantly, it connected me with Bob Higgs and his work on war and the growth of the state. The timing could not have been better given the other major event that occurred during my first year at GMU.

I entered graduate school in August 2001, a few weeks before the September 11 attacks. The U.S. government soon invaded Afghanistan and then Iraq. I already had a broad interest in foreign policy after reading Rothbard's chapter on war and foreign policy in *For a New Liberty*. At GMU I was assigned to be Tyler Cowen's research assistant. One day Tyler and I were discussing how no one seemed to be considering the realities of the U.S. government's occupation of Afghanistan—the epistemic constraints of engaging in “nation-building,” the perverse incentives facing those in the U.S. government as well as other key players involved in the occupation, and the likely perverse consequences of military occupation of a foreign country. This led to a co-authored paper with Tyler and served as the topic of my dissertation, which explored the political economy of U.S. military occupation and nation-building.

I completed my Ph.D. at GMU in 2005 and accepted a tenure-track position at Hampden-Sydney College in Southern Virginia. Two years later, I moved to West Virginia University, before returning to my intellectual home, GMU, in 2010 as a member of the faculty. I have been fortunate to have supportive mentors and advocates at each of these institutions who have helped me to develop as a teacher and scholar. At Hampden-Sydney College I benefited from working with Tony Carilli, Greg Dempster, and Justin Isaacs. At West Virginia I had the pleasure of working with Russ Sobel and Bill Trumbull. And at GMU, I have the privilege of working with my teacher and mentor, Pete Boettke.

While I have researched a wide variety of topics, I continue to study the political economy of foreign interventions by governments. This scholarship focuses on the feasibility of interventions abroad and on how a military-driven foreign policy undermines freedoms and liberties at home. I believe issues related to war and militarism are central to human liberty and well-being. These issues remain contentious even among classical

liberals, with some arguing for a global liberal empire, others arguing for a more restrained minimal state, and still others arguing for private alternatives to state-provided defense. Personally, I find daily inspiration in the opening words of Baldy Harper's essay "In Search of Peace":

Charges of pacifism are likely to be hurled at anyone who in these troubled times raises any question about the race into war. If pacifism means embracing the objective of peace, I am willing to accept the charge. If it means opposing all aggression against others, I am willing to accept that charge also. It is now urgent in the interest of liberty that many persons become "peacemongers."

I believe that Harper's words are as important today as when he first wrote them in 1951. My scholarship uses the tools of economics to study the conditions for peace and to clarify the benefits of being a peacemonger.

At GMU, I work alongside Pete Boettke and Virgil Storr in running the F.A. Hayek Program for the Advanced Study in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. Among other things, we create space for graduate students to pursue their interests in Austrian economics and public choice, and to explore topics that interest and excite them. I have had the pleasure of serving as the dissertation advisor to extremely talented and creative students including Yahya Alshamy, Joshua Ammons, Trey Carson, Alex Cartwright, Tom Duncan, Tate Fegley, Caleb Fuller, Nathan Goodman, Abby Hall, Peter Jacobsen, Jayme Lemke, Jordan Lofthouse, David Lucas, Derek McAfee, Matthew Owens, Chandler Reilly, Nathaniel Smith, and Garrett Wood. I have learned from each of these students and am grateful to be part of their intellectual journey.

I also have the good fortune of co-editing two academic journals. During graduate school I began assisting Pete Boettke with the journal he edits, *The Review of Austrian Economics (RAE)*. In 2007, I became the North American Editor of the RAE, and in 2013 I became the co-editor where I work alongside Pete. Also in 2013, Bob Higgs stepped aside as the editor of *The Independent Review*, a journal he co-founded (with David Theroux, founder of the Independent Institute) in 1996 and edited from its inception. David and Bob asked me to be a co-editor of the journal, an offer which I gladly accepted. I enjoy editing these journals both because of the intellectual engagement and because it allows me

to create space for the intellectual exploration and development of ideas foundational to human freedom and flourishing.

I have lived a charmed academic life for which I am thankful. I am grateful that I met Pete Boettke as an undergraduate; he had the biggest influence on my life outside of my parents. I am grateful for my experience in graduate school at GMU with supportive and engaging student-colleagues and teachers. I am grateful that I have been able to pursue the scholarly ideas I care about in numerous supportive environments. I am grateful for the privilege to interact with undergraduate and graduate students to discuss intellectual ideas, to teach, and to learn. In his book *Liberalism*, Ludwig von Mises wrote that “Against what is stupid, nonsensical, erroneous, and evil, liberalism fights with the weapons of the mind, and not with brute force and repression.” Finally, I am grateful to live a life of the mind and to contribute to advancing ideas that foster peace and social cooperation over force and repression.



A Young American for Liberty

Lauren Daugherty

When I was growing up, my mother read to my siblings and me a huge variety of books, including some about topics such as the Russian gulags and Mao. I remember being appalled at the very idea of a government controlling people in such a severe way, and the devastating consequences it had on millions of people. As a child, I also read books about the American Revolution and visited Colonial Williamsburg and other early American historical sites, and that also left a profound impression on me.

In graduate school, I took a course on twentieth-century history. After class, I often felt ill to my stomach after three hours of learning about the death and destruction that was so rampant across the globe in the twentieth century. It really is staggering. So much of it was because of tyrants who exerted extreme control and cruelty on millions of people.

Another pivotal moment in my continued and devoted commitment to the cause was a trip to South America. I was in my mid-30s, and was excited to fulfill a childhood dream of seeing the Andes. But what left the biggest impression on me was seeing and meeting Venezuelan refugees. They had walked hundreds of miles by the time I saw them. They had very few possessions, typically a small backpack and a blanket. Many carried

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their young children. It was painful to see their plight. Yet, these Venezuelans were the lucky ones because they were able to leave their ruined home country. Many quickly turned to entrepreneurship (like selling bottled water to travelers) to provide for themselves and their families. Venezuela should not be in the tragic situation that it is. This once-wealthy nation has some of the richest stocks of natural resources in the world. It ought to be very prosperous but socialism has nearly destroyed it. Liberty and prosperity can quickly fade away into severe poverty, crime, and tyranny as it has in Venezuela and many other places in history.

All of the above experiences contributed to my evolution as a libertarian and my decision to focus my time, labor, and talents to advance liberty. I have consequently spent most of my career thus far advancing liberty through non-profit and political organizations. I care about the cause of liberty because I care about human beings. Liberty is not only morally right but it also best provides for the prosperity and well-being of people. I do the work I do because I want to preclude the United States from succumbing to the tragic fate that befalls socialist countries. I want future generations of Americans to live in freedom and prosperity, with the many blessings that those provide. As Ronald Reagan famously said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." I firmly believe this to be true, and history so sadly illustrates it over and over again.

I recently finished my role as CEO of Young Americans for Liberty. At YAL we have the honor and joy of making many millions of Americans more free each year. In 2021, we made 88 million Americans more free. In 2022, we made 91 million Americans more free. And in 2023, we plan to very realistically make 100 million Americans more free. We do this by passing a wide range of bills on topics like school choice, the 2nd Amendment, criminal justice reform, free speech, religious freedom, and more.

Huge results like these are only possible because a lot of people work together. The extended YAL network and team includes legislators, students, donors, staff, and partner organizations, working together to make a big impact, protecting our liberty in America. We are helping to prevent the United States from going down the same tragic path as Venezuela.

People may think, "Oh, that couldn't really happen here." I suggest that they clearly have not studied history's many tragic examples, and that

they haven't reflected adequately on the reality of what the world experienced during the recent Covid-era lockdowns. Look at what happened in the United States. It was draconian in many ways here but, worse yet, consider the experiences of Canada, Australia, and China. America's overreach was not nearly as bad as some other places and yet the government forcibly closed businesses, churches, and schools, stopped surgeries, and so much more. State and federal authorities could easily have gone to the extremes that happened in some of these other countries, but they did not because the American public would not have tolerated it. It is very, very important that the American public pushes back against government overreach. This was inherent in our founding as a country. We must continue to have that same critical thinking, that same feistiness, and that same courage to preserve our most sacred freedoms for future generations.

What is the price of liberty? Many respected thinkers have said, "eternal vigilance." That is a key part, yes, but vigilance is meaningless without courage and appropriate action. If we want liberty to survive and thrive, we must be vigilant, courageous, and active.



Family, Freedom, and Flourishing: An Educator's Journey

Marianna Davidovich

My sisters and I often find ourselves engulfed in our parents' and grandparents' stories as they share memories reflecting on life behind the Iron Curtain. Even after 40 years, I can still sense what they must have felt to discover new-found freedom and the immense relief that everything they were taught about the “evil West” was a lie.

In Vinnytsia, Ukraine, where I was born, living conditions were dire. My mother (Marina) and I were often ill from respiratory or other infections from mold and lack of heat. Food was scarce, and we were often hungry. One day the ceiling above my crib collapsed just seconds after my father picked me up to kiss me hello after work. It was that precise moment when my mother screamed “Get me out of here!” and finally agreed with my father (Felix) and his mother (Ida) to risk everything for

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a chance to escape the USSR, antisemitism, and the constant struggle to survive under Soviet socialism.¹

It was risky to apply for an exit visa to leave the Soviet Union. Most applicants were denied and labeled Refuseniks²—traitors to the country who were subsequently ostracized from society. Teachers, employers, and even friends would all turn their backs on Refuseniks out of fear. It was a devastating predicament, but ultimately we were extremely lucky and granted permission to leave under the political agreement which allowed a small percentage of Soviet Jews to return to their homeland of Israel for family reunification.³ But thanks to America’s push for *Freedom of Choice*, the vast majority preferred to emigrate to the U.S. for greater economic opportunity and the chance to live freely.⁴ We spent three weeks in Vienna, then waited six difficult months in Lido di Ostia, Italy, until being matched with a sponsor (watch the documentary <https://www.stateless.us/>). We finally arrived in America on January 16, 1976, just before my second birthday.

LIFE IN AMERICA

I studied Hebrew at a Jewish preschool, and my parents and I learned English watching *Sesame Street* and other television shows. The rest of the time I spent in the gym with my parents learning gymnastics, which I loved. Our generous sponsors from the Jewish community in Hartford, Connecticut, taught us the ways of the West—including how to shop, be frugal, and save. My mother nearly fainted from shock the first time she saw such abundance at the local supermarket! My parents worked tirelessly and were excited to deposit a mere \$30/month into our savings account. They proudly became American citizens in 1982, which is when I was naturalized (at age eight). Our new life in America was happy and full of love with our growing family, as my sisters (Elizabeth and Joanna)

¹ Marina’s family blog and personal journey “Becoming Americans” (<https://marina.davidovich.blogspot.com>).

² The term is derived from the “refusal” handed down to a prospective emigrant from the Soviet authorities.

³ Gal Beckerman, *When They Come for Us, We’ll Be Gone: The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry*. Mariner Books, 2010. Boston, MA.

⁴ Center for Immigration Studies, Refugee Resettlement and “Freedom of Choice”: *The Case of Soviet Jewry*.

were born and at long last my grandparents (Yakha and Isac) and other extended family began arriving in the U.S.

My father's entrepreneurial mindset, drive to provide for the family, and natural business acumen led us to eventually open the second largest gymnastics school in Florida (United Gymnastics Academy), where I trained 30 hours/week. I experienced the highs of winning and the lows of losing. If you're not failing, you're not doing it right. It's a tough lesson for a kid, but it's an important one, and it only made me train harder. At age 14 I started coaching kids and learning how to run the business. This experience provided me with a better education than all my public school years combined. After qualifying to train at the Olympic Training Center at age 16, I retired from gymnastics and spent my senior year of high school competing in springboard diving at the University of North Florida. "Through a healthy body, a healthy mind" was the motto my father always repeated, which is a loose translation from the Latin maxim, *mens sana in corpore sano*. Health and fitness have always been an integral part of my life.

At 19, I joined the U.S. Air Force and became a Russian linguist, adjunct faculty instructor, and curriculum developer for the National Cryptologic School. After six years of military intelligence service, I re-entered civilian life and taught English as a Second Language and U.S. Citizenship to Russian immigrants by day and taught ballroom, Latin, and swing dancing by night. I later ran two family businesses (one in entertainment and one in weight loss) until giving birth to my children. Clara (b. 2000) and Cole (b. 2003) are the lights of my life and made all my dreams come true!

INTELLECTUAL GROWTH INSPIRED BY MOTHERHOOD

Both kids attended Montessori private schools, but after a sudden divorce, I reluctantly enrolled them in public school. This wasn't ideal, so I got involved and was elected to our charter school board and sat on the county's Health Advisory Committee. I quickly realized how bureaucratic and indoctrinating our school system was and that it focused on compliance and conformity instead of teaching children how to think. I also witnessed firsthand the corrupt nature of our political system when I served as precinct chair of the Republican Party. As my discontent grew, I pulled my kids from the failing government school system and left politics. I decided to homeschool my children primarily because I wanted

to provide a healthy environment in both mind and body. I aimed to teach them morality and what it meant to be a good person by setting an example of strong personal character with an entrepreneurial spirit.

I read *Atlas Shrugged* for the first time and immediately identified with Dagny Taggart because I thought I could help “fix” our broken political and education systems. Ayn Rand’s Objectivism, grounded in Aristotelian philosophy, led me to delve into psychology to gain a deeper understanding of the human condition. I read the works of Edith Packer, Jonathan Haidt, and Jordan Peterson. Craig Biddle’s *Loving Life* added clarity about the dangers of altruism. I greatly admired the ancient philosopher Hypatia for her uncompromising character, dedication to scientific inquiry, and extraordinary courage. As I completed my MBA in entrepreneurship, I realized that if I cared about humanity and the future of a civilized and prosperous society, I needed to return to education and help empower future generations with tools they otherwise wouldn’t receive—tools to understand and implement ideals for living freely, happily, and with purpose.

ADAPTIVE EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

Like all children, mine had individual learning styles. I developed a flexible hybrid model and customized it based on intensive research and my children’s uniquely evolving needs. The more I searched, the more opportunities I discovered. Clara took classes at local colleges and earned an AA degree before graduating high school at no additional cost to us. Cole maintained extreme flexibility during his school years while committing to 30+ hours of tennis training per week, ultimately graduating as a top national athlete with a 4.625 GPA. I jokingly tell people that we didn’t homeschool, we *car-schooled* between co-ops, sports, and field trips to local and international destinations. I treasure those years!

I founded Atlanta Secular Homeschool on FB to build a community outside traditional homeschool church groups and negotiated deals with local businesses to provide discounts for factory tours, farm tours, radio/TV station tours, rock climbing, glass blowing, and other experiential learning opportunities. The group grew to over 2.5K families, and I became the “go-to” for other parents who were dissatisfied as I helped them discover better educational solutions for their own children. This consulting led me to start FindaBetterSchool.org to serve a larger number of families looking for alternative educational solutions while helping

them navigate the changing educational landscape of universal vouchers, education savings accounts, and scholarship tax credits. As my friend Dr. Bradley Thompson says, parents should “#justwalkaway.”⁵

While I was teaching entrepreneurship, economics, and finance at our local library to my children and the homeschool community, I heard that the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) was looking for someone with my background and philosophical alignment to help create curricula as part of its new Character and Values Initiative. As long as I could work remotely to continue homeschooling my kids, I happily took on this exciting, yet challenging role to write curriculum teaching the morality of capitalism.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

One of my heroes, then-FEE President Lawrence “Larry” Reed, was adamant about conveying the virtues and morality of capitalism. It was during this time that I helped grow FEE from a libertarian think tank to a mainstream educational nonprofit focused on teaching the principles of free markets with an emphasis on ethical entrepreneurship, strong character, personal responsibility, individualism, property rights, and limited government. It was exactly what I wanted to teach my kids, and this role aligned with my life perfectly. Larry interviewed me for his book, *Real Heroes*, as I discussed education philosophy, pedagogy, and homeschooling. I spoke at conferences on the dangers of socialism and the beauty of free enterprise and entrepreneurial thinking. I also co-authored FEE’s first course, *The Economics of Entrepreneurship*, and created the Boy Scouts’ four-hour Entrepreneurship Merit Badge workshop.

Discovering Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and John Locke was thrilling. Adam Smith’s brilliance comes through in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, to which I often refer because the title itself draws attention to the real question at hand: “What causes wealth?” Frédéric Bastiat is another influential author who brought immense clarity and armed me with helpful vocabulary in his book, *The Law*. “Legal plunder,” what a brilliant term!

⁵ Dr. Bradley Thompson, Executive Director of the Clemson Institute for the Study of Capitalism and author of the Redneck Intellectual.

I continued creating new roles for myself by significantly expanding FEE's K-12 network and customer base while refining outreach, partnership, and growth strategies. I was soon promoted as the first female director in FEE's 75-year history, and currently serve as Chief External Affairs Officer.

EDUCATION IS KEY

I've come to realize that labels are dangerous, words are misunderstood, and definitions are lost. The lack of a proper education and understanding of history are contributing factors leading to a miseducated society. For this reason, I serve on the U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor and Genocide Awareness to teach and preserve history so that we don't repeat it. Many people remain unaware of the Ukrainian genocide from 1932 to 1933 when Stalin murdered around 10 million people by starvation. Walter Duranty received a Pulitzer Prize for his disinformation about the Holodomor in the *New York Times*, lying when he wrote there was no starvation in Ukraine. Gareth Jones is the true hero and should have received that honor but instead was murdered. Watch the movie *Mr. Jones (2019)* for the full story. This travesty necessitates public awareness until Duranty's Pulitzer is revoked (online petition found at UkraineGenocide.com).

Another international organization that influenced me was led by one of my role models, Linda Whetstone, daughter of Sir Antony Fisher, who courageously followed in her father's footsteps to continue the crucial mission of the Atlas Network, which he founded. Many friends and mentors associated with this network continuously educate activists to fight for freedom and individual liberty around the world, including current humanitarian efforts to help support network partners in Ukraine to defend against Russian aggression.

My family and I will be forever grateful to the United States of America where we have the freedom to live where and how we want, to be entrepreneurial, and to prosper. I hope my story will leave others with a feeling of gratitude for the privilege of living in the land of opportunity that millions of people around the world only dream about. If we don't preserve our liberty—the most precious commodity—it will slip away. So I, for one, will continue this fight for my children and all future generations around the world.



Moments That Led Me to Libertarianism in South Africa

Dumo Denga

My journey to becoming a libertarian involved a series of events which spanned over a period of nine years since 2009. In this autobiography, I will include all the events from my memory that played a significant role when deciding to become a libertarian and it should be noted that the context of this autobiography is from a South African perspective.

My earliest memory of my journey was when I was in high school around 2007. I had a friend with whom I studied history, and one day, during our break periods, we were discussing the Russian Revolution and the respective periods in which Lenin and Stalin ruled. One thing that I remember was when my friend told me how repressive Lenin and Stalin were towards those they ruled over, which mainly involved centralizing the means of production by confiscating property such as land, produce, and private business. Upon hearing of the repressiveness of Lenin and Stalin, I thought to myself, “I am so glad that I do not live in a regime that is similar to Russia’s during the respective regimes of Lenin and

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Stalin. Furthermore, I would never want to live in such a regime.” Little did I know that the ruling party in South Africa at that time, the African National Congress (ANC), had a plan known as the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), which aimed to turn South Africa into a socialist state. I became aware of the NDR in 2016 when I decided to take a serious interest in politics and economics. However, due to my naivety during my high school years I held two contradictory beliefs, this is, I was repulsed by the idea of socialism while at the same time supporting a political party that wanted to implement socialism.

While I was studying for a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of Witwatersrand from 2009 until 2011, I became more critical of the ANC and decided to distance myself from the party mainly due to how Thabo Mbeki was ousted in 2007 as the ANC president in favour of Jacob Zuma. The latter, at that time, was facing charges of corruption which the National Prosecution Authority (NPA) eventually dropped when it was clear that he would become the president of South Africa in 2009. During the 2009 national elections, I decided to vote for a new break-away party of the ANC known as the Congress of the People (COPE) which did well in their first election by obtaining 7.42% of the votes. Unfortunately, due to factionalism in COPE, the party became less relevant in subsequent elections which led me to believe that one should not be loyal to a party but rather to principles. As a result, I voted for different political parties and even decided to run as a Member of Parliament (MP) candidate for the Capitalist Party of South Africa (ZACP) during the 2019 national elections which is also elaborated on below.

In 2011, I was introduced to political philosophy and economic theories on two separate occasions when I was not seeking to learn either. The first occasion was when I realized that I was short one course in order to meet the requirements of completing my Bachelor of Commerce degree. While looking through the university’s course list, a course titled “Social and Political Philosophy” caught my eye. I was instantly sold after inquiring about what I should expect. The course exposed me to topics such as the role of the state, the idea of the state, the legitimacy of the state, and democracy, with writings by John Rawls, Thomas Hobbes, Robert Paul Wolff, and many others. The second occasion occurred in the context of another course, entitled “Insurance and Risk Management.” The lecturer of the course at that time was Dr. Brian Benfield, a founder of one of South Africa’s leading insurance firms and a former Chairman of the Free Market Foundation (FMF) Executive Committee. During his

lectures, Benfield showed glimpses of his passion for free markets. When discussing a topic pertaining to the course, he would always advocate for free markets while sticking to the topic. In his exam papers, there were a few questions on the free market despite the course being on insurance and risk management. I remember how in every single lecture he would say “There is no such thing as a free lunch,” a phrase popularized by the late Milton Friedman. Furthermore, that very phrase was the answer to a question in one of his exam papers. During the last lecture of his course, Benfield brought Leon Louw, the executive director and co-founder of the FME, to deliver a lecture to the class about free markets. During the lecture, Louw promoted the benefits of free markets and explained why South Africa’s economic policy should adopt free market principles. I thoroughly enjoyed the lecture, which was the highlight of Benfield’s insurance course. After completing these two courses in 2011, I became more aware of theories and standpoints within political philosophy and economics, but I was not yet a libertarian. At that time, I was certainly in favour of free markets, but was unsure about the role of the state.

I started to become very wary of the state in 2013. It was the year in which I started working full-time for an airline. In that year, the South African government decided that motorists should pay for road maintenance by means of e-tolling despite the fact that motorists already pay for road maintenance by means of the fuel levy whenever they purchase fuel at filling stations. E-tolling involved setting up gantries on major highways in the Gauteng province that charged fees to motorists for which a settlement was expected at the end of the month. The South African government was so secretive about the e-tolling project that in 2012, when the gantries were being completed, many thought that these “newly built structures” were speed traps designed to catch motorists travelling above the speed limit. The following year, however, the government announced their true purpose. A huge resistance followed, whereby many motorists, including myself, with the support of notable persons, declared that they would not pay for e-tolls. The South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL), the state-owned company responsible for e-tolling, responded by threatening to prosecute motorists who refused to pay. Many motorists were resilient in their non-compliance despite the threats, and the e-tolling compliance rate was as low as 15% according to the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA). Despite SANRAL’s threat of prosecution, not one motorist, at the time of writing this autobiography, has been prosecuted for non-compliance. The nature in which

e-tolling was introduced in South Africa and the government's secrecy surrounding the project made me realize that I would never trust the state again.

It was in 2016 when my journey towards libertarianism started to pick up some pace. At that time, I was introduced to the works of Thomas Sowell through a close relative and then I started to binge YouTube videos in which he appeared. Through my binging, I came across videos of the late Walter Williams and the late Milton Friedman who, in my opinion, were pivotal in my conversion. In 2017, I remember hearing the word "libertarian" in one of the videos that I watched during my binging sessions. I eventually googled it and discovered that my beliefs after engaging the works of Sowell, Friedman, and Williams were consistent with the definition of libertarianism according to the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*: "Libertarianism is a family of views in political philosophy. Libertarians strongly value individual freedom and see this as justifying strong protections for individual freedom" (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/libertarianism/>).

After realizing that I was a libertarian, assaults on our freedoms in South Africa became more apparent to me. The first such instance occurred in 2018 when Cyril Ramaphosa became the president of South Africa after Jacob Zuma resigned from the Presidency. In July of that year, Ramaphosa announced that the ANC would amend the South African Constitution to allow for the expropriation of land without compensation. Thankfully, this was ultimately unsuccessful due to the lack of support it received from other political parties in 2021. However, upon hearing this announcement to amend South African Constitution, I was sure that the ANC were ramping up their efforts to implement the NDR which, mentioned earlier, was a plan to turn South Africa into a socialist state. In that same year, I therefore decided to become more active in spreading the message of individual freedom and property rights. My first attempt at such was to establish a podcast called the "ManPatria Podcast" which was aimed at spreading the idea of libertarianism and free markets. The first episode was released in September 2018. Since my podcast's inception, I have interviewed libertarians, classical liberals, and anarcho-capitalists such as Antony P. Mueller, Germinal G. Van, Lipton Matthews, Michael J. Hoffman, Mpiyakhe Dhlamini, Christo Hattingh, and Martin van Staden, to name a few. The podcast still has a small audience despite its age. This is due to the low popularity of libertarianism in South Africa and the lack

of accessibility to digital media in South Africa which is explained by high data prices.

In 2019, I decided to run as a Member of Parliament (MP) candidate for the Capitalist Party of South Africa (ZACP) in the 2019 national elections. The party was launched three months before the election date, which meant that aggressive campaigning was required to create momentum. The party had ten simple principles in their manifesto which was meant to compete against more established parties with lengthy manifestos. The party managed to get about 16,000 votes in the 2019 national election, which was not enough to win a seat in Parliament. The experience of campaigning, which I had enjoyed, also made me realize that a lot more work is required to spread the message of individual freedom in South Africa. Voters seem to be more concerned about personalities rather than principles.

I have developed many new and valuable friendships ever since becoming a libertarian. One friendship that I think should be mentioned is the one that I developed with Mpiyakhe Dhlamini. He is also an anarcho-capitalist and was the first person to financially support my podcast. I am forever grateful for his friendship and his loyal support.

Becoming a libertarian has been an incredible journey thus far. I am glad that I have come across the material that solidified my stance on economics and political philosophy. Furthermore, I am grateful for all the challenges and successes that I have experienced. These have helped me grow as a libertarian.



The Libertarian Mission of a Catholic Priest

Beniamino Di Martino

I was surprised when I received an invitation from Walter Block and Jo Ann Cavallo to write a presentation of my intellectual journey to add to their autobiographies of eminent libertarians. Obviously, I could not say no to Block and Cavallo, considering the privilege granted to me. So here I am to sketch my profile as a no longer young Neapolitan Catholic priest in southern Italy. I have had many reasons to make the promotion of individual liberty the way to put my own vocation into practice and to make my priestly mission a ministry inseparable from recognizing the transcendent and moral significance, both Christian and human, of personal liberty, as well as defending individuality from all forms of collectivism.

I state up front that I consider this perspective a consequence of the charity that impels every Christian to always desire the best for every person; however—and I say this *above all else*—it is a substantial necessity, a requirement inscribed in the faith in the incarnation of God that entails a disruptive and previously unknown anthropological viewpoint with an unprecedented appreciation of physicality—“*caro cardo salutis*”

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(flesh is the pivotal point of salvation), declared the early theologians—and a serious consideration of the historical condition of man *qua* man, his material needs and exigencies as a unique and unrepeatable individual.

In the convergence between charity and dogma (that is to say, “*caritas in veritate*,” or charity in truth), I think it natural that Christians find themselves genuine lovers of liberty, and that it is precisely this love for liberty—not an abstract love, but the one rooted in the right to private property and expressed by the liberty to undertake economic actions—that shows the irreplaceable contribution Christianity offers to the earthly and social dimension of life: “*ubi fides, ibi libertas*” (where there is faith, there is freedom).

In one of my recent writings, I defined libertarianism as the political philosophy that simply takes seriously the inviolability of the human person and sets this intangibility as a criterion for judging social relations. Therefore, I maintain that overcoming the prejudice of religious institutions, specifically the Catholic Church, against classical liberalism in general, and libertarianism in particular, is a task to which we must devote ourselves without delay.

“A libertarian Catholic priest?” Well, yes. You have understood correctly. In fact, it often happens that people are surprised because they assume—improperly and superficially—that the Christian faith is incompatible with libertarian theory. Moreover, it is also true that there are very few priests who declare themselves to be libertarians (among Italians I may have only one fellow libertarian). Although we are few, we are well-tempered by adverse circumstances, such as the communitarianism and solidarity prevailing in the religious world, to give informed reasons and a thorough justification for our well-grounded reasoning. Indeed, the classical liberal-libertarian tradition is inconceivable without reference to Christianity.

My personal story unfolded within this long and fertile tradition; it was at once Christian and scientific, because my intellectual journey was of a piece with my existential and Christian journey. My rational journey in particular developed from a critical assessment of ideology understood as a distortion by which thought rejects reality and voluntarily sets itself against the nature of things. Now, many years after those initial moments, which were implicitly but not consciously libertarian, I am articulating my reflections in several works in which I present ideology as an “absolute evil”: “absolute” in the sense that it is a theoretical vice that is capable of

spawning every form of destruction, both political—at the social level—and psychological—at the individual level.

Constantly in anguish over the doctrinal crisis in which Christianity finds itself, I perceived that such a crisis must be traced back to a refusal of realism (a refusal explained away spiritually and emotionally), to a denial of liberty (a denial justified by solidarity and pauperism), and a rejection of individuality (a rejection caused by the presumed primacy of the community and the common good). I could then sense that it would be necessary to begin anew exactly from what was denied to recover what brought about Western civilization.

For a long time, I was the pastor of several parishes in the area where I grew up, in the shadow of Vesuvius, the most renowned volcano in the world. In that land laden with history and famous for its panoramas, I spent the first part of my life guiding and serving the communities entrusted to me, until the moment when my bishop stubbornly insisted that I resume my studies and pursue a Ph.D. in Moral Theology. I obeyed reluctantly, without knowing that from then on my activities would change by devoting myself predominately to studying and writing. Since I could not excuse myself from my bishop's request, I chose to focus my doctoral work in a field that was already congenial to me, and so I proposed to study a particular aspect of the relation between the social teaching of the Catholic Church as articulated by the Popes throughout history, and the Austrian School of economics from the perspective of Murray Rothbard's natural law/natural rights libertarianism. The "Social Teaching of the Church" is the branch of Moral Theology that deepens the relationship between the Christian faith and the social, political, and economic dimensions.

At last, I earned the Ph.D. in Social Doctrine at a prestigious pontifical university in Rome, but it was no mean feat. In fact, I had to confront the prejudices that are typical of a large part of theological thought. That was the occasion that allowed me to thematically develop what until then to me had only been germinal and implicit. Throughout my studies I was captivated by the sound logic of Rothbard. I found his thought both the apex of the Austrian School tradition and the best contribution to Social Philosophy. Thanks to Rothbard's works, from the classical liberal I had always been I became a conscious libertarian. I had always seen political interventionism as a danger to people's lives; however, in light of Rothbard's teaching, I understood that the problem could not be circumscribed solely within the excesses of statism, but rather sourced back to

the State as such, given that its nature cannot but coincide with willful, aggressive violence.

I vividly remember reading Rothbard's coherent statement that there were only two possible alternatives: socialism on one hand and anarchism on the other. I was perplexed because I could not understand how anarchism could really be considered an alternative to socialism. It is well known that Rothbard liked to call himself an "anarcho-capitalist," but I have always had doubts about that formula. The way to resolve the question somehow represented my first contribution to libertarian thought, in which I attempted to sever libertarianism from any possible association, even lexical, with a phenomenon—anarchy in its true sense—that is an exacerbated and complete form of revolutionary socialism.

While the question of form, which is anything but negligible, made me concentrate on how to best present libertarianism while avoiding misunderstandings, another problem led me to reflect so I would be able to make my contribution to the discussion within libertarian culture. This is about a fairly undervalued question that does not receive the attention it deserves: the problem of libertarian political strategy. I have attempted in many circumstances and in various venues to present the importance of this topic. I personally expended time and energy to try to limit three evils that grip libertarians of all levels.

The first of these is a kind of political perfectionism. How do libertarians risk being perfectionists? By making their own utopia of a future world without any state violence, by disdaining courses of action that do not lead to a total and complete expected outcome, and by discarding all means that do not prove to be absolutely, perfectly orthodox. Libertarians should never confuse the clarity of analysis with the expectation of a perfect world. Thus, libertarian tactics cannot slip into a utopian mirage while awaiting a mythical political perfection.

Second, pursuing political perfection leads to self-isolation while pursuing fruitless attempts at establishing libertarian parties conceived as "perfect parties." Having an anti-utopian and anti-perfectionist approach entails abandoning the idea of an ideal political formation or of a party composed of perfect people.

The third evil—which concerns the political attitude of libertarians, still a consequence of perfectionism—could be referred to as a prideful, condescending electoral disengagement. But in this case as well, the choice of disengaging from politics, with the condemnation of the evil that is actually widely present in it, preferring to await a disastrous social

outcome to then rebuild the “new world,” is too utopian and not realistic enough.

Faced with such attitudes that compromise the effectiveness of libertarians’ political action, in *Per un Libertarismo vincente. Strategie politiche e culturali* (Toward a Victorious Libertarianism. Political and Cultural Strategies, 2019), I suggested a different operational perspective based on at least four principles: realism, anti-perfectionism, gradualism, and fusionism. Realism—a healthy realism that is in no way to be confused with opportunism—restrains every ideological impulse; anti-perfectionism—in the awareness that a libertarian paradise will never exist on this earth—curbs every utopistic push. The criterion of gradualism—which is never soft moderatism—entails the awareness that one may astutely attain a greater objective through the results that are possible, however small they may be, in the pragmatic sense of political priorities; finally, fusionism—distancing oneself from the suggestion of a “libertarian party”—requires researching an operational platform that is common to multiple positions (libertarians, conservatives, classical liberals, and right-wing traditionalists) who can converge into a minimal, shared program.

This articulation of a libertarian strategy did not arouse any enthusiasm among Italian libertarians (the only ones the book could address because of the language in which it was written). For my part, however, I did not fail to point out how advocating an operational rigorism, by refusing to cooperate with intermediate positions, means benefiting the destructivism of the Left. This is the origin of my unease in participating in the initiatives of people with shared principles, but whose politics are harmful because they are unrealistic—and thus suicidal. This is why I have decided to distance myself from the Italian libertarian movement, and to do so publicly, in order to emphasize the existence of a different political method that—while in no way renouncing its principles—always seeks to be realist and anti-perfectionist.

In taking this stance I wanted only to respond to a need for honesty and sincerity, and I would not want it to be interpreted as pointless or polemical. Much less would I want it to be misunderstood, because at stake are not only the principles upon which libertarian thought is based (for me, along Rothbard’s natural law line of thought), but how libertarian political and electoral principles translate into practice. What needs to be defined is, therefore, the best strategy that can unite the most basic principles with the realistic fulfillment of the greatest possible good.

As part of this “rupture,” I must also come to grips with a similar situation which is undeniably my relation to the Church. I will always profess the Catholic faith that is founded on recognizing the Incarnation of the Word of God; but now, discouraged, I have stopped associating within Catholic circles, and I am extremely critical of the current Catholic political culture. Analogously, I am increasingly convinced of the veracity and soundness of libertarian theory; however, because I do not want to support utopian tendencies among the fringes that love referring to that theory, I will avoid associating my efforts to defend individual liberty with any libertarian position that endorses political “third ways” between Right and Left.

I will never separate from Catholicism or from the faith that sources from it; nor will I ever stray from libertarianism or the reasonableness that follows from it. As a result, I will never have many friends among either Catholics or libertarians. I am rather unpopular with both the former, who are mostly solidarists and communitarians, and the latter, who are mostly imprudent “tutorists” and rigorists. In short, I am seen as too libertarian by the Catholics and too realist by the libertarians.

Another central aspect of my thoughts on libertarian political strategy is clarifying what should be considered the essence of the Right and the Left. If we acknowledge that the Left coincides with socialist appeals, the Right is simply its opposite. When the Right is authentic, it differs from the Left in opposing any political control of human life. Thus libertarians, who must work so that the Right does not lose its identity, must also avoid any ambiguity and demonstrate that the Right is their natural political home, because the more authentic the Right is, the more it coincides with the logic of libertarianism.

Since any opportunities I might have had for teaching were quickly exhausted—partly because I was at once outside the theological universities as a libertarian and outside the social science universities as a priest—in 2015, together with a few wonderful friends, I founded *StoriaLibera*, a semi-annual journal of the historical and social sciences. Despite everything, I still intended to try to “translate” libertarianism into use by Christians (at least those who were not prejudiced against it) and to “translate” natural law and Christianity into use by libertarians by showing both the reasons for the Truth about humanity inscribed in the promotion of individual liberty. This specific purpose has not prevented the journal from becoming accredited as a scientific forum and quickly being considered as a point of reference within the variegated area of Italian

libertarianism. Recognized as the most authoritative Italian libertarian journal, its horizon is increasingly open to readers from all over the world.

When I leave this earth, I will have to give account not only of the way in which I have been able to make something useful of my life, but above all of the way in which I have recognized the Truth and how I have conformed to it. I think quite often of that moment, remembering that if one must defend civilization, considered as a reflection of the work of God, from all forms of destruction, then the most urgent task—even more so for Christians, and particularly for a pastor of the Church—can only be a driving afresh of the harmonious natural order. This is why I maintain that promoting the free market and defending private property are tightly coupled with the Truth. Recognizing this entails expending oneself to one's limits in the awareness that "We have not received the mission of making Truth triumph, but only of fighting for it."



Thinking About and Working Toward a Less Cruel World

Brian Doherty

That cruelty—forcing other people to do what you want through threats of violence, and punishing them if they dared disobey—was something best minimized or avoided in human relationships and human society was likely the closest thing to a “natural moral sense” I had as a pre-teen; it just seemed emotionally correct without any rigorous philosophizing needed.

What this intuition meant for how I should judge the institution of government began becoming clear to me via reading and thinking about the surreal conspiratorial science fiction novel sequence *ILLUMINATUS!* by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson, read when I was in my late pre-teens. (Some of my memories of my age may be inexact, but close.) Among many of the other things it did, it revealed government at its base as institutionalized cruelty and corruption through very colorful storytelling (combined with, yes, some more direct lecturing from brilliant libertarian characters). My interest in the world of that novel led me to

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an interest in a jokey faux religion discussed in it—though it was “real” or at least a real joke—Discordianism. I believe I found an ad for a strange bookseller/publisher called Loompanics in a science fiction magazine that connected them to an edition of the Discordian’s Bible, *PRINCIPIA DISCORDIA*.

I ordered that book and got Loompanics’ full catalog, and was alternately puzzled and excited by all the reckless, mad, antinomian, anything-goes, willful, and brave books that catalog sold, full of alternate and hidden histories, dangerous techniques to save your own life (or wreck it—hey, it’s YOUR life) and also a sober and serious sounding book called *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry Hazlitt.

Anything in one lesson sounded like quite a bargain, so that was included in my very next Loompanics order. As for many, many other libertarians, that introduction to Bastiat-inspired free-market economic thinking (its main message: always consider the secondary and tertiary effects of actions and policies, or, to sum it up, breaking a window isn’t good for the economy) and my inchoate understanding that I hated cruelty and force started to mesh. I ended up with an understanding of how and why the main institutions allegedly managing our society, which everyone else around me seemed to think were both right and necessary, were actually often a menace to human satisfaction (as Hazlitt helped me realize). I later learned that government also could not reasonably be seen as just thanks to early reading of writers such as Lysander Spooner (another Loompanics purchase).

For a few years there I was just a reader of disconnected strange books in a tradition I was only half-seeing. It took some human and institutional contact to help me understand the larger edifice in which the thought of Hazlitt and Spooner could be embedded. I met some fine, brilliant, and hilarious young libertarians led by a man named Philip Blumel manning an LP-associated literature table on the campus of the University of Florida in the late 1980s and, in this pre-internet age, learned directly via copies of their books about thinkers such as Murray Rothbard and Walter Block whose work was bracing and eye-opening to the college-age me.

Via institutional knowledge learned from hanging out with these young LP-ers, I became aware of and applied to an Institute for Humane Studies summer seminar in 1988. Exposed both to fellow students who helped educate me in the larger libertarian picture, and lectures from George Smith, Ralph Raico, Leonard Liggio, and Randy Barnett, the

clarity of how libertarian thinking could and ought to lead to anarchism became clearer. I was imbued via interesting and obscure books, smart and supportive fellow travelers, and dedicated institutional work from the LP and IHS, into a framework of seeing the world that mixed my moral intuitions with an understanding of economics that was pretty thoroughly Rothbardian by then, and I've stayed in it the rest of my professional and intellectual life.

The central concern of libertarian thought, as I'd express it especially to someone unfamiliar with it, is advocating for and figuring out how to create a society in which the fewest interactions and decisions possible are being made via non-retaliatory violence. I have been lucky to both have my mind sparked with realizing that this is the most important social-philosophical project and to have found opportunities to pursue that project professionally.

I then had the good fortune to find work for institutions pushing libertarian ideas straight out of college and more or less uninterrupted to the present day, including the Cato Institute and now *Reason* magazine, so being a libertarian never made my professional or personal life more difficult. (Though I will say the 2020s have seen more concentrated intolerance and refusal to have anything to do with libertarians than I recall from previous decades.)

While I did not make political affinity define my personal life—and I don't think it's going to lead to the richest, most interesting life to do so—the existence of a libertarian movement and libertarian institutions to work and communicate in has been helpful in not making us holders of peculiar, derided ideologies feel crazy. (Just remember that sharing libertarian ideas with someone doesn't mean you have to share all the other ideas they might have.)

My libertarian life story has been my work, how my linkage with the libertarian institution of *Reason* allowed me to do detailed feature reporting for decades, explaining a wide variety of aspects of the world at length through a libertarian lens, including the ADA, pollution trading, problems with campaign finance disclosure laws, state-constitution federalism, the vital importance of free-market capitalism for the popular arts, FDA abuses, tyrannical medical interference with parental choice, the deficiencies of the World Health Organization, the fight for anonymous travel, the abuses of psychiatry in justice, the U.S.'s criminal failures in Afghanistan for years, the ongoing abuses of the Patriot Act, the Ron

Paul movement, the “free cities” movement, the cryptocurrency revolution, and the rise of 3-D printed weapons.

I’ve written books about the history of the libertarian movement itself (*Radicals for Capitalism*) and the political phenomenon of libertarian Republican congressman Ron Paul (*Ron Paul’s Revolution*) for mainstream New York book publishing audiences. For the specifically libertarian Cato Institute, I wrote a book on the judicial vindication of the vital libertarian right of weapons-ownership (*Gun Control on Trial*). By being both a libertarian and a popular journalist, I also got to explain in books major pop-cultural phenomena such as the Burning Man festival (*This is Burning Man*) and underground comix (*Dirty Pictures*) through a libertarian lens.

While I don’t know that my personal experience is a universal formula, I’d say a combination of a core dislike for cruelty and force combined with an understanding of economics and history is a good recipe for making a person dedicated to the explanation, application, and spread of libertarian ideas in the world of magazines and books.

It’s a very different communication world now. I have a strong suspicion that books have little to do with the spread of libertarian ideas largescale now, which I think is a shame as I believe that they provide a deeper and more solid foundation for libertarian understanding than tweets or podcasts—but times and method change. Being of the generation I am, books will remain important to me both as input and output. I have felt blessed with understanding and pleasure by the authors of books pushing libertarian thought from my pre-teens on, and hope that writing such books has paid some of that forward to others. To be part of someone else’s biography of libertarian understanding and persuasion is the most I could hope for from the work I’ve done.



From Growing Up Under Socialism to Becoming Libertarian

Lukasz Dominiak

Recently a colleague of mine asked me what was the first political event that I could vividly remember from my childhood. When you think about it, it is an interesting question, especially when directed at people of various ages and backgrounds. For one thing, some events that we have lived through relatively recently and still remember graphically might be the events that our friends know only from school or history books (then we quickly realize that we are no longer young). At the same time, this question reveals something very personal about the different ways in which our respective lives become entangled in great politics and world history. It might bring to the surface long forgotten influences and drivers of our biographies. At any rate, in my case it was the overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu. The violent events of what later came to be known as the Romanian Revolution were broadcast by the Polish Television. It was around Christmas time and I remember checking out our Soviet Rubin

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714 TV set every day for the breaking news from Bucharest. I guess it was then, during those gloomy winter evenings, that I became aware, at first only vaguely, of what socialism—this systematic negation of individual freedom—was and that my family, as well as the rest of the Polish people, had lived under it for decades.

Although it was only then, at the very end of communist rule in Europe, that I realized the broader political context of my existence, I remember very well what everyday life under socialism looked like. My father emigrated from the Polish People's Republic to a better world when I was five and so I was raised only by my mother. We were short of almost everything and while my mother was working hard to put food on our table, I was essentially left to my own devices. When I reminisce about those early days, I see myself as a latchkey kid running around the neighborhood from dawn to dusk. Looking back, it was not a childhood that you would wish for anyone, but all in all I was a happy boy.

In our flat—actually, the flat was not ours, it belonged to the state—we did not have many books, but we had some and I guess it was enough. My mother subscribed to a four-volume *Universal Encyclopedia* (PWN, 1984–1989) which I simply devoured. I was glued to its colorful vignettes with insects, planets, and great paintings, and to pictures of very accomplished people (the majority of whom, for some reason, had long beards). Each entry seemed to me a new universe, mysterious, surprising, and tempting. It was due to reading this encyclopedia that—although I was a very irregular, unsystematic, and unruly student—I knew things that no friend around me knew. I was surprisingly able to win difficult school competitions in Greek and Roman mythology, the Age of Discovery, and Polish Nobles' Commonwealth (a very libertarian system, if you think about it). One entry I especially remember was John Locke. Even though as a young boy I could not entirely wrap my head around it, I was fascinated by the fact that he was a physician and a philosopher (with no beard!) who espoused empiricism and believed that man is born as a *tabula rasa* that can be molded freely. I remember thinking, if such an extraordinary genius supported toleration, free thought, and individual liberty against the encroachments of the state, that must be the way to go. In that very moment my heart, even if not yet my mind, was convinced entirely of these lofty ideals (to the chagrin of my teachers since all this liberty and free thinking stuff made me even more unruly).

I guess that those early experiences, even if latent for some time, must have stuck with me for life. However, although I had dealt with topics

concerning liberalism since the very beginning of my academic career—for example, I devoted my Ph.D. thesis to the debate between liberalism and communitarianism—my interest in libertarianism began only after my Ph.D. when I was already teaching in the Political Science Department of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Of course, writing on political philosophy, I was well familiar with Robert Nozick’s influential book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Yet, despite its unquestionable greatness, that book, for some reason, did not draw me into libertarianism. My path was more roundabout. My doctoral advisor had been Professor Jacek Bartyzel, one of the greatest living conservative thinkers in continental Europe and a prominent dissident during the communist period. His strongly antidemocratic views quite naturally influenced my readings and at some stage drew me to Hans-Hermann Hoppe’s libertarian critique of democracy. That was the first strong impulse. Hoppe’s *Democracy: The God That Failed* offered a clear, deeply theoretical, Austro-libertarian reconstruction of various political regimes in their historical complexity. What started as an austere and highly speculative philosophy in Nozick, now appeared to me as a concrete, flesh and bone political theory that I was able to use in my everyday teaching and thinking about politics, society, and history. An interesting aspect of this whole story with me getting interested in Hoppe’s critique of democracy is that at around the same time I had a very talented student—one of the best students I have ever had—who was attending my course in political theory and had already been influenced by Hoppe’s account for quite some time. He was trying to persuade me of the merits of Hoppe’s philosophy but funnily enough, I was reluctant. This student was Paweł Nowakowski, now an established Polish libertarian scholar and a good friend of mine. As it seems, everything has its own proper time.

One of the themes that especially interested me in Hoppe’s work was the marriage between libertarianism and conservatism or what is sometimes called anarcho-conservatism, that is, the idea that Austro-libertarianism at the basic legal and economic level can yield conservatism at the cultural level. Studying this relationship between libertarian law and Austrian economics on the one hand, and cultural conservatism on the other, was my research project for my first Summer Fellowship at the Mises Institute in Auburn in 2015. If Hoppe’s *Democracy* gave me the first nudge toward libertarianism, this Summer Fellowship sealed the deal. The faculty of the Mises Institute, in particular Joe Salerno and Mark Thornton, created an amazing, intellectually vibrant environment for

studying Austrian economics and libertarianism. During my first Summer Fellowship I met a great group of people who influenced me immensely. I built long-lasting friendships and engaged in fruitful scholarly cooperation with some of them, especially my dear friend and coauthor Tate Fegley and the rising economics stars and good friends Karl-Friedrich Israel, Louis Rouanet, and Jonathan Newman, from whom I learned a lot about the Austrian school. Thanks to the Mises Institute, I also had the exceptional opportunity to meet and learn philosophy from the one and only David Gordon.

One of the people that I met during my stay at the Mises Institute was Walter Block. We played chess and I lost badly. But this is not the reason for which I would like to mention him in this short autobiography of mine. I cite him because his way of explaining libertarianism had the biggest influence of all on my way of understanding it. At least as far as I know, Walter Block essentially single-handedly developed what can be called libertarian casuistry. Almost any case you can imagine, from the privatization of Antarctica, to the ownership of rivers and oceans, to homesteading misery—you can google with Walter Block's name next to it and you will find a libertarian solution to it. Sure, it is true that all of this started with the magnificent Murray Rothbard's *The Ethics of Liberty*. But it was Walter Block who brought it to another level. At any rate, if I were to pinpoint a single facet of libertarianism that finally drew me to this philosophy for good, it would be Walter Block's style casuistry. When I think about my own role or possible contribution to libertarianism, I see myself as continuing this casuistic legacy of Walter Block. Trying to figure out how each and every possible quandary—even the most minute one—should be adjudicated under libertarianism. This is what fascinates me the most. Thus, even if it all started with the bitter personal experience of living under socialism—the sheer antithesis of libertarianism—it all ended up, or at least it seems so, with the Talmudic exercise in making the finest distinctions and analyses in order to bring to light the richness, complexity, and intellectual beauty of the libertarian principles of justice. And frankly speaking, I prefer it this way.



My Life as an Austrian Economist and Classical Liberal: The Starting Point and Early Years

Richard M. Ebeling

I suppose I can date my interest in both Austrian Economics and classical liberalism from the day I was born. The doctor grabbed me by my little feet, turned me upside down and spanked my tiny bottom. I began to cry out. That is when I realized the fundamental “Austrian” axiom that “man acts.” In addition, I appreciated that what the doctor had done was in violation of the “non-aggression” principle. The rest is history. Well maybe not quite.

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AN INQUIRING YOUNG MIND DISCOVERS AYN RAND

For some reason, I had found history and current events interesting when I was in my early and middle teens in the 1960s. I had a part-time job at the Hollywood Public Library in Los Angeles when I was in high school. Part of my responsibilities was to maintain the magazine collections on a balcony in the building. I would finish my work, and hide up in the balcony reading new and old political and news publications.

But I soon was confused. When I read “progressive” publications like *The Nation* or the *New Republic*, they always seemed to have the moral high ground, making the case for “social justice,” “fairness,” and morality. On the other hand, when I read conservative publications like *Human Events* or *National Review* the argument was made that all that “bleeding heart” stuff just did not work. There was a “bottom line”: it cost too much, screwed things up, and socialism and communism seemed to kill a lot of people.

When I was about seventeen, and living in Hollywood, I met two men who introduced me to the works of Ayn Rand. I ran into them at a restaurant called “Hody’s” (no longer in existence) that was at the corner of Hollywood and Vine. Drawing me into a conversation, they asked if I had ever heard of Ayn Rand. I replied that I had heard of the Rand Corporation, but what was an “Ayn”?

They handed me a copy of Ayn Rand’s non-fiction essays, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966), and told me to read it and come back in three days. I did so, and we met. I found her case for capitalism transformative. They then handed me a copy of her other set of essays, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1962), and again told me to read it and come back in three days. I did and we met again. They now handed me a paperback copy of her 1000-page novel, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). My heart sank, fearing they’d again say to come back in three days! I wiped the sweat from my brow when they said to read it and come back in ten days.

Ayn Rand’s writings brought about an ethical and practical revolution in my thinking. She reasoned why it is that each human being has a right to their own life, liberty, and honestly acquired property. While human beings can and should show goodwill and benevolence to their fellow men, there is no collective or tribal moral claim to the product of any individual’s mental and physical effort without their free and voluntary consent. Free market capitalism not only “delivered the goods,” but also was the only political-economic system consistent with man’s nature and

the individual's right to peacefully and productively live for himself in free and mutual association with others.

In 1968, I was visiting family in New York City and took the opportunity to go to the Nathaniel Brandon Institute several times, then still headquartered in the lower level of the Empire State Building. One evening during a "social" night, Ayn Rand was there and she very kindly took about half an hour or so to talk informally with a small group of us.

All the stories about her are true. She had dark eyes that never left looking right at you while she was both hearing your question and giving her answer. She spoke with a calm certitude and deliberate clarity that made her comments reasonable and in no way "dogmatic." It was truly a memorable interaction for me.

FINDING OUT ABOUT THE AUSTRIAN ECONOMISTS

But my intellectual odyssey did not end there. I read the books referenced and footnoted in Ayn Rand's non-fiction writings. This soon led me to reading Henry Hazlitt, Frederic Bastiat, Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, and, of course, Ludwig von Mises, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, and Carl Menger.

In 1967, one of the issues of *Human Events* had an ad for the Conservative Book Club. If you signed up to buy a certain number of books they offered over the next 12 months, you would receive as a free gift the selection for that month—the recently released third edition of Mises' *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (1966).

Around this time, I discovered *The Freeman*, published by the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE), which resulted in my finding out about Friedrich A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). I was soon in correspondence with Bettina Bien Greaves, a senior staff member at FEE. She generously guided me to begin reading a much wider group of works on free market economics and the Austrian Economists in particular.

By the time I began college in Los Angeles, I had read most of the major works and many of the minor writings of the Austrian Economists, and, in addition, many of the books in the classical liberal and libertarian tradition. Indeed, it was these readings that made me decide to major in economics.

IRRITATING MY MARXIST AND KEYNESIAN COLLEGE PROFESSORS

What a rude awakening I had when in my first economics class, the assigned textbook was the seventh edition of Keynesian economist Paul Samuelson's *Economics*. I found the form of economic theorizing and the policy conclusions to be significantly different than what I had been absorbing on my own!

My college studies were interrupted for a while during the Vietnam War years. Since my relatively low conscription number was likely to come up, I joined the Naval Reserves, doing my active duty in San Diego, California, trained as a radioman. Then I went on to complete my undergraduate degree in economics at California State University, Sacramento. All my economics professors were either textbook Keynesians, Stalinist Marxists, or Institutionalists. One of them, Marc Tool, was a long-time editor of the Institutionalist, *Journal of Economic Issues*; another was John Henry, a noted Marxist economist of that generation.

Since it bothered me that the other students were absorbing arguments at uncritical face value, I made a nuisance of myself in virtually all my economics classes. I tried to explain and argue about Hayek's version of the Austrian theory of the business cycle in my Macroeconomics and Money and Banking classes. I would defend economic theory and the market order in Comparative Economic Systems. And in my Development Economics course, I attempted to articulate the arguments of the free market economist, Peter Bauer, against those the professor made for third world central planning.

I'm sure I drove some of my professors crazy. Economics majors and professors shared a common coffee lounge near the department office. On the lounge bulletin board, I once put up a picture of the four Marx brothers—Harpo, Chico, Zeppo, and Groucho—with their heads poking out of old fashion beer barrels. I wrote underneath, "Four leading Marxist theoreticians."

When Mises died in 1973, I wrote a piece about his contributions to economics for the university student newspaper. The only response was one of my professors coming up to me and saying, "Mises? Mises? I thought he died in the 19th century!" And he clearly was serious. When Hayek won the Nobel Prize in 1974, my professors were flabbergasted and bewildered by my very public excitement. Some had never heard of him; others only knew him as the author of *The Road to Serfdom* and they

asked what that had to do with “real economics”? One or two asked, “Wasn’t he the economist who assumed ‘full employment’ during the Great Depression?”

My undergraduate senior thesis was a fairly lengthy paper on a comparison of Robert Clower and Axel Leijonhufvud’s conceptions of Keynesian “demand failures” and Say’s Principle, with the Austrian theory of money and the business cycle. My thesis advisor was a nice and fair person, but he clearly knew nothing about the Austrian theory until he read my paper, and was only vaguely familiar with Clower and Leijonhufvud’s writings.

READING ON MY OWN IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Since there were no professors who came anywhere near my views on either economic theory or policy, I was “on my own.” While other students were at weekend parties or football games, I was in the university library going through all the old economics journals (many of which the library had as bound volumes from the starting issues), finding all the articles by Austrians and others related to Austrian views found in the old *Index of Economic Articles* volumes published by the American Economic Association.

Through this method, I ended up reading virtually all the journal articles by Austrians in English from the 1880s onward, as well as their critics. But I also discovered a great underworld of many other great economic theorists and analysts who were almost never referred to in history of economic thought books or modern textbooks. In this way, for example, I discovered on my own the famous “Chicago School” economist, Frank H. Knight, and read through virtually every article he wrote from before the First World War to his death in the 1960s. I wanted to read him at first because of his controversies with Hayek and Fritz Machlup over “Austrian” capital theory, but I soon found out that there was a lot more to him—both very brilliant insights and some very wrong-headed ideas.

I devoured the writings of such market-oriented economists such as Edwin Cannan (from the London School of Economics), Dennis Robertson (from Cambridge University), J. Laurence Laughlin (who founded the economics department at the University of Chicago), Frank Taussig and Thomas Nixon Carver (who taught at Harvard University), and other “Austrian” economists such as British economist Philip Wicksteed, and the Americans Herbert J. Davenport and Frank A. Fetter, among many, many others.

I especially found the “Swedish” economists from Knut Wicksell to Erik Lindhahl, Erik Lundberg, Gunnar Myrdal, and Johann Akerman to be valuable parallels to the Austrians on money, capital, and economic fluctuations. German interwar economists such as Moritz J. Bonn and Gustav Stolper were refreshing voices of economic sanity from the dark depression years of the 1930s. And, of course, the other German free market economist, Wilhelm Röpke, was like a laser-beam of clear thinking and intellectual up-rightness that was both insightful and inspiring.

Going through every issue of these economics journals especially from the 1880s through the 1940s and into the 1950s, and reading many of the articles by the various authors in each issue (not just Austrians) made it very clear to me that mainstream microeconomics and macroeconomics was a narrow and false conception of all that had been written and insightfully understood by a large number of economists, the vast majority of whom had gone down an Orwellian “memory hole.” There had been a wonderful world of economics before John Maynard Keynes and Paul Samuelson.

I also read backward through the Classical Economists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and soon discovered that there were “few things new under the sun” that these earlier generations of thinkers—especially the Scottish Moral Philosophers such as Adam Smith, David Hume, and Adam Ferguson—had not already understood and analyzed, and often far better than most modern mainstream economists. I loved Jean-Baptiste Say and Frederic Bastiat and Paul Leroy-Beaulieu among the French economists; and James Mill and Nassau Senior, and in spite of his socialist sympathies, many things in John Stuart Mill among the British economists, along with John R. McCulloch, John E. Cairnes, and Henry Fawcett.

ATTENDING THE FIRST AUSTRIAN ECONOMICS CONFERENCE IN 1974

In 1972, while still an undergraduate student, I met Floyd “Baldy” Harper, founder of the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), at the Institute’s, then, headquarters in Menlo Park, California. I explained my interest and self-taught knowledge in Austrian Economics. I must have sufficiently impressed Harper and his colleagues, George Pearson and Kenneth Templeton, since I was invited to attend the first Austrian Economics conference in South Royalton, Vermont, during a week in

June 1974. This was my first meeting and interaction with “real, live Austrians,” many of whom became dear friends.

Meeting Israel Kirzner, Ludwig Lachmann, and Murray Rothbard for the first time at the conference was for a young man in his twenties, who had only read—and in some cases practically memorized—their works, was like being introduced to intellectual “gods” from Mount Olympus. I only knew Rothbard from his books and articles. In my mind I pictured him as tall, very thin, and extremely serious. What a shock to meet this short, rotund, joke- and story-telling funny man who had written a two-volume treatise on economics called *Man, Economy and State* (1962).

Bettina Bien Greaves also arranged for me to attend a FEE summer seminar at Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, the week after the South Royalton conference was over. So I also had the additional opportunity to meet Leonard Read, the founder and long-time president of FEE, as well as Austrian economist Hans Sennholz and free market journalist Henry Hazlitt, who both spoke at the seminar. One of the other attendees that week at FEE was Llewellyn Rockwell, who later founded the Ludwig von Mises Institute.

TIME WITH HAYEK AT THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMANE STUDIES

Then in both 1975 and 1977, I was offered summer student fellowships at the Institute for Humane Studies at their Menlo Park headquarters. IHS brought together a group of promising young Austrian-oriented students, some of whom had been at that first Austrian Economists conference in South Royalton, Vermont, in June 1974 and, then, a second Austrian conference in June of 1975 at the University of Hartford in Connecticut.

But the special highlight of these two summers was that for both of them Friedrich A. Hayek, who had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in the autumn of 1974, was present as a senior research fellow. By chance, during both summers Hayek’s office was situated only one or two doors down from mine. Hayek was in his late seventies at that time, and since I was only in my mid-20s, he seemed “ancient” to me and likely to die any day—he actually lived until he was 92 years old. I was determined to go into his office almost every day that he was around to pick his brain for an hour or two about the “old Vienna days” with Ludwig von Mises and the other Austrian economists of the interwar period, his

“battles” with John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s, and his clashes with the advocates of socialist central planning.

I must say that Hayek was the epitome of the old-world Viennese gentleman, generous with his time, patient with questions many of which he must have heard a hundred times over his long career. He was often amusingly self-deprecating in telling the stories of his intellectual exchanges with those on the collectivist and interventionist sides in the grand ideological and economic policy debates in the middle decades of the twentieth century in which he participated. I am especially grateful that he was so pleasantly tolerant for what he must have considered a brash and pesty young man who imposed on his time day after day. If one could have an image of what an ideal Nobel Laureate might be in personality and temperament, Friedrich A. Hayek would fit that image perfectly.

AT NYU WITH ISRAEL KIRZNER AND LUDWIG LACHMANN

I also started attending graduate classes in 1976 at New York University as part of the Austrian Economics program organized by Israel Kirzner. The weekly Austrian Economics seminar with the other graduate students and often famous visiting guests who delivered papers was one of the most thrilling and educational experiences I’ve ever had. It gave all of us a sense and feel of what Ludwig von Mises’s “private seminar” in Vienna in the 1920s and early 1930s must have been like. The discussions at the NYU Austrian seminar encompassed everything from critiques of the frontiers of mainstream economics, to attempts at new and original contributions to Austrian theory, to interpretative investigations into the history of economic ideas, and questions concerning the methodology and methods of economic science.

Ludwig M. Lachmann, who had studied with Hayek at the London School of Economics after having left Germany in 1933, had made major contributions to Austrian capital theory and a dynamic conception of the market process. Long a professor of economics in South Africa, he came to NYU as a visiting professor on a regular basis. His graduate seminar was a stimulating experience in which after delivering a series of lectures himself for the first few weeks of the semester, the rest of the term was taken up with the graduate students delivering papers and having them subjected to challenging criticisms from both Lachmann and the other participants. Among the regulars with me in Lachmann’s courses were

Don Lavoie and Jack High, both of whom became professors at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Lachmann's office door was always open, and I consistently took advantage of it. He would say in his gravelly, sing-song voice, "Well, Mr. Ebeling, in these four walls we can speak our minds." And soon the discussion was drifting to the rarefied heights of abstract economic theory, and to his own recollections of those great economic battles of the 1930s and 1940s between the Austrian economists and their Keynesian and socialist critics. And, in an almost hushed conspiratorial whisper, he would suggest how the "Austrian" approach might be advanced in the hostile climate of mainstream economics.

Israel Kirzner was and is the "ideal type" of the economist's economist. Whether in his office at NYU or in the Austrian Economics seminar, Kirzner was the deliberative, balanced, and thoughtful thinker. In the most scholarly manner, he explained the Austrian theory of entrepreneurship and the market process, while always showing the most careful respect and attention to alternative approaches and conceptions of the market order within the economics profession. His training as a rabbinical scholar, with its detailed appreciation to words, meanings, and conceptual nuance was ever present in his careful and comprehensive textual analysis and critique of both Austrian and mainstream works in economic theory and its applications to the nature and logic of the market process.

FUN AND ECONOMICS WITH MURRAY ROTHBARD

Murray Rothbard's influence was different. I learned a great deal of clear and logical thinking from his writings on Austrian Economics, especially his monumental two-volume treatise, *Man, Economy and State*, which systematically stated, refined, and advanced the entire corpus of Austrian theory from the conception of human action to the nature and effects of government intervention in the market economy. But he was also the radical libertarian, the system-builder of a "science of liberty" based on the "natural rights" of individuals to freedom.

Anyone who spent an evening that usually went long into the night at Rothbard's Manhattan apartment lived a unique experience. His large apartment was crammed with books in every room from ceiling to floor on every conceivable subject, every volume of which he seemingly had read based on his ability to restate and then critically evaluate the content of virtually any one of them that you pulled off a shelf.

Rothbard would regale with personal stories, amusing narratives of historical epochs, details of economic theories and policies, with their strengths and weaknesses, and an unending stream of political jokes and songs from all along the political spectrum with which he would entertain his visitors until way into the wee hours of the morning. But he could be a difficult person, and you did not want to get on the wrong side of him. You could find yourself condemned, criticized, and banished from the Rothbardian circle—a fate worse than death for any young admirer who felt as if he had been expelled from the libertarian Garden of Eden.

Unfortunately, space does not permit to tell the rest of my story: a journey that led to my teaching in Ireland and earning a Ph.D. from Middlesex University in London, England; being the Ludwig von Mises Professor at Hillsdale College; vice-president of the Future of Freedom Foundation (FFF); president of the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE); professor of economics at Northwood University; and now the BB&T Professor of Ethics and Free Enterprise Leadership at the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. In the midst of all this, in the 1990s while I was at Hillsdale College, my wife, Anna, and I discovered the “lost papers” of Ludwig von Mises in a formerly secret KGB archive in Moscow, Russia. A large portion of these papers were translated and published in three volumes as the *Selected Writings of Ludwig von Mises* by Liberty Fund of Indianapolis, under my editorship. Detailed accounts of the discovery of Mises’s “lost papers” may be found in my books, *Political Economy, Public Policy and Monetary Economics: Ludwig von Mises and the Austrian Tradition* (2010) and *Austrian Economics and Public Policy* (2016).

In conclusion, I was a fortunate young man who happened by chance to be introduced to the writings of Ayn Rand and followed the footnote references in her books to find out about the writings of the Austrian Economists. During my undergraduate student days my professors were at best indifferent and most often antagonistic and ridiculing of these “anachronistic” Austrian thinkers I had been reading on my own in the university library. I was viewed as a most peculiar and irritating student who seemed irretrievably misguided on economic theory and policy. But it was the starting point for the rest of my intellectual and professional life. I’ve had no regrets and many fascinating experiences along the way.



Maverick Scientist, Libertarian Capitalist

Robert B. Eckhardt

“Gradually, then suddenly” was the response given by a character in Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* in response to the question “How did you go bankrupt?” Thus, gradually and then suddenly, did I become a libertarian. For decades I had acquired piecemeal components of a libertarian belief system before the late realization of their reasoned centrality in my life.

There were three distinguishable phases. First, through childhood and early college I had no conscious political identity although aware that my blue-collar parents were unquestioning moderate Democrats. Any ideological influences came from the paperback books that in the late 1950s were becoming abundant and cheap. I still have my disintegrating 35¢ copy of *1984*, to which I certainly first was attracted by its lurid cover but immediately became engrossed by its plot. In quick succession I read *Animal Farm*, *Brave New World*, *Brave New World Revisited*, *Erewhon*, and every dystopia or utopia I could find; since I was studying German at the time, into the exhilarating mix came Goethe’s *Faust* as well as

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Egmont plus *Hermann und Dorothea*. The seeds of my lifelong commitment to freedom of thought and action germinated in the rich soil of such exotic constructs about other times and situations—possible, impossible, and sometimes, as now, intolerable.

The loose political mantle from my parents slipped off easily in 1963 when I met the girl who was to become my wife. Caroline (Carey) Davis had a family strikingly different from mine. Her father, Joseph Davis, born in 1913, came to the United States at age 13 from Slonim, Poland (now Belarus), quickly learning enough English to graduate from Bronx High School of Science in three years, then college at NYU. Barred by the 10% quota on Jews in Eastern medical schools, he completed an M.D. degree at Creighton Medical School in Omaha, Nebraska. During college Joe belonged to Jay Lovestone's faction of the American Communist Party. Their circle also included trade unionist Irving Brown and his wife, Lilly (of the International Rescue Committee). Other friends included Albert Jolis of wartime OSS (and later Resistance International) repute, with links extending to Arthur Koestler and George Orwell. Although too young to have known Lovestone, Koestler, and Orwell, I met Bert and his family, and had discussions with the Browns beginning the year after Jay Lovestone and Irving founded the American Institute for Free Labor Development in 1962. Those people all hazarded their lives for anti-totalitarian actions. In this group Joe was an intellectual leader (later writing several unpublished plays about the Bolshevik feminist Inessa Armand and her circle), eventually turning strongly right politically. It is impossible to understand my political philosophy without acknowledging the profound influence from many hours of discussion I had over two decades with him; he was the most deeply informed political thinker I ever have encountered. Under his influence, I became conservative in most respects, but gained other perspectives through further education.

During graduate school (1964–1971) at the University of Michigan, Frank Livingstone was my major professor, thesis director, mentor, colleague, and friend. Frank's standardly liberal Democratic political philosophy was unattractive. But he was one of the foremost experts on the worldwide distribution of hemoglobin genetic variants (including sickle cell anemia) and had built upon this base the perception that human biological variation never has been neatly parceled into any number of separate races. His paper "On the non-existence of human races" demolished many stereotypes about variations in discontinuous genetic characteristics (hemoglobins, blood groups) and continuous gene-influenced

traits (stature, skin color, cognitive measures) among human populations. His viewpoint was biologically convincing to me, though it would not be to many conservatives whose outlooks have been shaped more by books such as *The Bell Curve*.

The third phase marking maturation of my libertarian identity is harder to date precisely, in part because some conservative attitudes (such as belief in sound money and minimal taxation) that I formed early in the 1970s and still hold are shared by many iconic libertarians (Ron Paul, Milton Friedman, Harry Browne). I first became aware of Harry Browne's books in 1971, as I and many other people were appalled to learn that Richard Nixon had ended the international redeemability of the US dollar for gold. Consequently, Harry Browne came to my attention primarily as a fellow hard money advocate rather than more broadly as an exponent of the many libertarian ideas that he popularized. To the extent that I was aware of them they simply seemed commonsensical, so I probably already was substantially libertarian in outlook.

My strong focus on the economic aspects of life should be unsurprising. Before being married in August of 1964, Carey and I jointly planned to enter graduate school at the University of Michigan (respectively English and Comparative Literature, Anthropology and Human Genetics). Initially her humanities area provided no assistantship, so my US Public Health Fellowship paid not only living expenses but also her tuition until the English Department awarded funding in recognition of her surpassing talent. In 1967 our first son was born. With several more children planned but completed doctorates and job prospects unknown, obviously I needed to generate more money than was coming in each month.

My parents had no concept of saving for future needs; "investing" by buying securities was beyond imagining. Nevertheless, I needed to comprehend these exotic concepts. But how? There was not as much information available then as now, but the general quality was just as low and delusional. Fortunately, I realized that I could recognize financial twaddle. Four years of undergraduate school had produced something beyond core scientific knowledge: An effective BS detector!

Discovery of how to generate the money needed by my growing family came quite by accident. Sometime in 1969, when our first son, David, was about two years old, the three of us walked downtown on the day the Ann Arbor Public Library was having a sale of rarely borrowed books. One caught my eye, a thick, gold-lettered black volume that resembled

a Bible: *SECURITY ANALYSIS*/Graham and Dodd/Second Edition; penciled on the flyleaf: 25¢. We splurged.

The next two years, 1969–1971, encompassed the birth of our second son, completion of Ph.D. degrees by Carey and me, then transitions to Assistant Professor positions at Penn State. While writing my dissertation I read Graham and Dodd several times. The first time resembled the Biblical experience of Saul of Tarsus being knocked from his horse by a bolt of lightning while on the road to Damascus. In contrast to the various get-rich-quick financial newsletters and you-can-make-a-million-dollars how-to books, *Security Analysis* resembled my science textbooks. It provided an overall logical structure and prescribed strategies for attacking problems. It was embedded in a narrative text that discussed examples and complications of various sorts. The core principle was Value Investing, which sounds formal but is captured colloquially by the maxim “If you can buy a dollar bill for forty cents, something good may happen to you.” My early transactions generally worked, with positive outcomes. The compounding growth of family financial net worth enabled us without strain to adopt two young Korean sisters who arrived in 1973 with survivor mentalities and matured into outstanding citizens.

All Value Investors share common perspectives but in practice are highly individualistic. My own investing pattern is the same as my approach to scientific research: Identify the most important problem within my range of abilities (Medawar Zone philosophy); have a sound general conceptual framework for analysis (value investing, evolutionary theory); collect as much evidence from as many sources (conventional and unconventional) as possible; scrutinize the data exhaustively, particularly seeking observations or patterns that don’t conform to the consensus of opinion. This amalgam melds the theoretical framework of Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn (keys that don’t fit one lock may open others that guard even greater treasures) with the pragmatic perspective of Ben Graham (“The stock investor is neither right or wrong because others agreed or disagreed with him; he is right because his facts and analysis are right”), all impelled by the restive stoicism of poet Theodore Roethke (“I learn by going where I have to go”).

Before the October “Crash of 1987” that “no one saw coming” I had purchased put options on high-tech companies, so the “portfolio insurance” that drove the market downward in a seeming death spiral propelled put prices upward. With profits from those we purchased two shares of Berkshire Hathaway stock (\$3000 each) that have appreciated 15,000%

(still held). In markets confirmation produces payoff, while in human evolutionary biology conceptual structure often remains unaffected: July 1987, marked the publication in *Nature* of my single-authored cover story, demonstrating that patterns of bone growth are too polymorphic within populations to use reliably for inventing multiple earlier human species. The orthodox human evolutionary “bush” is a Gordian knot of hearsay. This realization extends backward in time to Frank Livingstone’s ideas about relationships among living humans. In science as in securities markets, extreme ideas can be built upon successfully, though in my experience payoffs generally are surer, swifter—and higher—in finance than science.

My background described so far includes no explicit political awakening. But just as Molière’s M. Jourdain discovered that he “had been speaking prose all his life” without knowing it, only a couple of decades ago did I realize that most of my previous intellectual and social experiences had converged on a libertarian outlook with a focus on freedom at its core. The person who crystallized this broader *Weltanschauung* was my elder son, David. He dates his own libertarian identity to 1996, under various influences such as books by Ron Paul and Harry Browne. David’s grasp of libertarian ideas and ideals initially was broader than mine. The discussion with him made me realize that my beliefs were more libertarian than conservative concerning controversies over laws about marriage licensing for same-sex couples. He raised the fundamentally libertarian question “Why is it the State’s business who your marriage partner is?” My reflexive answer was not conservative but, rather, libertarian: “It’s not.” Gradually had become suddenly, but instead of bankruptcy had come conceptual enrichment. Dave had helped me to realize that the same government that was mismanaging the quality and quantity of the money supply also was using foreign military intervention to create a unipolar axis of world power and attempting to delimit gender identities and the suitability of marriage partners. The shift from a conservative to a more explicitly libertarian outlook involved embracing the idea that “less is more” extends from science (Occam’s Razor) and finance (Gresham’s Law) to politics (Monroe Doctrine) and personal privacy (Ninth Amendment to the US Constitution).

Visibility as a libertarian came on October 18, 2004, Penn State *Daily Collegian* article noting my shift three years earlier in reaction to increasing government control. Shortly afterward some students invited me to become the faculty advisor to the College Libertarians, which I did

for more than a decade. Around the same time another capitalist episode noted only in passing here found me opposing illegal naked short-selling. I took a shareholding position in [Overstock.com](https://www.overstock.com) at the request of its founder, Patrick Byrne. He is an associate of the free-market economists Milton and Rose Friedman, a notable libertarian in his own activities, and an acquaintance of mine who I value. Libertarian ideas build important relationships in many ways; just as there are conceptual commonalities between finance and political philosophy, so are there organic connections between evolutionary biology and libertarian thought, as Walter Block, John Levenson, and I explored in our 2019 paper “Evolutionary psychology, economic freedom, trade and benevolence” published in *Review of Economic Perspectives* (<https://doi.org/10.2478/revecp-2019-0005>).

Continuing influences that should be acknowledged are those of Walter Block (friend, colleague, and co-editor of this volume), as well as Patrick Byrne (who continues to urge strong, peaceful response to the Deep State), Nassim Taleb (sympathetic to “Maverick scientists who take risks with conjecture at distance from common beliefs”), and Carey Eckhardt (“Some risks are worth taking more than others”). I also note that it is a matter of great credit to my university that my freely expressed libertarian beliefs and activities have not called forth any evident criticisms or sanctions.



Mommy Was a Commie: My Personal Voyage from Intellectual Depravity to Libertarianism

Gene Epstein

I started out in life as a Stalinist. And while that position didn't last page age 11, I did have a brush with supporting Fidel Castro at age 18. But my story is surely upbeat: If I could become a libertarian in the face of those severe handicaps, there must be hope for others. I also began as a bleeding-heart, feeling special compassion for the poor and oppressed, and especially for racial and ethnic minorities who were victims of bigotry. I'm still the same bleeding-heart. And I've been a libertarian for more than four decades. I'll start with a few snapshots from childhood that seem indelible from a libertarian perspective.

It's a weekday in October 1952, and I'm in the second grade at P.S. 6 in the Bronx. We've been given an article in the "Junior Review" to read, headlined: "One of these two men will be the next president of the United States." The two men are the Republican candidate Dwight D.

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Eisenhower and the Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson. I smugly and silently tell myself: This can't be true. The winning candidate will be the one my Communist mother supports, Vincent Hallinan. For my mother was indeed a CCC: a card-carrying Communist. I have her FBI file to prove it, which includes in her physical description, "Thick Ankles" (alas, true).

Looking back, I'm impressed that I could so easily assume that the school's propaganda sheet was wrong about the coming election. But here's what must also have helped: It hadn't occurred to me that school was supposed to be in the business of imparting knowledge. At that age, I thought school was a kind of day-time penitentiary in which grown-ups marched you around and yelled at you. I had no idea that it was supposed to be a place that taught you things. In the third grade, when a teacher yelled at our class and then added, "Now, I don't like to scold you," I was shocked, thinking: How can she dislike what she's supposed to do? By the fourth grade, I began to realize that school was supposed to educate you. The fact is, however, that I would have been better educated had I not attended a single day of school.

Back to my expecting Vincent Hallinan to win. Soon after I'd silently dissented from the school's opinion, my mother surprised me by saying that she expected Hallinan to lose. He was running to make a point about the need to abolish capitalism. I found this to be good preparation for the many times I voted for libertarian candidates, who also lost.

A final indelible snapshot: My mother taught me that the politicians in charge were on the side of the capitalists, who profited from workers' poverty. Since I took it for granted at age six or seven that we all honestly speak our minds, I was surprised that I didn't hear any politician say something like, "It would give me great pleasure if you working people all starved over the holidays!" Instead, they sounded as though they were caring folks. As my mother explained, sounding like they had good intentions was in their job description. They lied in that way to get elected. Another lesson that was good preparation for libertarianism.

Where was my father in all this? Hardly around, since he and my mother were breaking up even before I was born—and my birth was a kind of miracle. When I was seven, he sued my mother for divorce and then for custody of me and my older brother. After nearly five years of court battles, my mother was left with no alimony and only visitation rights. He won because he was able to prove that she was a Communist who had sex with black guys in the party. Perhaps needless to say,

my father had been a serial adulterer years before my mother took up with anyone. My dad had made a few million dollars in business, and his crushing victory over my mother seemed symbolic to me at the time of the capitalists crushing the socialists. As an FDR liberal who consistently voted Democrat, he offered me little in the way of intellectual guidance. But both parents did help shape me as a bleeding-heart.

By my teen years, my mother became active in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. She traveled to Cuba and met Fidel Castro. My ill-advised support of Castro mainly sprang from my viewing him as a heroic upstart against Yankee imperialism. Mom was also active with the anti-war movement and taught me—correctly, I still think—to dissent from all the school and local drills that encouraged us to accept the threat of nuclear war.

By around age 20, I distanced myself from my mother's support of the Soviet Union and became a democratic socialist, inspired by writers like Michael Harrington, Lewis Coser, and Irving Howe of *Dissent* magazine. I was thus able to split the difference: supporting socialism, while also supporting civil liberties, and thus viewing both the Soviet Union and Mao's China as authoritarian socialisms gone badly wrong.

No account of my development as a libertarian is complete without mentioning the scorching influence of Noam Chomsky in my formative years. I was a draft dodger during the Vietnam war, determined to go to prison rather than serve. Chomsky's 1969 collection of essays, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, instilled in me a repudiation of my socialist belief that intellectuals should run society. "What grounds are there for supposing," Chomsky asked rhetorically, "that those whose claim to power is based on knowledge and technique will be more benign in their exercise of power than those whose claim is based on wealth or aristocratic origin? On the contrary, one might expect the new mandarin to be dangerously arrogant, aggressive, and incapable of adjusting to failure, as compared to his predecessor, whose claim to power was not diminished by honesty as to the limitations of his knowledge...or demonstrable mistakes."

Chomsky blew my mind a bit further by favorably comparing capitalist aristocrat Averell Harriman with an intellectual like Walt Rostow. "As far as Harriman is concerned," Chomsky once remarked, "the basis for his power is that his...father...built railroads. ...[N]o matter what mistakes he makes, he still has a right to power. So he can be quite pragmatic and he can change his policies and he can tell you that he was wrong... Walt

Rostow can't say that. If he says...I was all wrong, do it the other way around, then what he is saying is there is no reason at all why he should be in power." Chomky's unmasking of the intellectuals' bid for power left a scar on my brain. It helped make me open to the argument that the economists who run the Federal Reserve can't be trusted either.

Now fast-forward to my late 20s, when I read my gateway drug to libertarianism: Murray Rothbard's book, *Man, Economy and State*. I was a Ph.D. candidate in economics at the New School for Social Research in downtown Manhattan, while also teaching economics courses at a local university. And I was rapidly losing interest in the whole subject. The New School's left-wingers certainly cared about achieving a free society. But their radical agenda mainly consisted of the "instrumentalist" ideas of the econ department's emeritus professor Adolph Lowe, which boiled down to coercing people into following the dictates of elitists like him. My only real objection to conventional economics was that it bored me. If a theory like "perfect competition" was remote from reality, it seemed like a judgment on the imperfections of capitalism. After all, to the degree that capitalism was not perfectly competitive, it fell prey to the evils of "imperfect competition," which might require intervention from antitrust.

Always a book browser, I had more than once leafed through a two-volume work titled *Man, Economy, and State* in the New School library, whose author, Murray Rothbard, I had barely heard of. After the third or fourth look, I finally began reading the book—and experienced one eureka moment after another. For example, I learned that, if leftists thought "capital" deserved no share of the economic bounty, they were in a sense more right than they knew. Rothbard explained that, in a free market, there were no financial returns to owners of capital goods as such. Since capital goods consisted of such items as factories, machinery, offices, and desks, these goods were entirely the product of labor and land (or resources). So the monetary value of newly created capital goods is entirely attributable to the purchase of land and labor, with nothing remaining for capital goods owners. How, then, did capital goods owners make any money at all? The money they received came in two forms: interest payments for advancing resources in the present and profits for their entrepreneurial foresight—unless, of course, they were unsuccessful entrepreneurs and suffered losses.

After finishing *Man, Economy, and State*, I discovered the LaissezFaire bookshop, then a well-stocked store on Mercer Street, which regrettably

shut down years ago. Browsing at that bookshop virtually every Saturday, I gradually bought up all the Rothbard I could find, plus all the works of Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, and Israel Kirzner. I formed a reading group in Austrian economics, attended late-afternoon seminars chaired by Kirzner at New York University—and even barged into one of Rothbard’s classes at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, where he taught for many years. I say “barged in” because somehow I forgot to ask him if I could sit in and audit.

In one of Rothbard’s essays—I don’t remember which—he pointed out that freedom of speech and press was impossible under socialism: Given the reality of scarce resources, socialist planners would be compelled to restrict the supply of resources that make the exercise of freedom of speech and press possible. That made it impossible for me to believe in civil liberties and still be a socialist.

Most important was my gradual realization that free-market capitalism played *an* essential role in lifting the living standards of the broad masses of people. A passage in Mises’ magnum opus, *Human Action*, clinched it for me. Mises pointed out that, if workers receive less than the value of their output from any capitalist, that capitalist would be vulnerable to competition from a competitor, who could profit from bidding away the workers. Similarly, as Thomas Sowell’s books vividly made clear to me, a bigoted capitalist who refuses to hire minorities, or otherwise do business with them, will be punished in the marketplace by competition from non-bigoted capitalists.

For me, the greatest eureka moment of all is when I first read Rothbard’s essay “The Austrian Theory of Money.” That was when I fully grasped Mises’s most beautiful insight, called the “regression theorem,” in which Mises was able to show that all money must have originated in some commodity (gold, seashells), that if you regress backward in time, you’ll find this had to have been the case. What people think of as government-created money (dollars, euros) is nothing of the kind, but came from those same commodities. For me, the beauty of the regression theorem lies in its power to infer historical facts from simple logic about human action. It also paved the way for my realization that money is the last thing we want the government to control.

By my mid-30s, my conversion to libertarianism was pretty complete. But I continued to learn. In his 1995 magnum opus, *Capitalism: A Treatise on Economics*, economist George Riesman addressed the socialist I once was. To explain how wages rise under capitalism, for instance,

Riesman begins by acknowledging the progressives' point that in the labor markets, "employer greed and worker need" (I liked the rhyme), are ever-present. Employers are greedy—they seek to pay employees as little as possible; and workers are needy—they don't have a lot of money saved, and therefore need a job fairly quickly. But as Riesman goes on to explain with a well-chosen example (you've moved to Manhattan and need to sell your car to greedy consumers), these factors are largely irrelevant to the determination of prices in competitive markets, and certainly to the determination of wages, where employers compete for your services.

My exposure to the mind-expanding writings of anarcho-capitalist economist Walter Block is a story worth telling. I'd initially avoided Block's out-of-the box book, *Defending the Undefendable: The Pimp, Prostitute, Scab, Slumlord, Libeler, Moneylender, and Other Scapegoats in the Rogue's Gallery of American Society*. Too way-out for my taste, I thought. Then I got invited to attend a conference in Manhattan hosted by the Mises Institute. Having recently been to a spate of conferences where nothing ever started on time, with everyone chronically arriving late since no one expected anything to start on time, I was impressed that at this conference all events began and concluded exactly as scheduled thanks to the heavy hand of the guy in charge of the proceedings, Walter Block. I was so delighted by his drill-sergeant behavior that I decided then and there to read his book. I enjoyed *Defending the Undefendable*, and have since repeated one of its key points: "Libertarianism...is *not* a philosophy of life [emphasis in original]."

Did I finish my Ph.D. and continue college teaching, once I felt I had something to teach? No. My antipathy toward conventional schooling was too great. After two years as a college instructor, I plunged into the non-academic job market, starting with a less-than-one year stint as a "Program Policy Analyst" with New York City's "Human Resources Administration" (read: the Welfare Department) under then-Mayor John Lindsay. The job gave me first-hand experience in the jungle of government bureaucracy. There followed 15 years on Wall Street, first as an analyst of the commodity futures markets, then as a senior economist at the New York Stock Exchange. Then followed a quarter-of-a-century as an economics columnist at Barron's Financial Weekly, where my free-market perspective got pretty free rein. In my final decade at Barron's, I was also the weekly's book review editor and was able to publish reviews by libertarians such as Donald Boudreaux, Bretigne Shaffer, and Walter Block.

Since September 2016, I've been running the Soho Forum, a debate series that meets monthly in downtown Manhattan. Two of my debaters have been Donald Boudreaux and Walter Block, and I myself have done three separate debates with socialists. One of those debates, with Professor Richard Wolff—referred to in the *New York Times* as “probably America’s most prominent Marxist economist”—has had more than five million views on YouTube.

As for mom, she died in 2007 at age 92. The fall of the Soviet Union made it hard for her to hold on to her belief in socialism, although she could never bring herself to say anything good about capitalism. She invested in the stock market. Challenged to explain how she could justify this practice, she once memorably replied: “What—only the capitalists should get rich?”.



My Journey to Liberty

Rafi Farber

I have these disparate memories as a kid of questions that came up in my head that were never answered satisfactorily. The earliest one I can recall is when I was around 7 years old. I asked my father why the prices of things always went up. He answered that inflation is how you grow the economy. I remember thinking to myself that this didn't make any sense, because if prices always went up then everything would eventually cost millions of dollars. As most young children do, I just shut up and listened to my father, because he knew better and I was just a kid.

Then, when I was maybe 12 or 13, I found a 1000 shekel Israeli banknote from 1983 in my father's office drawer. A shekel was worth about a quarter back then and I had no idea my father was so rich. I asked him how he had so much money and why it was just sitting in his desk drawer like some piece of scrap paper. He said that the bill wasn't worth anything anymore, because now Israel had the "new shekel." The "old shekel" was basically worthless after the hyperinflation of 1983. This didn't seem to jive with his previous assertion that inflation is how you grow an economy.

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The next odd memory I have on the subject was from my senior year in high school in economics class. We were learning about GDP and how it “grew.” I remember thinking about how silly the number seemed to me, because if you’re just adding up all transactions, it’s going to pretty much be correlated with the money supply and it won’t really tell you anything useful. And so I remember writing in jest on my test that GDP stood for “gross disgusting product.”

In that same class, I remember the day we got to the subject of fiat money. “The dollar used to be backed by gold, but now it only has value because the government says it does,” said my teacher, Mrs. Holcman. “What does *that* mean?” I asked her. She had no answer other than to repeat the point.

Skip forward to 2005. I was in my early 20s on a summer program as a journalist reporting on the forced expulsion of all Jews from their homes in the Gaza Strip and the destruction of all their property by the State of Israel. At the time I supported the measure because I naively thought that allowing the government to literally burn people’s homes to the ground was politically expedient under the circumstances. First they came for the Gazans. After I saw the horrors of the aftermath of that atrocity I had supported, I started to turn around.

But it wasn’t until 2011 when everything fortuitously clicked into place. The dominos were all lined up in my head so to speak. Little did I know they were all ready to topple over. One night I got curious about the debate surrounding late term abortion. It must have come up in the news somewhere and I wanted to know what the fuss was about. Obviously, I knew conceptually the whole thing was brutal but I had never really looked into it. And so I searched and ended up on the website [Ron Paul.com](#).

The article I landed on had links to sites describing late term abortion procedures in detail, with actual pictures. I’ll spare you the details, but the whole thing was absolutely horrifying. After that initial shock, I calmed down and went through the website for hours.

Besides having all my nagging questions about economics answered logically (inflation is theft, GDP is mostly meaningless, the right to private property is absolute, and all fiat money draws its original value from gold and silver and then eventually hyperinflates to zero), Ron also answered all my questions about Israel. The United States should stop meddling, stop paying both sides, and leave Israel and the Arabs alone to their own

devices. That made way too much sense, and contradicted all the race-mongers who had insisted Ron Paul was “anti-Semitic” and “anti-Israel.” And so I quickly registered Republican and got involved in the Ron Paul 2012 campaign.

As that went on, I went through the recommended reading list and bought a whole bunch of books by Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard. I had no idea that Mises was a prominent academic holocaust survivor who had advised the Austrian government on monetary policy post World War I. He wasn’t one of the “mainstream” survivors they told us stories about on the establishment-funded March of the Living death camp trips to Poland they took us on in high school. And so I knew I had hit on the truth.

And so for the last decade plus, I have been accumulating more and more knowledge about the global economy, the welfare-warfare machine, and monetary policy, very well aware that at some point it is all going to collapse. Shortly after the eruption of a terrifying global medical tyranny the likes of which I never even imagined, I began the End Game Investor, my market commentary on monetary analysis and how to prepare for what looks certain to be the biggest economic and monetary calamity in all of human history just around the corner.

We are on the very precipice of everything Ron Paul has talked about all of his career, and though many aspects of it will be scary, it is our best opportunity as libertarians to gather real resources now. By doing that, we can help direct the world to liberty, peace, and prosperity once the old order breaks down for good.

Stay cheerful libertarians! Perpetual totalitarianism is impossible! Eventually, the state will run out of resources to steal and power centers will crumble to dust. Then our time will come.



A Vocational Road Toward Liberty

Bernardo Ferrero

The idea of liberty came to me as a providential event. I was born in Rome, Italy, in 1996. At the age of sixteen, I left home to study abroad, at an American boarding school in Surrey, England, named *TASIS*. Upon attaining my American diploma, I attended the University in London, at the School of Oriental and African Studies. It was at SOAS, at the age of 20, that I discovered my interest in economics and libertarianism. However, SOAS—probably the most prestigious university in the world for Middle Eastern studies in the 1950s and '60s, and home to Bernard Lewis, arguably the most important historian of Islam of the past century—was openly socialist. Jeremy Corbyn was an *habitué* and representatives from the Communist Party of Britain appeared often at the entrance of the main building distributing its leaflets and political dossiers. When I entered the university, I was the typical social-democrat, or *gauche caviar* as the French like to say, who had received everything from life, but who nonetheless believed that the market was unfair, that

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the industrial revolution was responsible for mass unemployment, that government should intervene to help the poor through forced redistribution, and that the “altruism” of the public sector dwarfed the “egoism” of the private sector. Encountering these Marxist “comrades,” however, had a profound effect on me, for what they desired was not to reform capitalism, but rather, in line with what the author of the *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The Communist Manifesto* had preached, to revolutionize the entire social order. *Solve et coagula*—dissolve and conjoin—could well have summed up their *Weltanschauung*.

My first reaction was that they were taking their ideas to an unjustified extreme. They saw exploitation everywhere, and students would organize protests every day in defense of cleaners and other such discriminated “minorities.” Growing up with my mother in a Florentine noble family—Frescobaldi—whose origins were rooted in the hierarchical *Societas Christiana* of the Middle Ages, I never doubted the importance of tradition and natural elites. When Metternich said that in his country the man begins with the Baron (*In Österreich beginnt der Mann mit dem Baron*), he was alluding to a sacred principle: the upper classes, in so far as they are depositaries of noble values and customs, have an inalienable responsibility, through their example and deeds, of elevating their fellowmen of which they are accountable before God. In two words: *noblesse oblige*. These, for the moment, were just ‘indoor’ and tacit family teachings. Only later did I discover, by reading some far-sighted classical liberal and (paleo) libertarian intellectuals, from Bertrand de Jouvenel to Robert Nisbet, from Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn to Hans-Hermann Hoppe, that natural elites, qua independent centers of authority, also represented an indispensable counter-power to the modern, democratic state and its perverse tendency to politicize and flatten all interpersonal relations.

The destructionist mentality I encountered in my first year of the university produced in me a cultural shock which, however, had the very healthy effect of giving me the incentive to dig deeper into the big questions. An important influence in directing my attention toward free-market ideas during this period was my private tutor, the baron Giovanni Barracco (“il barone”). If my grandfather, Dino Frescobaldi, who worked as a journalist and writer at the *Corriere della Sera* for thirty-three years, was the first to instill in me a curiosity for the humanities, it was Giovanni who turned my interest to politics, countering my prejudices against the private economy and introducing me to the dichotomy between freedom and the state (“*contro lo Stato, per la libertà*” was his

favourite line). I remember that one day I was in the university library reading Paul Krugman's column in *The New York Times*. Since he called himself a "liberal," I thought Krugman was a free marketeer, so I decided to tell Giovanni about it. His answer was fulminant: "What are you doing? Krugman is a socialist. Genuine liberals look to Friedman, not Keynes!"

Thus, I turned to Milton Friedman and soon discovered his ten-part tv series, *Free to Choose*. In a relatively short period of time, I became a Friedmanite, for these programs convinced me straightaway of the merits of the free market and the flaws of government intervention: from tariffs to minimum wage laws. For the first time, I understood that even in the social realm there were strict laws from which one could not escape and, most importantly, that a free and competitive economy possesses a rationality that no top-down, central plan could even come close to replicating.

With time, however, I felt that despite his clear thinking and impressive argumentative ability, Friedman was too compromising on a whole series of issues: from anti-trust laws to the negative income tax, from school vouchers to money. Looking for more comprehensive and coherent defenses of the free society, I happened upon a *YouTube* lecture by Thomas Woods on the causes of the Financial Meltdown of 2008, in which the Austrian School, and in particular the figure of the Nobel laureate Friedrich von Hayek, was repeatedly mentioned. I was thus led to Hayek, whose views on the inflationary origins of business cycles and the role of the price system in disseminating dispersed, context-specific knowledge throughout the catallactic order were extremely thought-provoking. As far as I could see, what the Austrians had, but which Friedman and the Chicago School lacked, was the ability to tackle macroeconomic phenomena while never losing sight of the fact that the latter always unfolded from the real, moment to moment choices, actions, and interactions of workers, landowners and capitalist-entrepreneurs in their specific coordinates of time and place.

Picking up *The Constitution of Liberty* and *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, nevertheless, made me aware that Hayek, too, advocated government intervention for a whole variety of purposes: to defend individuals from epidemics, floods, and avalanches; to build most roads and other so-called public goods; to provide land registers, maps, and statistics; to enforce standards of measure as well as quality certifications; to assure a certain minimum income for all; to make sure public spending would step in when private investment shrinks; to finance schools, research, and

recreational activities; to restrict the sale of some “dangerous” goods; to force upon businesses certain regulations in matters of health and safety, and to take advantage of eminent domain so as to increase public welfare. These concessions seemed incomprehensible to me.

While reading Hayek I learned that he was converted away from socialism, like Lionel Robbins and Wilhelm Roepke, by some guy called Mises. Ludwig von Mises was an amazing discovery. He had a much clearer prose than his student and his public policy conclusions were much less tainted with middle of the road recipes: except for the protection of person and property, government should not get involved with the voluntary decisions of individual traders. Period. Reading Mises then allowed me to discover his intellectual heir, Murray Rothbard, and I soon became a Rothbardian. What grabbed my attention was Rothbard’s intellectual coherence in bringing Mises’s viewpoint to its logical conclusion. Following in the footsteps of Gustave de Molinari, who was the first to make an analogous point a century earlier amidst his fellow classical liberals gathered around the *Société d’Economie Politique* and the *Journal des Economistes*, Rothbard convincingly argued the following: If voluntary exchange, free competition, and the profit and loss mechanism ensure maximum freedom and efficiency in the production of all goods, why not also make them the guiding principles in the production of law and order? The fact that there was no planetary monopoly of taxation and ultimate decision-making convinced me that radical political fragmentation and jurisdictional competition, as Rothbard was advocating, represented not only a possibility but, also, *ceteris paribus*, the greatest opportunity for the flourishing of human liberty and international peace. Moreover, influenced by Aristotle, who in the *Politics* argued that a distinctive trait of man relative to the other animals lies in his exclusive ability to perceive the good and the evil, the just and the unjust, Rothbard’s synthesis between the classical liberal and individualist-anarchist tradition of nineteenth-century America, the causal-realist paradigm of the Austrian School and the natural law science of scholastic origin, seemed to me philosophically more ‘humane’. If Mises had defended the market economy exclusively on utilitarian grounds, as a ‘technology’ conducive to peace and prosperity, Rothbard situated these benefits within a scientific framework that did not shy away from the discovery and definition of a rational ethics based on the nature of man and of reality.

My adherence to the Austro-libertarian framework led to experiences that further reinforced these convictions, including travel to Auburn,

Alabama, to attend Mises University, the Austrian Economics Research Conference, and the Rothbard Graduate Seminar (from 2016 to 2019). During that time, I also had the opportunity to meet many Italian libertarians and scholars. Chief among these was the traditionalist-libertarian priest Don Beniamino di Martino, who asked me to join the editorial board of *Storialibera, Rivista di Scienze Storiche e Sociali*, a journal of historical and social sciences of which I am now vice-director.

After graduating from SOAS in Economics and Politics, I decided to leave for Madrid to pursue a Master's in Austrian Economics. Initially, my plan was to stay in Spain for a year and then return, as my father as well as my family business were waiting for me in Monaco. The enthusiasm and encouragement on the part of my professors at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos—Jesús Huerta de Soto, Philipp Bagus, Antonio Martínez, Óscar Carreiro, Miguel Ángel Alonso Neira, and César Martínez Meseguer—convinced me otherwise. An additional source of knowledge and motivation were the scholars and dear friends that I met from the *Xoán de Lugo Institute* who were living in Madrid: Ignacio Almará, Daniel Carreiro, Constanza Huerta de Soto, Moises Martinez and Noemi Diaz Corral. The latter, I recall, one day, returning from class after a presentation I had given on innovation and technology from an Austrian perspective, told me: “You cannot let a vocation go uncultivated.” So it was that I decided to stay longer in Madrid and pursue a PhD in Economics, under the direction of Philipp Bagus and Jesús Huerta de Soto. With the latter, most recently, I had the privilege (as de Jouvenel indicated and as the biblical story already informed us, all liberty stems from privilege) of coauthoring *Pandemia e Dirigismo*, a book published by the *Istituto Bruno Leoni* that looks at the pernicious consequences of the interventionist fiscal and monetary policies that have been implemented from the Great Recession to Covid 19, bringing us ever closer to the next boom-bust cycle.

The relationship between credit creation and the boom/bust cycle, I must add, is something that has interested me since my first encounter with the Austrians because in many ways it is linked to my family background. Between 1299 and 1311, in fact, at a time when the *florino* was Europe's primary medium of exchange, the Frescobaldi's were the official bankers of the English Crown. They began their operations by holding 100% reserves on demand deposits. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, most Florentine banks started issuing, at

interest, unbacked money substitutes (fractional reserve banking), a practice which led to the first asset bubbles, financial panics and economic recessions. A crucial one occurred in 1312, which led my family to flee from England and, upon returning to Tuscany, specialize in the production of high quality wine, which continues to this day.

Looking backwards with the eyes of someone who, adhering to the Austrian framework, understands the future as to be (entrepreneurially) made rather than as given by the mystical and irrational forces of nature or of the dialectic, I am led to recall Alexis de Tocqueville, who in one of his most famous works argued that “He who seeks freedom for anything but freedom’s self is made to be a slave.”¹ One cannot, in other words, look for or pursue liberty in the same way one looks for or pursues ordinary goods. The light of freedom most surely brightens the mind, but it’s the taste of it that fills and inflames the heart of all those who are open to appreciate it and are ready to defend it. That I can count myself within this group, with all my insurmountable limitations, I consider to be one of God’s greatest gifts.

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1856), p. 204.



From Philosophy to Economics

David Friedman

My earliest political position was minarchist libertarian, defended largely on moral grounds. The main source, other than my own thinking, was my father. The arguments I remember, with a high school friend, were more nearly moral philosophy than economics, a less sophisticated version of arguments later made by Robert Nozick.

One problem I faced was the question of the moral authority of the state. I could not see any reason why law qua law was morally binding; right and wrong are not made by act of Congress. But it was hard to see how a society could function if everyone felt free to do as he wanted, whatever its effect on others. My conclusion, I think at about age sixteen, was that I should obey laws until I found a satisfactory resolution to that puzzle, since my final conclusion might be that I was morally obliged to do so.

After some years I noticed that my doing so was regarded by others as odd; nobody else saw anything wrong with offering a glass of wine to a seventeen-year-old friend. People did not believe they were morally obliged to obey all laws, yet society was not collapsing. I concluded that

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the combination of people obeying laws because they agreed with them, people obeying laws because they might get arrested if they didn't, and people not obeying laws whose violation was not sufficient to collapse social order, must be sufficient to maintain a functional society. Many years later I added to that the role of mutually recognized commitment strategies as a mechanism for defending rights and maintaining order.¹

I enjoyed arguing about ideas and still do. During my freshman year at Harvard I posted essays arguing for conservative and libertarian positions on the inside wall of the freshman union and stood around defending them. Later I attended meetings of “Radicals for Capitalism,” the Harvard/MIT Objectivist group, and argued with its members—mostly, as I remember, over Ayn Rand's claim to derive her moral conclusions.² Eventually, the group asked me to stop attending. I also argued with local left-wing students including Maoists.

In 1964 I got into a political conversation with a friendly stranger, I think at a lunch counter; he had probably noticed that I was wearing a Goldwater button. We ran through a series of issues. In each case, it was clear that he had never heard the argument I was offering for Goldwater's position and had no ready rebuttal. At the end of the conversation, he asked me, in a “trying not to offend” tone, whether I was taking all of these positions as a joke. Pretty clearly, what he meant was that he did not see how I could be smart enough to offer apparently convincing arguments for conclusions he knew were wrong and yet stupid enough to actually believe them. I took it as the political equivalent of “What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?”

My view that moral beliefs were tastes, neither true nor false, was altered by an argument with Isaiah Berlin, a philosopher visiting at Harvard. It is the only argument on an important issue that I can remember unambiguously losing. The conclusion I eventually reached was intuitionism: Our moral intuitions are imperfect perceptions of moral reality just as our sensory perceptions are of physical reality.³

I spent from 1965 to 1971 at the University of Chicago as a graduate student in physics. During part of that time, I contributed a libertarian

¹ See *The Machinery of Freedom*, 3rd edition, Chapter 52 (New York: Chu Hartley LLC, 2014), for an explanation.

² I offer my criticism of Rand's position in Chapter 59 of *The Machinery of Freedom*.

³ I describe the argument and my conclusions in Chapter 61 of the third edition of *The Machinery of Freedom*.

column, “The Radical,” to *The New Guard*, a conservative student magazine. Much of part I of *The Machinery of Freedom* was rewritten from those columns.

TOWARD ANARCHY

When I went to Chicago I was a classical liberal/minarchist. A year or two later I read *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, a novel by Robert Heinlein set in a stateless society on the moon. The setting was very different from the world I lived in, but a theorem is disproved by a single counterexample; if his society was internally consistent, and I thought it was, it could not be that all societies required a legal structure provided from outside the market. That started me thinking about what a stateless society might be like in my world. The result was the anarchist society that I described and defended in part III of *The Machinery of Freedom*.

One feature of the institutions I described, where law was produced on the market, was that it would tend to produce economically efficient law, law that maximized the summed value to those affected. Since the value to A of being able to violate B’s rights is almost always less than the cost to B, that would usually be libertarian law.⁴ I had come up with a mechanism for producing libertarian law that did not depend on persuading people to be libertarians.

My most recent book was on legal systems very different from ours.⁵ Part of what I learned in the process of creating it was that I had been reinventing the wheel, that the legal system I imagined was a modern, high division of labor version of something that had existed in past societies.

OTHER IDEAS

I became interested in the controversy over population growth and wrote a paper for the Population Council arguing that it was unclear whether the net externality from population growth was positive or negative.⁶

⁴ Chapter 54 of the third edition of *The Machinery of Freedom* deals with the circumstances in which the resulting legal rules will or will not be efficient.

⁵ David Friedman, Peter Leeson, and David Skarbek, *Legal Systems Very Different from Ours* (2019).

⁶ “Laissez-faire in Population: The Least Bad Solution.”

Three decades later, when climate change had replaced population as the looming catastrophe that demanded immediate action, I came to the same conclusion about it. In both cases there were both positive and negative externalities, the former largely ignored in the public discussion, and it was unclear which were larger.

After getting a doctorate in physics and spending a few years as a post-doc I switched my field to economics, wrote and published a journal article presenting an economic theory of the size and shape of nations, and ended up as an assistant professor in the economics department of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI). My colleague Gordon Tullock had written a book chapter arguing that it was impossible to bargain into social order from a Hobbesian state of nature because without a government to enforce contracts making an agreement changed nothing. I used the concept of self-enforcing contracts, inspired by ideas I got from the late Earl Thompson, to show why Tullock was wrong: Making an agreement establishes a new Schelling point, a bargaining outcome mutually perceived as unique, and so changes the pattern of believable commitment strategies. Generalizing the argument, I concluded that the existence of mutually recognized commitment strategies explained rights—conceived of not as moral or legal claims but as a feature of human behavior—and offered a way out of the Hobbesian war of each against all.⁷

I went from VPI to the economics department of UCLA, from there to Tulane Business School. While at Tulane I became involved in a controversy between two economists and two legal scholars, all at the University of Chicago, over a proposal to privatize part of law enforcement. I contributed two articles, one historical on the saga period Iceland⁸ and one theoretical,⁹ and ended up as a faculty fellow in the University of Chicago Law School working on the economic analysis of law.

I became interested in public key cryptography and discovered the Cypherpunk email group, one of whose recommended readings was *The Machinery of Freedom*, my first book. On the basis of ideas largely

⁷ My reply to Tullock was in my review of *Further Explorations in Anarchy*, ed. G. Tullock (Blacksburg: Public Choice, 1976). The ideas are explained in detail in Chapters 51 and 52 of the third edition of *The Machinery of Freedom*.

⁸ “Private Creation and Enforcement of Law—A Historical Case,” *Journal of Legal Studies* (March 1979), pp. 399–415.

⁹ “Efficient Institutions for the Private Enforcement of Law,” *Journal of Legal Studies*, June (1984).

borrowed from Tim May, one of the group's central figures, I wrote an article describing the possibility of a world of strong privacy, an online society where individuals could interact, communicate, buy and sell in ways that no third party, including government actors, could observe.¹⁰ That suggested the possibility of an anarcho-capitalist cyberspace coexisting with states in realspace—what I still regard as the most likely form of anarcho-capitalism to appear in my lifetime.

ECONOMICS OR PHILOSOPHY

I started with a bright line view of libertarian moral theory: Violating individual rights was wrong and you should never do it. Over time I concluded that that was too simple. The basis of rights was less clear than I had believed, due to problems such as justifying ownership of land,¹¹ and the lexicographic view of morality, according to which one should never violate someone's rights even a little in order to achieve something else, however important, led to conclusions neither I nor anyone else was likely to accept.

My favorite example is due to Bill Bradford. I fall off my tenth floor balcony, save myself by catching hold of the flagpole of the balcony immediately below. While I am working my way hand over hand to safety, the resident of the ninth floor apartment comes out and orders me to stop using his flag pole. Few libertarians, however strongly committed to property rights, would let go. Respecting rights is a value, an end as well as a means, but violating rights may be justified if, as in that example, failing to do so has catastrophic consequences.

Many who reject libertarianism believe that the society we propose would result in massive inequality, increasing poverty, large-scale unemployment, pollution, and other horrors. If so, that might be a good reason to reject it. My response is not that libertarianism is morally obligatory; I have no way of proving to a skeptic that my moral views are correct and, even if they are, those views do not compel libertarian policies if their consequences are sufficiently bad. The correct response is to convince the critic that the consequences are not bad but very good.

¹⁰ "A World of Strong Privacy: Promises and Perils of Encryption," *Social Philosophy and Policy*.

¹¹ I discuss my not very satisfactory solution to that problem in Chapter 57 of *The Machinery of Freedom*.

Moral beliefs correlate, if imperfectly, across people—few are in favor of poverty, disease, or ignorance. A libertarian society is superior enough to the alternatives, judged by widely shared values, that most people would prefer it if convinced of my view of its consequences. That is the basis for my controversial claim that libertarianism should be defended by economics not philosophy, the subject of a series of debates with libertarian philosopher George Smith.¹²

I am a professional economist, not a professional libertarian. As an economist I recognize that the market is an imperfect mechanism for solving the coordination problem that all societies face. Market failure, situations where individual rationality does not produce group rationality, is real, with the possible inability of a stateless society to defend itself as one important example.

One implication is that my early support for an economy where all interaction was by decentralized trade rather than centralized employment was a mistake. There are, as Ronald Coase showed, reasons why hierarchy is sometimes a superior coordination mechanism, hence why economic activity in a free society is organized by firms, internally hierarchal, as well as by markets. If the strong version of the libertarian side of the calculation controversy were correct, if economic coordination was only possible through markets, there would be no firms larger than one person.

What is wrong with the criticism of *laissez-faire* by good economists is not their analysis of the market but of the alternative, imagined as intervention by wise and benevolent regulators. The rebuttal to that is public choice theory, the branch of economics with which my career started. Viewing the political system as itself a market, a system of self-interested actors interacting under a different set of rules, it becomes clear that market failure, the exception on the private market, is the rule on the public.¹³ The same point supports the superiority of anarcho-capitalism, where the law itself is produced on the private market, to minarchy, where it is produced on the political market.

Over a period of about sixty-five years, the foundations of my libertarianism have shifted from moral philosophy to economics, from the belief that only a libertarian society is consistent with human rights to the belief

¹² The video of the final debate is webbed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9YVqZN9Ljk>.

¹³ Chapter 53, *Machinery of Freedom*.

that it does a better job than any alternative of providing humans with the outcomes they value. That it better respects human rights is a reason to prefer it but not, by itself, a sufficient reason.



Libertarianism as a Path to Life

Alan G. Futerman

A whole new world was opened to me when I was around 10 years old. My mother Ana gave me a book and by so doing she not only gave me a nice gift but, more importantly, she opened an entire world of ideas to me. After that, I fell in love with reading.

My first big intellectual love was with history, and then with philosophy. It was when I was around 12 that I first delved into the world of Greek thought with its enduring human questions. I found the question of justice to be of the utmost importance because it did not involve simply an abstract concept but, fundamentally, a standard by which to evaluate both reality and my own actions. This love of philosophy also coincided with an increasing interest in Judaism, and as such with the ethical ideals that surround Jewish thought. In a sense, the combination of both traditions is what guided me in the discovery of the idea of freedom.

But my journey to classical liberalism and libertarianism properly begins, as is usually the case, with Ayn Rand. At school I used to read

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a lot of history. I remember that I was on holiday when I suddenly realized something: if history could teach anything, it would be that socialism does not work. It may be difficult to challenge in theory, I thought at the time, but on a practical level it was (as Mises put it) pure destructionism. However, because of living in Argentina in the 2000s, I was able to see that socialism was far from being forgotten or even challenged. How could an ideology with such horrendous outcomes still be highly regarded? At the same time, how could it be considered *just* for the state to take away someone's property? That was the question with which I tried to grapple. And then came the beginning of an answer: If there were thinkers and philosophers, such as Marx, who defended socialism, the same must be true for capitalism. But who were these philosophers?

When looking into this, the first name that I found was that of Ayn Rand. So, I ran to the bookstore to get whatever I could find on her. That is when I read *The Virtue of Selfishness*. To say that reading that book changed my intellectual world would be an understatement. It was more than that, since it gave me what I was seeking: not only an alternative ethical viewpoint in opposition to the altruist discourse that permeates socialism, but also an entire worldview founded upon the idea of the justice of living for one's own sake.

A year of studies in Israel when I was 18 years old gave me a lot of time to think. I tried to read everything I could find on Rand and her philosophy of Objectivism. Whether books or blogs, articles or lectures, nothing was enough to satisfy my desire to learn more. Naturally, it was not long before I discovered that I also had to learn economics. If I really wanted to understand the functioning of a free society as a proper social system, I had to know the specifics of how it works. Soon I realized that it was not only interesting to learn economics, but that I also liked it. So, it was settled: I wanted to become an economist.

It was only a matter of time before my interest in the freedom philosophy led me to find the Austrians (the writings of Gustavo Perednik and Alberto Benegas Lynch, Jr., were essential). And when I did, it had the same effect that history, philosophy, and Rand had on me when I first met them. Again, I repeated the process and tried to read everything I could find on Austrian Economics. Books, papers, articles, blogs. The clarity of the Austrians fascinated me.

I began my studies at the National University of Rosario (which I would later finish at the University of the Latin American Educational Center, UCEL), where I was able to contrast the Austrian Economics

that I was learning on my own with what I was studying at the university. I was passionate in my defense of the free market system, and so I could not but argue with professors and fellow students who defended interventionism. In fact, it was during a Sociology class where I discussed some of Marx's contradictions that I first got to talk with Desiré, who is now my fiancée. To be fair, I wanted to talk with her before, but she only noticed me when I argued with both the entire class and the professor. The class was full of socialists and interventionists of all kinds (including the professor), and she (who was sitting close to me) turned and said: "I agree with you." So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that I must thank Mises for getting to know my future wife!

Until that moment, my experience with libertarianism was only theoretical because it consisted mainly in studying on my own. But then I decided to get to know people who had similar ideas. That is how I learned about the Bases Foundation in my city, Rosario. When I began to attend the lectures they organized, I met more people in libertarian and classical liberal circles. Thanks to the kind invitation of its president and members I joined the foundation's research group, where I met my friends and future colleagues Ariel Tejera and Leandro Verón. Meeting almost weekly, we delved into deep discussions on economic topics, especially macroeconomics. They were extremely generous with me by letting me join them in their research. At the same time, we had the chance to present papers at the international congresses on Austrian Economics that the foundation organizes every two years, where I also got to meet several of the most important scholars and thinkers in the field, from Lawrence White to Kurt Leube.

But the university and my research were not the only places where I learned economics. I also had the chance to work at my family business (and eventually became CFO), where I not only got to see first-hand how the market works but also to witness a true Kirznerian entrepreneur in the figure of my father Marcelo. Creativity, will, and discipline, among others, are values that are at the core of human endeavors and wealth creation, and that cannot be grasped by only reading or playing with models. They must be seen to be understood, and the market is a good teacher. True enough, one must know what the market is to actually *see* it (as in Mises' *Theory and History*), but you get the point. Some things are learned by *acting*, and not by the a priori.

As is usually the case, I did not have much Austrian Economics or libertarianism in class. So, I had to continue studying on my own. In this

respect, I read more and more, from Murray Rothbard to Adam Smith. I tried to write every idea I had on economics or philosophy, both good and bad. That helped me to think more deeply about each subject as well as to practice my writing. Soon, I published my first paper on macroeconomics (focused on a method to measure each stage of the Austrian Business Cycle), and later other projects followed.

As I was trying to learn more, I was fortunate to win the second prize at the 9th International Vernon Smith Prize for the Advancement of Austrian Economics, organized by the European Center of Austrian Economics Foundation (ECAEF) in Liechtenstein, for an essay dealing with Hayekian foundations for direct democracy. Presenting the paper in Vaduz was a marvelous experience. I also got the chance to participate in several seminars and programs focused on economics and other subjects by the Fund for American Studies, Cato Institute, Mises Institute, Liberty Fund, and Ayn Rand Institute, among others. The Tikvah Fund was very important in this regard, since its program on *Jewish Thought and Enduring Human Questions* at Princeton University was eye-opening for me. In another Tikvah program, *The Israeli Economy* in NYC, I met a fellow libertarian, Michael Makovi, with whom I discussed different subjects related to freedom philosophy. At one point, I mentioned that I really liked Rothbard's writings, but that I did not agree with his foreign policy perspectives, especially regarding the State of Israel. Michael told me right away that his professor Walter Block was also interested in this subject and always wanted to write about it, and he immediately put me in touch with him. This was the beginning of a long and productive friendship with Walter, with whom we ended up publishing eleven papers, four articles, and two books (with other projects on the way), dealing with many aspects of economics from an Austrian approach as well as a political philosophy in a libertarian light. *The Austrolibertarian Point of View* (Springer, 2021; with a foreword by Deirdre McCloskey) and *The Classical Liberal Case for Israel* (Springer, 2021; with commentary by Benjamin Netanyahu) are a result of this great relationship with Walter.

A subject that really captivated me was economic methodology and epistemology. As such, I was fortunate to have met Rafael Beltramino, a friend and professor. With both an encyclopedic mind and an incredible kindness, he was my mentor in these subjects. As such, I was his assistant for his course on Methodology and Epistemology of the Social Sciences at UCEL (with another extraordinary professor, Daniel Trapani), and he was

generous enough to be my final thesis supervisor for my BA in Economics (dealing with methodology and epistemology of economics).

In this context, I also met an outstanding professor and Smith scholar, Walter Castro. He was extremely kind to me by sharing his knowledge and his advice on academic subjects. After taking his course on Institutional Economics, I gained an increased understanding of both the economic and the social order. A few years later he would give me the opportunity to join him as an adjunct professor in his course at UCEL, so we are colleagues to this day. Both Walter and Rafael were students of a great intellectual and follower of the Austrians, Rogelio Pontón (whom I also had as a professor in his course on the history of economic thought). The circle of students (consisting of economists, professors, entrepreneurs, and traders) that followed Rogelio has been debating subjects of economics and political philosophy for more than thirty years, and I was lucky to be invited to join them.

It was in the latter group where I met Ivo Sarjanovic (a prominent figure in the world of agricultural commodities globally). The friendship and work with Ivo eventually led to writing articles together and finally to our forthcoming book, *Commodities as an Asset Class: Essays on Inflation, the Paradox of Gold and the Impact of Crypto* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022). Ivo was also a professor of mine at Torcuato Di Tella University in Buenos Aires, where I got my MSc in Finance in 2021. My interest in finance increasingly grew, and I have continued my research down this path.

Having learned much more since taking the first steps in the freedom philosophy, I no longer have the same excitement with fully integrated systems as I had then. I have become much more Popperian, in a sense. As such, I do recognize the importance and usefulness of certain aspects of other traditions and economic schools of thought, and at the same time, I am more suspicious of all-encompassing theories or proposed solutions. Society, as Hayek clearly explained, is a complex system.

Therefore, my current research deals with two topics. One is methodology and epistemology, where following the latter perspective I intend to show how Carl Hempel's partial explanation model could be more suitable for explaining economic events. And the other one consists in expanding Mises's praxeological approach to finance, showing that human action does not only involve economic principles, but financial principles as well.

In sum, the freedom philosophy not only gave me the theoretical framework to understand at least a bit of our complex world but, more importantly, allowed me to find a path in life. And for that, I will be forever grateful.



Born Wanting to Be Free

Sean Gabb

On the whole, I think, libertarians are born rather than made. No doubt, there are libertarians who burn with hunger to dominate others but are restrained by an intellectual acceptance of the non-aggression principle, or by considerations of personal convenience or the general utility of leaving others alone. I may have met a few of these. I do think most of us, though, are drawn to libertarianism by a natural inclination to leave others alone. So it was for me.

I was born in Kent in December 1959. For reasons that may be relevant but that I choose not to explain, I was brought up for my first six years in Chatham by my grandmother. She had lost her husband in the War, and she supported herself with a small widow's pension and a slightly larger dressmaker's business. She had bought her own house in 1956 with the proceeds of much hard work and self-denial; and if the electric wiring had a tendency to heat up and smoke in those rooms where it reached, and if baths were had in a metal tub in front of a coal fire, she never to my knowledge complained about the narrowness of her means. "I've got

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my independence” was something she repeatedly told me not as a consolation but as a cause of pride. Others paid rent. Others had debts. Others got up in the morning to go elsewhere and help make someone else rich. Not my grandmother. If she found it convenient to sit up all night with her sewing machine, that is what she did. If she wanted to spend all afternoon stretched out on a grubby carpet in front of the fire, that is what she did, and I lay beside her.

“Mind your own business!” was another of her favorites. She would bring it out with a menacing intensity if anyone got in her way. I remember when I was a few weeks short of my second birthday, and someone from the Unmarried Mothers’ Association came to visit. A self-important woman in a silly hat, she asked too many questions about the blisters I had on my hands from a game with burning coal. “Mind your own business!” was the least intemperate response. The woman was soon on the other side of the front door. She returned a few days later to collect the perambulator her charity had lent us. I never saw her again.

You may answer my first paragraph with my second and third. My grandmother could be a little odd in her ways but probably counts as a libertarian. She was the first person I knew. Even after I was finally taken off to live with my parents in London, we remained very close until her death. Nearly sixty years after I was taken from her, I retain most of her prejudices and many of her habits. Like her, I want to be left alone. Like her, I want to leave others alone. Like her, I want others to leave each other alone. Perhaps she made me what I am. Perhaps she did. My response is that we got on so well, and I absorbed so much from her, because she and I had both come into the world with the same inclinations. Whatever others said about her, nothing she ever did struck me at the time, or strikes me now, as other than reasonable and even natural.

This much being said, I can point to no time when I became a libertarian. There was only a time when I realized I was a libertarian, and another when I came out as a libertarian. Both times came early in my life, and both follow from a reading of two books. The first of these, on the face of it, has nothing to do with libertarianism. One day, when I was seven and bored in the school I was forced to attend, I poked miserably at a pile of books at the far end of the classroom. Into my hands fell a copy of Roger Lancelyn Green’s *Tales of Troy*, which is a retelling of the Homeric Poems. I read this as if struck by lightning. I had never known anything so glorious. I read it in class and reread it. I cried over it. I dreamed at

night of Hector's body dragged round the walls of Troy, and of Odysseus in the cave of Polyphemus. I decided that, whatever else I might do in life, I would learn everything I possibly could about the history and the language and the ways of the Greeks. I forgot about watching television and going out to play with friends. Instead, haunting every library within walking distance, I began a lifetime of compulsive and voracious reading.

Never a popular child at my primary school, I was ruthlessly bullied at my secondary school. This, plus the school's disregard for the attendance laws, turned out to be a blessing. I played truant for three years. Bearing in mind my settled preferences, the most natural place for me to go instead of school was the Lewisham Central Library. There, for those three wonderful years, schooling never once got in the way of my education.

Part of this education came in April 1973. On a Monday in that month, I began the first volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. The librarian who found it in the reserve stock had pulled a face at its bulk, describing it as "the dullest book ever written." I thought otherwise. But, if I had begun it as a history of the Roman world from the second to the fifteenth centuries, I was insensibly bathed in the liberalism of the High Enlightenment. From Gibbon I passed to Hume, from Hume to Lecky, from Lecky to Macaulay. I taught myself French by reading Montesquieu and Voltaire. What I learnt, among much else, from these men was that I was not so strange after all, and that there was a vast mass of literature to state and explain and defend the opinions I already had.

My last step to libertarianism came at school. At sixteen, I was persuaded back in time to sit my O-Levels. Because it was an inner-London comprehensive, and because I had no interest in mathematics or the sciences, my school could offer only History, English and Economics for A-Level. I eventually found a use for the thorough training my teacher gave me in neoclassical economic theory. When in my thirties I faced a much-reduced market for my services as a teacher of the ancient languages, and no one was willing to publish my novels, a post in an Economics department was most welcome. At the time, however, the main value of the textbook and the conversations with my somewhat leftist teacher was that I saw straight through the fallacies of economic statism. I came to the subject already with no interest in telling people how they should live. What people wanted to read or write or say, or to swallow or smoke or inject, or generally do with themselves and each other—that, I had *always* believed was their concern; and I had learned

from the old liberals *why* it should be their concern alone. Of course, no one who knew so much about the Ancients, and had known from a very young age, could have time for the moral prejudices of my youth. I now learned that economic stability and fairness did not require heavy taxes or control of prices and incomes. I accepted that some government was needed to scare the Soviets, and some welfare was desirable for those really unable to help themselves. Otherwise, I found that most excuses for the government were a mass of interconnected sophisms advanced by people who wanted at best to live at the expense of everyone else, but mostly to push everyone about with less honesty because less open, and with more continuous force than those bullies had used to drive me from my school.

So I went up to university, arrogant—sometimes justly, sometimes not—shy, careless of my appearance, uttering to anyone who would listen the truths of old liberalism, half as clown, half as Old Testament prophet. But what I did there is no part of this narrative.

I have said nothing of Ayn Rand, Murray Rothbard, or Ludwig von Mises. I say nothing because I did not read them until after my views had already been settled. I knew Milton Friedman for his economics and Hayek because he liked Hume and Macaulay. But, if by 1979, I was calling myself a libertarian and announcing that my schemes of national reform were applied libertarianism, I found little in common with those libertarians who had come in by more conventional routes. I found little, that is, until Monday the 31st of December 1979.

I was back in London from university, and had decided to inflict myself for the day on the National Association for Freedom. I spoke for about half an hour with Gerald Hartup, after which we ran out of anything more to say. He was busy. I was boring. Robert Moss was not available. Stephen Eyres, the Director, was available, but I was not his type, and so he refused to come off the telephone when Gerald introduced us.

Eventually, I was persuaded into a small room without windows and left to consult the “archive.” As I skimmed through a mountain of unsorted literature and old issues of *The Free Nation*, I read about a new bookshop that had opened just round the corner in Covent Garden. It was wholly devoted to books about liberty. Having no reason to linger in the hope of a meeting with Mr Eyres, I made my excuses and went in search of Floral Street.

As yet, the Alternative Bookshop had no *fascia*, and I walked past the place once. Inside, thousands of books, both old and new, were packed

into rudimentary shelves. On the plain, whitewashed walls were various posters, most of these from the Libertarian Party of America. One that I particularly remember was a listing of the core principles of the National Socialist German Workers Party that emphasized its socialist origins and ideals.

I saw none of this at first, as the inside of the shop was very hot, and my spectacles steamed up as soon as I was through the door.

“Can I help you?” asked someone behind the counter to my left. As my spectacle lenses adjusted to the new temperature, I saw a slim, rather short young man with a mass of tight black curls and long sideburns that framed a sharp, mobile face. In the blast from the several fan heaters placed behind the counter, he sat in black trousers and a white frilly shirt open to the waist.

“I’ve just come from the NAFF offices” I said. “I read about this shop in *The Free Nation*.”

The man smiled. “I’m Chris Tame, the Manager” he said. There was a slight but distinct emphasis on the word Manager. I now know that Chris was eleven days past his thirtieth birthday, and this was his first position of any importance. And it was an important position. He had previously worked at the NAFF, but as a researcher and in strict subordination to people whose views he largely did not share and whose persons he generally despised. Plucked from there, he was now in charge of his own operation, from where he could spread his own distinctive views of liberty without close supervision. He had every reason for that slight emphasis. He was a young man going places, and he wanted the world to know that.

Introductions made, Chris took me on a tour of the bookshop. Here were the Austrian economics, here the Ayn Rand. Here was the history, and here were the attacks on socialism, both national and international. He darted from stack to stack, pulling out books for my inspection. I bought some Bastiat, and Henry Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson*, and something by Leonard E. Read. With the exception of this last, I still have the books.

After a while, I felt that Chris had given up on trying to sell more to me. Instead, he was pulling down books simply to discuss them. He seemed to have read them all and was interested in what I might think of them. I mentioned that I was studying the history of the Later Roman Empire. He paused for a moment. He had nothing about that on the shelves but could recommend books I might find elsewhere. And he did.

It seemed to be over in half an hour, but we sat alone in the bookshop all afternoon. We spoke and spoke. In that first meeting, we covered in the outline all the points of difference that were to keep us arguing for the next twenty-six years. I never did ask Chris what he made of me, but I found him both fascinating and disturbing.

At that first meeting, Chris told me about the Libertarian Alliance. This was an organization he had started. He said I might find it more congenial than the NAFF. I looked at the leaflet he gave me. It looked pleasantly uncompromising, and I joined at once. I think the subscription for students was £7.50. For this, I was promised four issues per year of *Free Life* magazine and written notification of events of interest. As ever with Chris, there was no distinction made between the work he wanted to do and the work he was paid to do. It was over a year before I realized that the Alternative Bookshop was other than a projection of the Libertarian Alliance.

The Libertarian Alliance. That, I suppose, was the beginning of my life as a public libertarian. For the next quarter century, Chris was there to push me and nag me, and sometimes to shout at me, and always to make use of what writing talent I may have. For the last ten years of his life, we were effectively the British libertarian movement. But that is a long story—a story much longer than the word limit given me for this brief personal account. So I will leave things as they were in December 1979. For what it may be worth, the young man who drifted that month into Chris Tame's net is now the ageing man who sits contemplating the destruction of English liberty. That is something you can check for yourself if you have the patience to trawl the millions of words I have written. But—again, for what it may be worth—the young man who drifted into that net was once the little boy who lived with his mad old grandmother in Chatham and took to heart those key libertarian utterances: “I’ve got my independence,” and “Mind your own business.”



Live Free and Thrive!

Carla Gericke

As we lose our freedoms, some will just sit around and complain, while others, visionaries like me, are creating a brave new world in the Free State of New Hampshire, where we aim to “Live free and thrive!”

I’m originally from South Africa. Pa was a diplomat, which meant I lived in New York, Mafikeng, Stockholm, Rio, and Pretoria growing up. I attended five primary schools after which I was put in an all-girls boarding school in Pretoria. I have always been a bit of a rebel, but I was also a nerd, a jock, and the class clown. Humor is a great way to avoid getting your ass handed to you when you are the Permanent New Kid.

The short version of “How I Became a Libertarian,” goes like this: I was independent by age 10, owned my first Krugerrand at 16, and I read a lot. The longer version goes something like this:

I walked my tiny diapered self to America in the aisle of an airplane in 1973. By the time I was six, I’d traveled to 48 states. I had my first chosen job at 8 or 9, pushing shopping carts for tips at the local grocery store to buy candy my parents wouldn’t subsidize.

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I started flying from Johannesburg to Sweden by way of London in 1983 with five Rand in my pocket. Can you imagine today slapping a clipboard-sized orange label around the neck of a prepubescent child announcing: UNACCOMPANIED MINOR? Could just as well have said, KIDNAP HER. Luckily, no one did. Perhaps the world isn't as scary as our overlords claim?

My parents returned during my senior year of high school, the last time we all lived together. That year, we were burglarized three times; one time, the back door was hacked down by an ax. Pa was promoted to Consul in Rio, but before they departed, Ma had a debilitating stroke that left her paralyzed, having to relearn how to walk and talk. They went anyway. I was sixteen. By 17, my sister and I were sharing an apartment in Pretoria, and by 19, I was living on my own—mostly on coffee and two packs a day—halfway through law school.

I graduated from the University of Pretoria around the time Nelson Mandela was released from prison. During law school, I co-wrote a play called *The Little Curly Black Hair*, which a Johannesburg newspaper called “A poor man’s Not the Nine o’Clock News” and also “scatological.” (I had to look up what that meant.) In one skit, I played a CNN Talking Head who was trying to sell the First Gulf War to a skeptical audience. I was antiwar from a young age, after reading Wilfred Owen’s poem “Dulce et Decorum Est,” followed by *Cat’s Cradle* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Pa turned me on to Kurt Vonnegut. And Star Trek. And Ayn Rand.

I also started an underground zine critical of the Apartheid Regime called *The Third “I,”* which was promptly banned from campus. On weekends, out partying at underground clubs, I wore hot pants, fishnet stockings, platform heels, and fake eyelashes. I swept my dyed-red hair into a beehive. Deee-lite in dee small town.

I needed a bigger pond.

I won a Green Card in the INS Diversity Lottery, and, after sneaking off and marrying my then-boyfriend, now husband of oh-so-many-years, we immigrated to San Francisco with two suitcases and a wad of cash from selling most of our earthly possessions.

It’s strange what you regret losing. I cried when I sold my books at the flea market, and because of that, now I will never have enough. Because I simply couldn’t, I refused to sell my artworks, mostly paintings by Ma and talented friends, and strange treasures picked up on my travels.

Over the years, friends and family have delivered these back to me, a throw rug here, a tribal mask there, even, eventually, Great-Ouma's hand-embroidered doilies, the ones she made after surviving the British concentration camps during the Boer War.

As brand-new immigrants in the Bay Area in the Nineties, we had \$7000 and big dreams. And, boy, was San Francisco ready to deliver. We first lived in the Tenderloin, a San Francisco inner city slum, renting a studio apartment for \$475 per month. Classy joint; think: bath in the kitchen; bullet holes in lobby window, dead junkie on the second floor, a crack house in the basement, and an undercover police sting at the drug-dealing laundromat next door. Real classy.

Fortunes were being made in Silicon Valley, just not by me. I bought a bicycle with my first paycheck, riding to BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) to get to work. I was hired as a paralegal for Apple Computer at the time Steve Jobs was gone and no one wanted to work there, but I didn't know better and I was thrilled. I worked with Sales and Marketing, and, eventually, on the acquisition of NeXT. I was then recruited to the Borland Software Corporation, which had the best campus in the Valley with its exquisite Japanese gardens and koi ponds and even Squash courts. After passing the California Bar Exam on my first try, I was off to Swiss-owned Logitech, where I should have stayed. But alas, the lure of insta-start-up-millionaire-status enticed me from my secure and lucrative career as in-house counsel for a Fortune 500 company, to Scient Corporation which, to put it in terms we can all understand, was a "high-tech e-consulting firm" that went from a six billion dollar market cap to being delisted for trading under a dollar.

Yeah.

The Dot Com Bubble collapsed and I had to lay off 1,200 employees... including myself. My husband went from closing \$7 M in first-round start-up funding, to *Nah, sorry, times are tight, even though we are really impressed by all your patents.*

Bad times were upon us. Having had no prior American work experience, we'd simply thought roving tequila stations and massages at your desk was just how Corporate America rolled. But now post-crash, post-9/11, we needed to regroup. We put our possessions in storage, bought a couple of backpacks, drafted a \$15 per day travel budget, and booked plane tickets to India.

India, Nepal, Vietnam, Singapore, Laos, Thailand, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Macau, Hong Kong. Typical Third World travel:

hostage situations, Delhi-belly, a stolen passport, a punch right in the kisser, as well as countless beautiful starry nights and much self-reflection. Three years later, we returned to America, this time to New York City.

Due to an epiphany, I'd had at the base camp of Annapurna, I returned to school to pursue my M.F.A. in Creative Writing. I no longer wanted to be a lawyer. I no longer wanted to move stacks of paper around for the government. I no longer wanted to be a wage slave working 80 hours a week for someone else. I wanted to embrace my real strengths and become the things I wanted to be: honest, wild, and brilliant.

While backpacking, I'd researched what exactly had happened during the Dotcom era. The answer to "Where do bubbles come from?" led me to "Where does money come from?" which then led me to sexy, sexy stuff like M1, M2, M3, quantitative and qualitative easing. Somewhere during this deep dive into Austrian Economics, I learned about the Free State Project, a then-nascent movement to concentrate libertarians in New Hampshire.

We started to visit the Granite State from New York, usually to attend the Free State Project's annual events, Liberty Forum in the Winter, and the Porcupine Freedom Festival, aka PorcFest, always the third week of June.

On these trips, we'd explore the state independently too: the home-made ice-cream stands; the incredible natural beauty with lakes, mountains, forests, and sea; and what can you say about Fall in New Hampshire? The trees turn to candy and your eyes hurt from the pretty.

Fall was definitely the clincher. Besides, New York City, with its post-9/11 paranoia and cops on every corner, no longer held any allure for me. But... New Hampshire? Not only was this state not the type of place that made any "hot" lists, but back then the idea of concentrating thousands of libertarians in one state seemed like.... A radical idea... Possibly.... A radically stupid idea.

Worst case, I told myself, I'd have another random place to add to the list of random places I've lived, but best case scenario, perhaps for once, I'd be getting in very, very early on a very, very good idea.

Turns out, I was.

Back in 2014, in an *Economist* interview, I said New Hampshire would become the "*Yankee Hong Kong... The one place in America that is economically free, like a beacon to the rest of the country—or even the world.*" Sadly, in less than a decade, Hong Kong has fallen and school children there no longer even learn this "benignly neglected" outpost was

once a British territory. But while liberty is being snuffed out worldwide, in the Free State, we are becoming measurably freer. Turns out, rising totalitarianism is good for business.

New Hampshire is currently ranked #1 in Overall Freedom by the Cato Institute. We have Constitutional Carry and no red flags laws. Same-sex marriage has been legal since 2010. There's no state income tax and Interest & Dividends taxes will taper to zero in 2026. Our homeschooling laws are excellent. Seabrook supplies clean, green nuclear energy. We are consistently ranked #1 for Quality of Living.

Free Staters have significantly contributed to these successes and hundreds of others. We run for office, serve in leadership, on school boards, and on juries. We're building crypto start-ups and investment firms. We are making art, movies, and podcasts. Personally, I won a landmark First Amendment lawsuit that affirmed the right to film police encounters and removed their claim of qualified immunity.

In 2010, I was arrested and charged with felony wiretapping. As the *Union Leader*, New Hampshire's largest newspaper said, "Gericke was the wrong person to arrest on a trumped up charge."

At my arraignment, the state dropped all charges, but I was so confident of my rights, and so outraged at how I'd been treated that night—including having my handcuffs dangerously tightened, and being taken out behind the Weare Police Station at 3 a.m. by three burly officers who let me know in no uncertain terms where I stood (physically manhandled and rightfully scared)—I instructed my lawyers to file a motion to reinstate the charges, which the judge denied, understandably thinking I might be nuts.

I was determined to have my day in court, and soon after, my lawyers filed a complaint in federal court for thirty-seven violations of my civil rights. Between the depositions, motions, arguments, and appeals, it took four years for the case to wend its way to the First Circuit in Boston. The entire case of *Gericke vs. Begin et al* now hinged on the act of filming police during a late-night traffic stop. We argued: On the job, on the record. The government argued, I kid you not, that Constitutional protections did not apply because the situation was "inherently dangerous." In other words, the state was straight-faced claiming the Constitution did not apply at the side of the road after dark. The First Circuit found this argument as laughable as I did, and after the case was remanded back to the lower court, the insurance company made a reasonable settlement offer, which I accepted. I will always thank the Weare

PD for the down payment on my house in West Manchester. (Sorry, taxpayers!)

A few months ago, I had to put down my ailing sixteen-year-old rescued dog, Nellie-Belly. As anyone who has had to pull the plug knows, it is a painful, difficult, gnawing decision. The service came to our house, and the first thing the vet did was give Nellie a chocolate cookie, because, why not? Then the procedure started the shaving of her leg, administering two doses of medicines, checking her vitals as they slowed down, until she was at last asleep, forever. My husband and I carried her body out together, crying, and buried Nellie in our backyard.

It's called the Granite State for a reason. The ground here is hard; life is not easy. But the soil of New Hampshire now forever holds something I love. This land, and the life I have built here, with my tribe, is now a deep and permanent part of me in a way I have never felt before.

My unmoored childhood, my immigration status, and my starkly independent streak meant that, for the longest time, I never felt that I belonged anywhere. But when we laid Nellie's body to rest in the ground of New Hampshire, I felt it, I felt that I finally belonged.

I belong here in the Live Free or Die state, with the thousands and thousands of fellow Free Staters who have answered my call. I belong here with the moose, deer, foxes, bears, boars, and birds. I belong with the snow-capped mountains, the deep green forests, the luscious lakes, and the candied trees. I belong here, and I will live here on my feet until I can no longer stand, because I have dedicated my life to the following belief: Live free or die. Death is not the worst of evils.

Here, in the Free State, is where I stand.



Luckiest Guy on Wall Street

James Grant

I was born on July 26, 1946, into an America still bound hand and foot in the coils of wartime controls. That I would mount a soap box of my own construction to take up the cause of liberty in the context of money and markets was not immediately apparent to me or anyone else in my small Long Island circle.

My father was a Juilliard-trained musician and businessman, my mother a woman of style and thwarted ambition. Once, looking up from a copy of *The Saturday Evening Post*, I asked her, “Are we an average American family?” and she replied, “I hope not.” My father bought a small house in Williston Park, New York, with the down payment provided by the government in compensation for the death, at Okinawa, of his brother. There, my twin brother, R. Webster Grant III, named in honor of his fallen uncle, and I, grew up.

At intervals, I resolved to become a farmer, the first baseman for the then Brooklyn Dodgers, a naval officer, and a French horn player. I came closest to realizing my musical ambition, though I put aside the horn, at age 18, for the Navy, in which I attained a rating no higher than

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gunner's mate third class. Discharged early in 1967, I presented myself to the Music Department of Indiana University, where I was to begin my studies that fall. "I've been accepted as a horn player," I announced to one of the virtuosi who taught at that eminent institution. "Really?" he shot back. "I never have been."

I filled the six or so months between my discharge and the start of the autumn semester as a clerk on the corporate bond desk of McDonnell & Co., a New York Stock Exchange member firm. Wall Street made a deep, happy, and lasting impression on me. A bull market was in full swing, and I thought I could smell the money. At Indiana, I made my formal separation from music with the decision to concentrate in economics. The history of economic thought was then taught, as it is not today, much to the cost of American finance, in my opinion, and I found my mentors in Professors H. Scott Gordon and Elmus Wicker. How interesting, I thought, listening to those inspiring teachers, that bust follows boom—even if the Keynesian establishment insisted that modern macroeconomic policy had obviated the busts.

I reveled in the luxury of freedom and study after my two years aboard the USS *Hornet*, and I prolonged this academic self-indulgence at the Columbia University School of International Affairs. By now, I had come face to face with my politics, which, perhaps, were not acquired but innate. Certainly, my skepticism was inborn. Presented with the many variations on the doctrine of statism, I instinctively examined the contrary ideas. Albert Jay Nock's *Our Enemy, the State* helped to confirm me in them. I spent hours in Columbia's Butler Library exploring the books that Russell Kirk so fetchingly cracked open for readers of *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*.

What to do for a living? I resolved to write good sentences—that would be enough, I thought—perhaps on the staff of a newspaper. *The Baltimore Sun* offered me a job, it alone among the more than one hundred papers to which I applied. I knew I was lucky to get my foot in such a well-reputed door but did not appreciate just how fortunate I was. In Baltimore, I was to meet and marry Patricia Kavanagh, glamorous fashion editor of *The Sunday Sun* and, subsequently, investment banker, publisher, entrepreneur, physician, and mother of our four children.

As a cub reporter on *The Sun*, I covered crime—the "police districts," as we called that beat. Later viewing *The Wire*, the riveting TV series about the Baltimore underworld, I was humbled to discover how little I knew about the luridly newsworthy events that must have been happening

right under my nose. Luckily, a job opened up on *The Sun's* financial desk, easily the paper's least prestigious department. With my college economics degree and those few months of experience on Wall Street, I became the newsroom's own Warren Buffett. I bought a slide rule (there were no computers) and a copy of Benjamin Graham's *The Interpretation of Financial Statements*. Under the tutelage of the infinitely patient Jesse Glasgow, *The Sun's* financial editor, I began to learn my craft.

A slow, painstaking writer and an errant, three-fingered typist, I came to doubt my fitness for up-tempo journalism. I could spend a weekend agonizing over a book review. How, then, could I write a book? The prodigious output of such journalistic speed demons as the Sage of Baltimore, H.L. Mencken, and the Victorian editor of the *Economist*, Walter Bagehot, not to mention the Stakhanovite production of the wondrous Murray Rothbard, filled me with awe and despair. It only elevated the great sportswriter Red Smith in my estimation that the four-times-weekly columnist on *The New York Times* was himself an authorial bleeder. Writing is easy, Smith would say, "Just open a vein and let it drip out."

In 1975, Patricia and I moved to New York to allow me to begin my second real job, a staff writer at *Barron's*. For me and *Barron's*, it was love at first sight. I fell for the front page, its look and message alike. I hold a mental picture of the old-style *Barron's*, clipped to the front of a newsstand, its front page consisting of three gray columns of type (no pictures), the text devoted to promoting, in some fashion or another, the idea of the individual over the state. Robert M. Bleiberg, the editor, hired me to write investment stories and share in the editorial writing. He gave me some valuable advice about the ideological content of the paper. Never forget, he said, that people buy *Barron's* to decide how to invest, not how to vote. Bleiberg was a product of the-then excellent New York City public school system, of Columbia College and, in 1944–1945, of the U.S. Army infantry. His precise enunciation and modulated voice lent a wonderful incongruity to the four-letter words with which he matter-of-factly seasoned his conversation. He was imaginative about investing, deeply cynical about the state, and fearless in defense of the unpopular views he upheld.

At *Barron's*, I wrote investment articles and the occasional editorial (one, I recall, in hearty defense of the suspected carcinogen Red Dye No. 2). I traveled to South Africa and what was then, still, Rhodesia, to report on gold and gold mining. I dreaded the deadlines, doubted my capacity for making them, and contemplated alternative lines of work. Perhaps,

I would daydream, there was an opening for a deckhand on the Staten Island ferry, or in the grounds department of Trinity Church not far from the *Barron's* offices in lower Manhattan.

Some years later, a visitor from California asked me, in his new-age way, "What's your journey?" "My journey," I answered him, I'm afraid with a bit of an edge, "is four kids and a mortgage." But necessity did its work. No Trinity Church groundskeeper was going to be able to meet the mortgage payments, let alone the private tuition bills, of a growing family in New York. Needing to write, I wrote faster and better. I began my first book, a biography of the financier and (non-libertarian) political figure Bernard M. Baruch. The best review I got was hearing that Murray Rothbard liked it.

At *Barron's*, I'd developed a specialty in monetary policy and the bond market, and my timing, I must say, was superb. The Great Inflation, 1965–1981, and the Federal Reserve's belated response to it, had pushed bond yields and mortgage rates to unimaginable heights. The dollar, since 1971, had been on a pure fiat basis. Interest rates were big news, as was Paul Volcker's Fed. In 1982 and early 1983, Patricia, then an investment banker at Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb, and I planned my next professional step. It was to be *Grant's Interest Rate Observer*, a 12-page, twice-monthly journal of the financial markets, whose front page happened to resemble *Barron's*.

Surveys indicated that my money-market column, "Current Yield," was popular with the readers of *Barron's*. Patricia and I, planning our future, reasoned that if only half of my estimated 50,000 readers availed themselves of the \$200-a-year introductory subscription offer, we could expect major tax problems. *Grant's* debuted with the issue dated November 3, 1983.

On the bright side, there was no tax bill. Neither was there a profit nor a salary for the one and only full-time employee. By early 1984, we had eaten up our seed capital and were within weeks of having to shut down. Then, from out of the blue, emerged John Holman, a reader of my *Barron's* work, to invest \$35,000 for a generously undersized minority interest. It turned out to be all we needed. In the meantime, I worked to make good on the pledge I had made to myself, John, and Patricia to deliver actionable investment ideas, sound monetary insight, good (no, brilliant) writing and, with the help of Hank Blaustein, the artist who has drawn our sketches from Vol. 1, No. 1, the funniest cartoons.

I rented a 12th-floor office in the Woolworth Building—the tiniest office in the Woolworth Building, as a Federal Express delivery man informed me. We published every two weeks, skipping an issue in August for a family vacation. Our editorial line was—and has consistently remained—anti-Federal Reserve, anti-consensus, and pro-money-making. By and by, *Grant's* came into its own. We identified the bullish opportunities in Treasury bonds (1984) and the bearish ones in junk bonds, overvalued real estate, and Japanese equities (1987–1990). We exposed the financial pretensions of a young Donald Trump (1990), hurled anathemas at the Federal Reserve, and correctly tagged the levitation in Japanese financial assets for the bubble that it turned out to be.

The negative, or bearish, side of things was, indeed, our specialty, though I am the first to admit that a cheerier face to the world would have been better for business. Still, the readers were grateful for our prescient analysis of the financial techniques and abuses that brought on the 2007–2009 Great Recession (my colleague Dan Gertner cracked the code on the notorious mortgage-backed derivatives that featured at the center of the crisis) and, reciprocally, of the opportunities for recovery that followed the washout. Though we erroneously warned that the Fed's early experiments in so-called quantitative easing would generate consumer price inflation, we did not hang back from blowing the whistle on the inflationary outbreak of 2021–2022.

Our paid circulation has never topped 7000, but I like to believe that we make up in the quality of our readers what we lack in quantity. One evening in 2011 I turned on the television to see Ron Paul in conversation with the financial commentator Larry Kudlow. Asked to identify his choice for Fed chair, should he win the election, Ron replied, “Jim Grant.” I nearly spat out my beer, though I confess that the idea rather tended to grow on me. How close to the surface are the wellsprings of grandiosity.

As a boy, I spent countless hours alone practicing the horn. As a man, I spend my days in the solitary act of writing. Is the preference for solitude a part of the libertarian personality? In my historical and biographical writing, I have chosen the company of people who, like me, never did well in groups, with John Adams coming first and most affectionately to mind. For the subtitle of my biography of America's second president, I chose “Party of One” (might that phrase connote a book about restaurants? my publisher queried).

This year marks the fortieth year of publication of *Grant's* and, for Patricia and me, the fiftieth year of marriage. At the age of 76, my work continues to engage me, my children (and *their* children) to delight me, and my wife to enchant me. Taking one gift with another, I thank my lucky stars.



Human Action and My Austrian Economics Journey

Haijin Zhu

Before 2005 I had read some of Friedrich Hayek's books, but had little understanding of Ludwig von Mises and other Austrian economists, and even the concept of the Austrian school was unfamiliar to me. What really started my journey in Austrian economics was Mises's great book *Human Action*.

In the summer of 2005, I noticed the book *Human Action* in my bookcase at home. It had a hard blue cover and was in English. At first, it was not its content that attracted me, but its title. I felt that the title was a bit strange, for it was not the same style as that of other general economics books, so I took it out and read it. In fact, the book had been in my possession for four years. In 2001, when I was a doctoral student majoring in political economy at the Economics School of Zhejiang University, my doctoral dissertation supervisor asked me to drop by his office one day. He then pointed to a box of books and said that it was for me. The box contained a set of twelve classic economics books, including

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Human Action. The box of books was heavy in my arms, and I was almost exhausted as I returned to my residence. When I completed my PhD at Zhejiang University in 2002, I left the school with these books. That is how I had the opportunity to come into contact with *Human Action* three years later.

As a result of reading *Human Action*, I changed the focus of my research. When in the spring of 2005 I had the opportunity to be a visiting scholar in Denmark, I originally planned to further investigate the topic of my doctoral thesis, Industrial Districts and Corporate Networks. However, as a result of reading *Human Action* I decided instead to study Austrian economics with Prof. Nicolai Foss as my mentor. I already knew of him because I had read his papers on the theory of the firm when I was writing my doctoral dissertation. I found out that he happened to be an Austrian economist as well, so I contacted him and asked if I could study under his guidance. He agreed, so in November of 2005 I went to Copenhagen Business School to study Austrian economics.

From November 2005 to September 2006, I studied Austrian Economics at the “Strategic Management and Globalization” research center at Copenhagen Business School, where Prof. Nicolai Foss was the director. Our offices were on the same floor. In his office, I noticed a copy of *Human Action*, which I also borrowed as my reference book. After intense study at Copenhagen Business School, I wrote a paper on methodology that became the first part of my first book on Austrian economics, *The Nature of the Market* (2008).

Human Action is in my opinion the greatest work on economics, and the Praxeology established by Mises is real economic theory. However, in Chinese universities, Mises’s ideas were hardly known, and the important positions in economics education were held by mainstream economics professors. Many of them had studied abroad and received economics education in famous Western universities. But what they brought back to China from the West was interventionist economics. They made extensive use of the positivist method, which was a denial of economic theory and economic laws.

An example came from Prof. Steven Cheung, an economist of the Chicago School who had a great influence in China. He believed that competition between local governments was the reason for China’s rapid economic growth in the past few decades. In my opinion, his view could not be established. In fact, the efficiency of local governments in allocating resources was an illusion, and he ignored the harm they caused.

Although the Chicago School economists advocated freedom in policy as the Austrian economists did, their methodology was very different from Austrian economics, especially Praxeology. They tried to explain economic phenomena with the method of Maximization, which may result in wrong conclusions and cause intellectual confusion. As Mises had emphasized, the theory precedes history, and to understand phenomena correctly, one should first master the correct theory.

In the past ten years, I have published four monographs and ten translations. I have also written a lot of essays, mainly published on my own social media, to spread the ideas of Austrian economics. I founded a Wechat official account on February 13 (also the day of my birthday), 2017, with the name “The Review of Austrian Economics,” and it has attracted more than 60,000 subscribers so far. I am carrying out the role of an academic entrepreneur more than a professor employed by the public university. I also realized the current government-led academic order is unjust and corrupt, counter to the principle of spontaneous order. In such an artificial order, scholars are not free to use their conscience or pursue truth in their academic contributions but are subject to the evaluation standards set by the government to achieve specific purposes, which inevitably leads to distortions. I am proud to have many readers and friends with the same interests, all brought to me through Austrian economics.

Human Action was a treasure trove of ideas that touches almost every important economic topic, and every time I open it, I find something new. It is the most important book on my Austrian journey because it helped me the most. To date, *Human Action* has five different Chinese versions, three in Simplified Chinese and two in Traditional Chinese. The multiple Chinese editions of *Human Action* have greatly advanced the spread of Austrian economics in China. There are currently many Austrian economics fans in China. Some young friends were so enthusiastic about Mises that they set up a *Human Action* reading group to study the book word by word. Maybe today’s young libertarians in China will become a force for the country’s future transformation.

I also hope to make original contributions to Austrian Economics. Recently, at the age of fifty, I found that Austrian Economics may still be developed from the aspect of production theory and that it is even possible to reconstruct a theoretical system of economics. More specifically, I found that under the influence of Carl Menger, Austrian School economics and Neoclassical economics revolve around the problem of

exchange rather than production, whether in Hayek's *Prices and Production*, Rothbard's *Man, Economy and State*, or Mises's *Human Action*. As they discussed the theory of production, they didn't establish it on entrepreneurial judgment, profit, and uncertainty that were necessary for production. Theorists of the Marginal Revolution used marginal utility theory only to explain the equilibrium phenomena, which was the continuation of the equilibrium theme of classical economics. The static equilibrium characteristic of economics was incompatible with the free market, so I argue that economics should shift its focus from equilibrium or exchange to production and process.

I have a huge passion for Austrian Economics, which has accompanied me for nearly twenty years and has become an important part of my life. I will continue to spread and study Austrian Economics in the future days.



A Life Among the “Econ”

Steve H. Hanke

I was born on December 29, 1942 and grew up in rural Iowa. What follows are little more than vignettes of my life among the “econ,” related species, and assorted dramatis personae.

While I don’t know if I have lived nine lives, I certainly have lived three. One has been in the world of trading, business, and markets. Then there is my academic life, one in which I have been a professor at the Colorado School of Mines, the University of California Berkeley, and The Johns Hopkins University—where I am in my 54th year. And then there’s the world of political economy, where I have been an advisor to many governments and heads of state.

Just what variety of econ am I? Broadly speaking, I consider myself to be a classical liberal. As a practitioner of classical political economy, I am, to put it simply, searching for solutions to problems. At the center of that search is liberty. And for me, liberty rests on three pillars: private property, limited government, and free markets.

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My exposure to the markets began at a very early age, when I was a young country boy in Iowa. The Hayekian price discovery process was going on from morning till nightfall. The radio was always tuned in to what was happening in the livestock and grain markets in Chicago and Omaha. Talk at the local coffee shop centered on who was buying or selling cattle, hogs, hay, land, you name it, and for what price and on what terms. So, when I first encountered Hayek's price-theoretic ideas years later, they struck me as commonsensical and were easy for me to grasp.

My first "hands-on" exposure to the markets was when I was 10 years of age, 70 years ago. It was then that I learned, while "assisting" my grandfather, how to hedge. He had a large egg operation. Eggs were collected, candled, graded, put in cold storage and eventually shipped to New York City or Boston. To manage the price risk, we routinely sold eggs forward on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. A few years later, at the age of 14, I opened my first trading account, started trading soybeans, and have been trading ever since.

As a student of markets and the price discovery processes, I have been influenced by many economists with classical liberal leanings. One of my favorite academics is Ludwig Lachmann. He is one of the few economists who understood forward markets and their important role in the functioning of a free-market economy. Lachmann recognized that assets are held for resale at some uncertain future point in time and that market participants are constantly groping in a sea of subjective information to determine ever-changing "fundamentals." To be successful and survive, one must possess what Israel Kirzner called "alertness," which is the central mark of an entrepreneur. When thinking about markets and price discovery, I think along Lachmann lines.

Another economist who influenced my thinking about markets and trading was Felix Somary, known as the Raven of Zurich. Somary was Viennese and studied under Böhm-Bawerk. His peers as students included the likes of Schumpeter and von Mises. Somary's advice: make deep dives into everything that might influence prices, including geopolitics; realize that few in positions of power understand anything about financial markets and economics, and place big bets accordingly; realize that there are few game-changing moments in history and that they must be fully exploited; stick to your guns; and be fast on your feet.

At the time of his death in 1956, just where did the Raven of Zurich think we were headed? The following sentence from Somary's unpublished memoirs, which his son Wolfgang sent me in 1989, answers that question: "The cult of the masses has elevated the police state into the ideal polity..."

Moving from the somewhat general to the specific side of the markets, I had the good fortune to meet and become associated with Albert Friedberg. Like Somary, Friedberg is an Austrian School economist. He is also one of the world's greatest traders. We met in 1985. I had written a piece in *Barron's* about the Austrian Business Cycle. Friedberg had read it, and invited me for lunch in Toronto. We saw eye-to-eye and hit it off immediately. I became Chief Economist at the Friedberg Mercantile Group Inc., where I am now Chairman emeritus.

Most of our trades at Friedberg's involved the application of Austrian economics, arbitrage principles, Friedberg's uncanny ability to take the temperature of markets and market sentiment, and his Kirznerian alertness—alertness that allowed him to spot opportunities thrown up by "mispricing."

Shortly after I began work at Friedberg's, I developed a plain vanilla model of the OPEC cartel. I predicted that OPEC would collapse in 1986 and that crude would plunge to below \$10/bbl. It did. At Friedberg's, we were short crude and gas-oil on a massive scale. We controlled about 70% of the short interest in the gas-oil contract in London. We were also short the Saudi riyal and the Kuwaiti dinar. When OPEC collapsed in July 1986, all our ships came into port.

Another memorable trade occurred in 1993, when we concluded that, given the internal inconsistencies in the European Monetary System (EMS), the French franc was going to tank. Our short position broke the back of the Franc Fort and almost forced France out of the EMS. This was duly noted in Paris, where Mrs. Hanke, a Parisian, and I reside part time. Indeed, that trade was spectacular enough to make the French weekly *Paris Match* in a piece titled "Scénario-fiction pour une journée de cognac: Hunt, Hanke, Goldsmith, Tsutsumi et les autres..."

Then, 1995 rolled around. It was a banner year for me. I was President of Toronto Trust Argentina (TTA) in Buenos Aires. TTA ended 1995 as the world's top performing fund, up 79.25%.

Before I close out this chapter on markets and trading, I must stress that there's nothing more important than a balance sheet. In January 1998, I delivered a speech in Vienna. In passing, I noted that the balance

sheet of the Central Bank of Russia was deteriorating rapidly and that the ruble was bound to collapse. The Bank's net foreign assets were falling like a stone and its net domestic assets were surging. A *Reuters* reporter was in the audience and reported on my remarks. When his story hit the wire, the ruble lost about 3% against the U.S. dollar. I realized that I was onto something. I immediately put on a short position, and as I anticipated, the ruble eventually tanked in a spectacular collapse on August 17, 1998.

In addition to Friedberg, Harry Langenberg supplied me with a great deal of wise counsel about markets from an Austrian perspective, and also about the importance of disseminating classical liberal ideas. Harry was, as he liked to say, "just a stockbroker." In fact, he was a St. Paul's School, Princeton old-school kind of guy, a member of the Mont Pelerin Society and one who was deeply steeped in the practical side of Austrian economics. We talked regularly by telephone about the markets and the importance of spreading the free-market message, which Harry did via "The Discussion Club," a lively venue Harry established in St. Louis. Harry also circulated a little pamphlet *Langenberg's Kitchen*. It contained sketches of 21 of Harry's favorite freedom fighters and their ideas. I am proud to say that Harry included yours truly. Also featured were Milton Friedman, Baldy Harper, Friedrich Hayek, Henry Hazlitt, Israel Kirzner, Albert Nock, Leonard Read, Wilhem Röpke, and Ludwig von Mises, among others.

To close my vignettes on business and trading, allow me to introduce Heinz Schimmelbusch, a real Austrian, both in terms of nationality and thought. Schimmelbusch founded the Advanced Metallurgical Group in Amsterdam. It's a company that produces critical materials, like lithium, tantalum, ferrovandium, titanium alloys, silicon, graphite, etc. It's also a company where I serve as Chairman of the Supervisory Board. For me, it's particularly interesting and productive because it brings me back to the beginning of my career, when I was teaching courses in mineral economics and petroleum economics at the Colorado School of Mines. And also because it has facilitated a close working relationship with Schimmelbusch, a real entrepreneur and first-class professional with unparalleled knowledge and experience in the world of commodities. I have learned many lessons from Schimmelbusch about the metals markets, how to run a big industrial enterprise, how to hedge, how to innovate in the Schumpeterian sense of that word, and how to fight socialism. On that last point, Schimmelbusch's most recent book is a fascinating satirical treatment of

central planning: “Critique of Commutopia: On an Economic Concept of the New Left.”

Interestingly, Somary, Friedberg, Langenberg and Schimmelbusch—all Austrian economists and seasoned financiers—have conveyed one big lesson in life to me, the most important one: always have an exit strategy, a hedge. If things turn negative, have a strategy to facilitate a departure from your place of work or even your country of residence. To ensure the successful execution of the hedge, they, to a man, counseled the same thing: always be financially independent—in short, make certain that you are loaded.

In 1960, I was packed off to the University of Colorado (CU) at 17 years of age. My first encounter with formal economics was in a course on European economic history. All I can remember about that course is that Prof. Ragaei El Mallakh trumpeted Schumpeter in every class. So, it was as a freshman at CU that I was first introduced to the works of an Austrian economist.

During my years as a graduate student at CU, Fred Glahe was one of my primary professors. His macro theory course was very traditional, but on the side, Fred and I studied Hayek and the Austrian Business Cycle. That was my first serious introduction to the Austrians. Fred eventually co-authored an excellent book *The Hayek-Keynes Debate—Lessons for Current Business Cycle Research*. When it came to econometrics, Glahe was demanding and precise. He taught me the importance of using primary data and that everything must be properly presented so that your work could be replicated. Fred did, however, have a certain playful side. He loved to wear a custom-made T-shirt. It read: “Adam Smith Was Right — Pass It On.”

At the start of my second year of graduate work, I was scheduled to become chief of the teaching assistant corps. But, a few weeks before classes were scheduled to begin in September, Morris Garnsey, who was the Chairman of the Economics Department, called me in and announced that a full-time, tenure-track faculty position had unexpectedly opened up at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado, after a professor died of a massive heart attack a few days before classes were to begin. Mines was desperate. I told Garnsey that teaching three courses per term would kill me. I was only a second-year graduate student and was taking a full load of graduate courses at CU. Garnsey listened and finally said,

“Steve, you can do it, plus you will learn a lot of economics.” Well, Nietzsche was right, “that which does not kill us makes us stronger.”

Mines was a terrific opportunity and experience. During my tenure (1966–1969), I taught the first courses that had ever been offered at Mines in mineral economics and petroleum economics. I also edited two books on petroleum economics. Those books allowed me the opportunity to be introduced to another significant mentor, M.A. Adelman of MIT. Morry was a contributor to both books and one of the greatest petroleum economists of the twentieth century.

Summers at CU were lively. Boulder, Colorado was an inviting watering hole for big-name visiting professors. One was Bill Breit from the University of Virginia (UVA). I operated as his teaching assistant. After Bill returned to UVA, he alerted me to a month-long free-market economics course that was offered at UVA for young faculty. I was accepted for the 1967 session. It was an eye-opener and turning point. The program rolled out the big guns. Lectures were delivered by Armen Alchian, Bill Breit, James Buchanan, Ronald Coase, Warren Nutter, Gordon Tullock, and Leland Yeager, among others. All were impressive. They focused on the role that property rights, limited government, and free markets played in enhancing liberty. Yeager covered international trade. When he arrived in the lecture hall, he was always carrying a yardstick. Why? So he could draw perfect diagrams on the blackboard. For me, that was a first. Yeager was unique. We became good friends and collaborators. Today, I am in the process of finishing *Capital and Interest*, a book Leland and I had worked on for years and one that Leland entrusted with me to finish if he didn’t make it to the finish line.

At the time of that eventful summer in 1967, it was Warren Nutter who had the most impact on me. His meticulous work showed why Soviet statistics were pure fabrication. Nutter’s findings flew in the face of virtually all the works by Sovietologists and economists, including Paul Samuelson and John Kenneth Galbraith. Nutter was cool, tough, and loved to swim against the tide. He was proven right. The Soviet economy turned out to be exactly what Nutter’s detailed analyses showed it to be: little more than a Potemkin village. Nutter’s works, including *Political Economy and Freedom*, remain in my library and are well worn.

Upon finishing my graduate studies, I accidentally landed at Johns Hopkins. I say “accidentally” because in those days, there were virtually no faculty members who had arrived from anywhere but the Ivy League universities, MIT, Chicago, Berkeley, Stanford, Cal Tech, and a

handful of foreign elite universities. Hopkins had produced pioneering research on urban water demand and its relationship to systems engineering. My dissertation research happened to be what was the second generation of the pathbreaking Hopkins research. It was a perfect match, one that allowed me to realize the most rapid promotion from PhD to full Professor in the history of Johns Hopkins.

As for classical liberals, they were few and far between at Hopkins. An exception was Sir Alan Walters. He was a great economist, widely known for his role as Margaret Thatcher's economic guru. Alan and I edited two books together, co-authored a *Forbes* magazine column, "Point of View," for a number of years and wrote the entry for "Currency Boards" in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Money and Finance*. Most of our collaboration focused on alternative exchange-rate regimes, a topic that Alan taught me a great deal about.

Nobelist Robert Mundell also taught me a great deal about exchange-rate regimes and lent me support in my work as a money doctor. Many of Bob's lessons and advice were conveyed during summers at Mundell's Palazzo in Tuscany and while we served together as members of the Financial Advisory Council in the United Arab Emirates.

Another great economist, and one with whom I had the longest working relationship (40 years), was William Niskanen. I first met Bill in 1971, when he was the Assistant Director for Evaluation at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Bill tapped me as an OMB advisor.

Prior to his position at OMB, Niskanen served as Director of Special Studies for Secretary Robert McNamara at the Department of Defense. At 29 years of age, Bill was a "whiz kid" with a civilian rank equivalent to that of a brigadier general. He held the highest security clearance and had access to highly classified information. As a result, he was wise to the ways of Washington, D.C. He knew that officialdom was untrustworthy and very prone to lying. Indeed, Bill told me that, upon viewing the first moon landing, he initially thought it might have been staged in a Washington, D.C. warehouse. I recount this to punctuate the fact that I, like Bill, am very skeptical about the veracity of official information disseminated by governments and non-governmental organizations.

After OMB, Bill moved to the Ford Motor Company, where he was Director of Economics. Bill famously argued that import restrictions would be detrimental to the U.S. auto industry. For sticking to free-market principles, Bill was immediately sacked.

Bill then became a professor at the University of California Berkeley, where we were colleagues and collaborators. Niskanen and I were once again colleagues at President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers in the early 1980s. We last rendezvoused at the Cato Institute, where Bill served as Chairman until his passing in October 2011 and where I was a senior fellow.

My life in the sphere of political economy has been intense and eventful. Most of it has been conducted in collaboration with Mrs. Hanke, whose field of interest is literary criticism, but de facto it is geopolitics. There have been many appointments and honors that have resulted from successful currency reforms in Argentina, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Estonia, Lithuania, and Montenegro. Indeed, as a money doctor, I have had the opportunity to stop more hyperinflations than any living economist. Seven honorary doctorate degrees and four honorary professorships, including the Gottfried von Haberler Professor at the European Center of Austrian Economics Foundation in Liechtenstein, have come my way. And in 1998, I was named one of the 25 most influential people in the world by *World Trade Magazine*. In 2020, I was knighted, a Knight of the Order of the Flag. Upon Mrs. Hanke's advice, all of my foreign appointments and engagements have been conducted on a pro bono basis, not as a paid consultant. That's the best way to stay free and independent.

In what follows, I limit myself to some memorable high points. I joined President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers as a Senior Economist in 1981. One of my early assignments was to analyze the federal government's landholdings and make recommendations about what to do with them. These lands are vast, covering an area six times larger than the surface area of France.

These public lands represent a huge socialist anomaly in America's capitalist system. As is the case with all socialist enterprises, these lands are mismanaged. Indeed, the U.S. public lands represent assets that are worth trillions of dollars, yet they generate negative free cash flows.

I first presented my recommendations to sell public lands at a Public Lands Council meeting in Reno, Nevada in September 1981. The title of my speech was "Privatize Those Lands." It was eventually published in *Reason Magazine*. The most interesting aspect of my speech turned out to be its title. As Mrs. Hanke reviewed my speech, she said that I had to change the language to say that it was "privatization" that I was

advocating. At that time, that word wasn't in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* because it was a French word that Mrs. Hanke had brought with her from Paris. We eventually convinced Webster's to enter the word into *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. "Privatize" was entered in the 1983, 9th edition. Unfortunately, the U.S. is still burdened by a huge socialist enterprise: its public lands.

The next memorable event in my life as a political economist came in South America. Early one afternoon in Montevideo, Uruguay, I was delivering an address to a large crowd, when the master of ceremonies interrupted me with a confidential message: President Augusto Pinochet wanted to meet with Mrs. Hanke and yours truly in Santiago, Chile. We accepted the invitation and met privately with Pinochet the next day. Pinochet had been informed that Mrs. Hanke and I knew Argentina's President Carlos Menem and that Pinochet could trust us. Our mission was simply to convey a message to Menem. Pinochet and Chile had no intention of going to war with Argentina. As a result of that message, both Argentina and Chile immediately pulled their troops back from the border. War was avoided.

The next notable event involved bringing down the Communist League in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, where I served as the Personal Economic Advisor to Deputy Prime Minister Zivko Pregl from 1990 until June 1991.

I first met Pregl in late 1989 at a dinner in Vienna, Austria that was arranged by our good friend, the late Daniel Swarovski of Swarovski crystal fame. Swarovski was a major supporter of the Austrian School of Economics and the establishment of free-market economies in former Communist lands.

The day following our pleasurable dinner, Pregl—the person responsible for developing economic reforms in the Yugoslav government led by the late Ante Marković—requested a meeting. We discussed Pregl's reform ideas, and Pregl invited me to become his advisor. I indicated that I had reservations because I was a classical liberal, free-market economist, and Pregl was a leader of the Communist League of Yugoslavia.

Pregl then surprised me when he said my qualifications were exactly why he invited me to be his advisor. He asserted that he wanted to implement free-market reforms and didn't want watered-down advice. At that point, I indicated that I would become his advisor on the condition that he bring down the communist party in Yugoslavia. Pregl asked, "How in the world am I going to do that?" I presented a precise gameplan. Pregl

persevered and did bring down the League in January 1990. It was then that I became Pregl's personal economic advisor.

As Machiavelli repeatedly stressed, nothing great could ever be achieved without danger. How right he was. Some currency reforms of the type I proposed threatened to upset apple carts. That threat has put me in the crosshairs of state-sponsored assassins on three occasions.

The first two were in Indonesia. During one of our nightly meetings in his little den at his private residence, President Suharto surprised me by stating that he had good intelligence that I was a marked man. He informed me that two foreign services wanted me out of the picture. As a result, Suharto assigned a sizeable part of his personal security detail to look after Mrs. Hanke and me on a 24/7 basis.

The next time I received a "marked man" notice was in 1999 in Montenegro, where I served as State Counselor, a position that carried cabinet rank, and as advisor to President Milo Djukanovic. In that capacity, I determined that the replacement of the Yugoslav dinar with the Deutsche mark was both feasible and desirable.

In 1999, Montenegro was still, along with Serbia, part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Strongman Slobodan Milošević was the president of Yugoslavia. On November 2, 1999, Djukanovic made a decisive move that would set Montenegro on a course toward independence: he granted the Deutsche mark legal tender status. This all but eliminated the dinar from circulation in Montenegro. It also infuriated Milošević. I became a marked man once again.

The Yugoslav Minister of Information Gorin Matić produced a steady stream of bizarre stories. Among other charges, I was accused of being the leader of a smuggling ring that was destabilizing the Serbian economy by flooding it with counterfeit dinars. The most spectacular allegation, however, was that I was a French secret agent who controlled a hit team code-named "Pauk" (Spider), and that this five-man team's mission was to assassinate Milošević.

In addition to this comedy of the absurd, there was a serious side. I knew this because Djukanovic informed me of the danger and assigned heavy security to look after Mrs. Hanke and me.

As I close these remembrances, I have saved the best for last. In all of my thoughts and endeavors, Mrs. Hanke is not too far away. The 1979–1980 period was a very important time, a period when we brought our views on classical liberalism into sharp focus.

We were living in Baden bei Wien and were in residence at the Hotel Schloss Weikersdorf. While in Austria, we became inspired and took a deep dive into the works of the Austrians, particularly Hayek. In addition, Mrs. Hanke went through Frédéric Bastiat’s works. It was a pivotal time. There was no turning back.

And speaking of Hayek, our favorite Austrian and family friend, allow me to recount the longest, most interesting dinner that Mrs. Hanke and I have ever had. In November 1983, Mrs. Hanke and I rendezvoused with Hayek at what was, back then, Washington D.C.’s most “in” restaurant: the Maison Blanche. Hayek arrived at 6 p.m., precisely the appointed time. The evening began with some light, but interesting, back and forth, particularly Hayek’s remembrances of Mrs. Hanke’s aunt—known as the most beautiful, intelligent young lady in Vienna and clearly the apple of Hayek’s eye, something confirmed to us by both Gottfried von Haberler and Herbert Furth. Things quickly turned from light to heavy. Mrs. Hanke engaged in a long discussion with Hayek about his book *The Sensory Order: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology*. At one point, close to Midnight, and well beyond the Maison Blanche’s normal closing hours, Hayek proclaimed that he had never had the pleasure of discussing *The Sensory Order* with someone who actually understood his book and what was behind it. A few days later, on November 21, 1983, Hayek presented Mrs. Hanke with a copy of his book *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and the History of Ideas*, with the following inscription: “To Liliane Egon Hanke, In pleasant memory of a fascinating conversation four days ago.” Fortunately, I have the pleasure of having those fascinating conversations each and every day.

So, now that I reach the end, what is my prognosis about the prospects for classical liberal ideas to prevail? On the one hand, I remain optimistic. Indeed, small battles can and have been won. For example, one Sunday afternoon in July 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called me. He indicated that the United States was considering the imposition of financial sanctions on Hong Kong, and that a final decision would be made by President Trump the next day. But, before the White House meeting Monday morning, Secretary Pompeo had been instructed to obtain my opinion. We spoke via telephone for 35 minutes. Pompeo was adamantly for sanctions. I was adamantly against them. Monday afternoon, the White House emailed to inform me, “Hanke you won. There will be no financial sanctions imposed against Hong Kong.”

On the other hand, the public and public opinion tend to run the show in popular democracies, and the public's voracious appetite is for instant sound bites and "news," dramatically portrayed. This appetite tends to crowd out serious fundamentals. So, what Frank Knight called Gresham's Law of Talk prevails. Bad talk drives out good. This fact brings me to a somewhat gloomy conclusion, one that is close to that of Felix Somary, the Raven of Zurich: "The cult of the masses has elevated the police state into the ideal polity."



The Making of an Anarchist: Rothbard's *For a New Liberty* at Fifty (1973–2023)

Hans-Hermann Hoppe

I was born shortly after the end of World War II, in 1949, in the British occupied zone of West Germany. My parents were both refugees, endangered at or forcibly expelled from their original homes in Soviet-occupied East Germany. As countless others of my generation, then, I was raised by a generation of parents and teachers who had just experienced some horrific military defeat and were then subjected to harsh and often brutal treatment by hostile foreign occupiers. Humiliated, abused, and intimidated, then, the generation of my parents kept largely quiet and obediently went with the “flow” as increasingly dictated in the West by the US. Hence, the “education” of my generation was to a large extent the result of Anglo-American propaganda and indoctrination. Every fad or fashion over there, in the lands of the victors, cultural or intellectual, was immediately imported and eagerly adopted by my generation.

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From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, during my last years at school and the beginnings of my university studies, when my intellectual curiosity first arose and grew, the US had experienced the so-called civil-rights movement, widespread anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, massive student protests demanding “free speech,” and some spectacular “race” and “anti-establishment” riots. The ideas and motivations underlying these events quickly swept across the Atlantic and took hold in West Germany and many other European countries. As a young man full of vigor and blessed with an American “education,” I, as countless others of my generation, later labeled the 68-ish generation, was converted to the fashionable leftist causes represented by such events, convinced as Paul Samuelson, at the time the Western world’s most prominent economist, of the economic superiority of socialism over capitalism.

To the delight of my parents, my leftist phase did not last for long, however. I first encountered Milton Friedman, then occasionally mentioned in the German press as Samuelson’s major counterpart in the US, and became a vaguely defined “free marketeer.” From Friedman I found my way to Friedrich A. Hayek, who further strengthened my newfound convictions and who impressed me above that with his wide-ranging interdisciplinary knowledge, largely missing in Friedman. Then, through Hayek, by way of various footnotes, I discovered his own mentor, Ludwig von Mises, who, in my estimation, had to be placed in an intellectual league of his own and through whose work I was turned into a radical, uncompromising advocate of free market capitalism.

In none of my readings, however, not even in Mises, had I ever encountered any serious doubt regarding the necessity of the institution of a tax-funded state as a provider of law and order. It was an intellectual shock, then, when I finally discovered Mises’ most prominent American student, Murray N. Rothbard, and read his *For a New Liberty*, first published fifty years ago, in 1973. Therein, in the clearest of terms, with the utmost analytic rigor and with impeccable logic, Rothbard presented the full-blown case for a stateless society, of free market anarchism, or “anarcho-capitalism.” Taxes were explained as theft and the state as a criminal gang, a protection racket, or a mafia writ large. And the state was unmasked not only as a moral perversion but also as an economic monstrosity creating nothing but waste. Compelling economic reasons were presented for the state’s inefficiency not just in all the areas typically held to be prerogatives of state activity, from education and money

to welfare, but also regarding the production of law and order in particular. Law and order, too, Rothbard demonstrated in great detail, could and should, for moral as well as economic reasons, be produced by freely financed and competing private producers.

Upon reading the book I became an anarchist, or as I later preferred to characterize my intellectual position, a proponent of a pure private law society. In my judgment, Rothbard with his work had brought the intellectual edifice inherited from his own mentor Mises to its ultimate completion. And in my eyes he had also finally redeemed America.

Of course, mankind being what it is, reading *For a New Liberty* now, for the first time, will not have the same effect on everyone that it had on me many years ago. But I am certain that no one will come away from such a reading without seeing the world with very different eyes.

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The Growth of a Christian Libertarian

Norman Horn

In some sense, I feel like I was destined to be a libertarian. My theologically and politically conservative parents raised me to be inherently skeptical of state power. This was remarkably demonstrated by their choice, not very socially acceptable at the time, to never put me (and my siblings) in a public school and eventually to homeschool us through high school. This enabled us to learn in a more independent manner than what one often receives in the government school system, and it has served all of us well to this day. In addition, we were not indoctrinated with the typical curriculum of state mythology, such as idolizing presidents, government programs, and aggressive wars.

Our religious upbringing provided a further inoculation against the trappings of state power. The Churches of Christ (Stone-Campbell Movement) are more than a little unusual in the milieu of American Protestantism. The history of our denomination is replete with examples of people resisting the allure of war, loving the gospel of peace, and speaking out against power. The latter half of the twentieth century

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and early twenty-first saw that attitude pull back quite a bit, but its leavening still has an effect. The Churches of Christ also eschew the use of nationalistic symbols in the worship service, so much so that visiting other congregations that engage in this practice makes me rather uncomfortable. The Red-versus-Blue perpetual fight is not a prominent discussion in services, either. All of this contributes to an attitude of general skepticism and aloofness toward state action.

Destiny and predisposition to liberty aside, we also believe in the freedom of choice. I chose during my high school and college years to expand my knowledge in both the natural sciences and philosophy. I was always academically inclined, but I found myself wanting to specialize in more than engineering alone. Rather, I wanted to understand *all* of the world around me: the workings of the marketplace, theological and ethical principles, and political theory. Discovering Austrian economics through my future father-in-law was an incredible revelation, and I chose to go deep into that study late as an undergrad and in graduate school. Reading the classic articles of Mises, Rothbard, and Hayek was eye-opening. Hayek's "The Use of Knowledge in Society" showed that central planning is simply impossible given how knowledge is dispersed in the world. Mises' "Economic Calculation in a Socialist Commonwealth" fully disabused me of the notion that typical economic models could replace market mechanisms. His "Middle of the Road Policy Leads to Socialism" convinced me that the "debate" between progressives and conservatives was little more than a disagreement over the speed at which socialism should progress. Rothbard's "Anatomy of the State" blew apart any remaining belief that a state could really be a worthwhile institution.

I found myself realizing that every question I had about the nature of political economy was better answered through libertarian and Austrian ideas than through the conservative philosophy to which I had previously adhered. Attending Mises University 2006 at the Ludwig von Mises Institute as a first-year graduate student—in *Chemical Engineering* mind you—was a terrific entry into the world of libertarian thinkers both young and old. There I first met the amazing Anthony Gregory and the brilliant David Gordon on the bus, and I remain friends with them to this day. Tom Woods, Bob Murphy, Stephan Kinsella, and Walter Block were also greatly encouraging to me. But there was still a bit of difficulty rectifying these new libertarian ideas with elements of my Christian upbringing, and so I needed more study to get to where I ultimately wanted to be.

While a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, I happened to discover that my church was an active sponsor of a local seminary and that I could take a few classes there for free. Given my appetite for academic work, I jumped at the chance and eventually even persuaded them to continue letting me work toward a Master of Arts in Theological Studies. I am forever grateful to the Austin Graduate School of Theology (now part of Lipscomb University) for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to expand my capabilities even more.

My professors at Austin Grad encouraged my interest in developing a “theology of the state,” and whenever possible I tried to write papers on topics that enabled me to study this further. There I discovered such seminal writings as Jacques Ellul’s *Anarchy and Christianity*, David Lipscomb’s *On Civil Government*, Alexander Campbell’s *Address on War*, and the writings of the great Laurence Vance. I began to discover the rich anti-empire tradition within historical theology that most Christians in America (let alone the rest of the world) barely know exists. This culminated in writing a paper that has become part of the bedrock of my Christian libertarian philosophy, entitled *New Testament Theology of the State*. Its thesis was, simply put, that the oft-quoted passages of Romans 13 (“there is no authority except from God”) and Matthew 22 (“Render to Caesar”) do not legitimize the state, and that a holistic view of biblical theology leads to rejecting such aggressive institutions as opposing God. This writing was widely disseminated initially through [LewRockwell.com](http://www.lewrockwell.com) (I am grateful for that opportunity) and later on through my nonprofit work.

Now, I must turn back to my economic pursuits and another particularly significant event around that same time. In my chemical engineering studies, I happened to take a class on energy technology and policy, which had a significant component about energy economics. I decided to write my term paper on government and transportation pollution, using Austrian analysis to suggest government policies will tend not to help deal with the problem. Before turning it in, I decided to send it to Dr. Walter Block in hopes of soliciting suggestions to improve my Rothbardian argument. To my surprise, he said three things that were tremendously encouraging: (1) don’t change a word, (2) come present this at the Austrian Scholars Conference, and (3) get the paper published and here’s how to do it. What Dr. Block taught me then, perhaps unwittingly, was that I was ready to become the multi-faceted scholar that I wanted to be. I could be a professional engineer, trained in economics, libertarianism,

and theology, and make serious contributions to the intersections of these fields. And so I have continued to do just that.

Eventually, I started a little website called LibertarianChristians.com. My scholarship in theology and ethics grew, and the work product became substantial. People took notice, and I got involved in Young Americans for Liberty, Students for Liberty, and the Ron Paul presidential campaigns. As my reach grew, it became evident that I could force-multiply my impact by turning LibertarianChristians.com into a full-fledged nonprofit in 2015. Thus, the Libertarian Christian Institute was born with the mission of equipping Christians to promote a free society. Now, LCI has a small staff, a global reach, and a growing supporter base. We are convinced that libertarianism is the most consistent expression of Christian political thought, and we strive to make an impact within the church for individual liberty while also being good stewards of the gospel message. And my conservative parents, well, they got on board too, realizing that this was what we were all meant to be. Christians have historically been among the greatest advocates for freedom for all, and I remain committed to continuing that grand tradition.



My Life as a Libertarian

Jacob G. Hornberger

When I walked into the public library in my hometown of Laredo, Texas, in about 1978, little did I know that the course of my life was about to change. At the time, I was practicing law in partnership with my father. Ever since I was a kid, I had wanted to become a lawyer. Whenever my elementary school teachers had me write an essay on what I was going to be when I grew up, I wrote that I was going to be a lawyer.

More specifically, my dream was to become a trial attorney. When I would accompany my father to trials, I thought it was so cool that only the lawyers and court personnel were permitted inside the area where the judge and jury were. I wanted to be one of those people. When I attended law school at the University of Texas, I would often skip class to study books on trial tactics involving such things as cross-examination and jury summation.

In 1978, I had been a trial attorney for about three years. I loved the practice of law and was fulfilling a lifelong dream. And then I walked into that public library looking for something to read. I headed over to the political science section. My eyes settled on four small, different-colored

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books entitled *Essays on Liberty*, volumes 1–4. The books consisted of compilations of principled, uncompromising libertarian essays.

As I was perusing the books, I could feel the indoctrination that encased my mind, mostly as a result of the public schools I had attended, shattering apart. Suddenly, I was seeing life in a totally different way—one that explained the principles of a genuinely free society. I checked out all four books, took them home, and read them, and then read them again.

My discovery of those four books ended up changing my life. I set aside all the trial books I was studying and immediately began reading everything I could find that had been written by the contributors to those volumes—people like Leonard Read, Ludwig von Mises, Frederic Bastiat, Henry Hazlitt, F. A. Harper, Dean Russell, Paul Poirot, Frank Chodorov, Ben Morrell, John Chamberlain, Friedrich Hayek, Edmund Opitz, Percy Greaves, Hans Sennholz, Murray Rothbard, Bettina Bien Greaves, and many others.

Those four books had been published in the 1950s by The Foundation for Economic Education, an educational foundation located in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York. When I discovered that FEE was still in existence, I immediately signed up for a weekend seminar and then a week-long seminar, both of which were held at FEE’s headquarters in an old mansion in Irvington.

Of all the contributors in those four books, Leonard Read was the one who had the biggest impact on me. Read founded FEE in 1946. When I read his essays—and, later, his books—it felt like he was speaking directly to me. He was one of the most profound thinkers in the libertarian movement, but he was able to write in a manner that was very simple for anyone to understand. Many years later, I wrote an essay entitled “Leonard Read Changed My Life,” which FEE published in its monthly journal, *The Freeman*.

In 1982, my father passed away. The following year, I moved to Dallas, where I opened my own law office, but my heart was with libertarianism. I formed the Mont Dallas Society, which consisted of several Austrian economists in the Dallas area.¹ Every month, we would meet at a local

¹ The members were Gerry O’Driscoll, who received his doctorate under Israel Kirzner, the noted Austrian economics professor at New York University; Gary Short, a Dallas lawyer who had been a fellow at the Institute for Humane Studies, and his wife Genie, who was working at the Dallas Fed; Peter Lewin, who was teaching at the University of Texas at Dallas; Robert Formani, who was also working at the Fed; W.H. Hutt, economics

restaurant, where one member would deliver a presentation that we would then discuss. I also organized a monthly series of talks in both Dallas and Houston by libertarians from around the country and also organized FEE programs in the Dallas area.

I majored in economics at Virginia Military Institute. Like economics programs at most other universities, we were taught the standard Keynesian paradigm in economics. No one ever mentioned Austrian economics, which is the economic paradigm around which libertarianism revolves. The Austrian economist who had the biggest impact on me was Ludwig von Mises, who, in my opinion, is the greatest economist who has ever lived. What impressed me most about Mises was his principled, uncompromising approach toward economics, the free market, and the free society.

During my time in Dallas, I retained Sam Bostaph to give me a weekly tutorial in Austrian economics. We began with Adam Smith's economics treatise *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Next, we proceeded to the classical economist David Ricardo and then studied Carl Menger's *Principles of Economics*. When we were about to reach Mises's magnum opus *Human Action*, Sam said that he was recommending that I retain a new professor he had just hired named Richard Ebeling. He described Richard as the person who knew more about Austrian economics than anyone else in our age group. I retained Richard, who gave me a chapter-by-chapter tutorial in *Human Action*, and who, more importantly, became a lifelong friend.

The biggest turning point in my life came in 1987. I was offered a job as program director at The Foundation for Economic Education, the organization that was responsible for my discovery of libertarianism. Ironically, at the same time, a big out-of-town law firm wanted to meet with me to explore the possibility of my heading its Dallas branch, which was just opening. Suddenly, I was faced with the biggest choice of my life.

I went to the beach for a few days to ponder and pray. I finally decided that I would give up my childhood dream of being a lawyer and instead go where my heart was—advancing libertarianism. I notified all my clients, packed my bags, and headed off to New York. It was one of the most exciting and rewarding times of my life. Suddenly, I was interacting on a

professor at the University of Dallas; Sam Bostaph, Head of the Economics Department at the University of Dallas; Richard Ebeling, who was teaching economics at the University of Dallas; and me.

daily basis with so many people who had had such an enormous impact on my life.

One of the highlights of my two years at FEE involved Israel Kirzner, who was one of the few people who received his doctorate under Mises. He permitted me to audit two classes he taught at NYU—one in the history of economic thought and the other in principles of Austrian economics. What a fantastic intellectual experience!

In 1989, after two years serving as FEE's program director, I decided to leave FEE and establish The Future of Freedom Foundation. Richard Ebeling, who by this time had become the Ludwig von Mises Professor of Economics at Hillsdale College (and later became president of FEE), served as FFF's vice president of academic affairs.

From its inception, our mission at FFF has been to present the principled, uncompromising case for libertarianism. My inspiration was Leonard Read, who used to emphasize that principles cannot be compromised; they can only be abandoned. I wasn't interested in an educational foundation that advanced ways to reform and improve America's welfare-state, regulated-economy, warfare-state way of life. I wanted a foundation that raised people's vision to a higher level—toward the principles of a genuinely free society.

Thus, in the 32 years of perspectives that are published on FFF's website (fff.org), one will never find articles advocating things like school vouchers, health-savings accounts, regulatory reform, drug-war reform, Social Security "privatization," and monetary reform. That's because all such reform measures necessarily leave infringements on liberty intact and simply purport to improve them. Instead, we make the case for separating school and state, separating healthcare and the state, separating economy and the state, full drug legalization, separating charity and the state, and separating money and the state. We have also taken a leading role in the libertarian movement in favor of open borders. We have also long advocated the restoration of America's foreign policy of non-interventionism as well as the restoration of America's founding governmental system of a limited-government republic.

Among the most rewarding aspects of my life has been working with the longtime employees of FFF. I am also honored and grateful for the great writers who have written principled articles for us and the speakers who have delivered great presentations at our conferences, most of which are posted on our website at fff.org.

With respect to the methodology of advancing liberty, FFF strives not to convert people to libertarianism but rather to find people who are naturally disposed toward libertarianism. I am convinced that it is these types of people who will ultimately bring about a monumental shift in America toward a society of liberty, peace, prosperity, and harmony.

Our methodology, then, is based on introducing sound, principled arguments into the marketplace of ideas, knowing that there is a good chance that they will be discovered by people who are seeking truth, just as I was when I walked into that public library in Laredo. Indeed, if someone had asked Leonard Read in the 1950s about the impact of those four small, different-colored books he had published, he naturally could not have known that those books would be discovered in 20 years by a young lawyer in Laredo, Texas, and change the course of his life.



Intuitive Libertarianism

Michael Huemer

Psychological research finds political orientation to be correlated with broad personality traits, such as agreeableness or extraversion.¹ There are even studies measuring the heritability of political orientation (it's about 40%).² If you've interacted with ideologues, you've probably noticed some patterns. Perhaps you've noticed that people who like to wear ties are more likely to be conservative, while those who enjoy poetry readings are more likely to be socialists. (A good philosophical question is to what extent the correlations between personality and political beliefs ought to undermine our confidence in our own objectivity and ability to identify political truth. But that is a question for another time.)

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¹ Adrian Furnham and Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, "Personality and Political Orientation," *Personality and Individual Differences* 129 (2018): 88–91, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.03.020>.

² Christopher T. Dawes and Aaron C. Weinschenk, "On the Genetic Basis of Political Orientation," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34 (2020): 173–8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.03.012>.

So perhaps you can understand what I mean when I say that some people are natural-born libertarians. If you've spent time in libertarian circles, you've probably noticed tastes and traits that are much more prevalent among libertarians than among the general population. Libertarians tend to be more frank and less tactful; more open to breaking social conventions; more interested in working out the logic of abstract systems; more interested in computers, science fiction, and philosophical debate; more committed to principles of rationality; and more interested in monetary systems and economic theory than the general population. In my social media feed, I see messages from the same people critiquing Denis Villeneuve's film adaptation of *Dune* and President Joe Biden's economic policies.

I am one of these natural born libertarians. I have more or less all the traits that are strongly correlated with being a libertarian. Perhaps most importantly, I have little intuitive respect for social hierarchies. I don't perceive people who are at the top of a social hierarchy as more deserving of respect or entitled to special privileges, compared to, say, my plumber. I have no intuitive sense of why we "have to" obey the law or the commands of the powerful, apart, of course, from fear of these people's predictable aggression. So one could have predicted that I would have to be a libertarian.

I wasn't always a libertarian, though. When I entered college at UC Berkeley, I was some sort of socialist. Obviously, the centralized, dictatorial socialism of the Soviet Union was no good. What we needed was a system of small worker cooperatives. I had gotten this idea from some of the nonsense materials that were commonly used in high school debate (for those not familiar with it, high school debate is an extracurricular activity that mainly trains students in stringing together wild-eyed quotes from random ideologues and reading them really fast).

What rescued me from that was mainly Ayn Rand. Three separate people recommended her to me. I started with a passage from *Atlas Shrugged* (reproduced in *For the New Intellectual*), which dramatically portrayed what might happen at an automobile factory that adopted the famous Marxist dictum, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." To implement this noble-sounding ideal, one would of course have to assess each person's abilities, as well as each person's needs. To make a long story short: Everyone winds up trying to demonstrate how little ability they have (so that little might be demanded of them) and how much need they have (so that much might be given

to them). The system breeds resentment, strife, and ultimately economic collapse. Rand's novel *We the Living* further demonstrates how socialism destroys people's moral character.

Though I view Rand as a brilliant novelist, I don't accept her philosophical system in general. I continue, however, to think her critiques of socialism are among the most powerful and insightful ever written.

So I escaped from socialism and moved toward minimal state libertarianism early in my college career. At first, this seemed the most extreme libertarian position that was defensible. Though all government involved some amount of theft in the form of taxation, I couldn't see how a society could work without a government to protect against criminals.

As it happened, I was at UC Berkeley at the same time as an economics student named Bryan Caplan (who would later become a famous libertarian economist). Bryan introduced me to the ideas of anarcho-capitalism, mainly through the writings of Murray Rothbard and David Friedman. My initial reaction to the idea of anarchism was "that's crazy," accompanied by a half dozen obvious objections. But as each new generation of libertarians quickly discovers, *if* they have a sufficiently open mind to read the damn books, Rothbard and Friedman have addressed all the obvious objections. After discussing these works with Caplan, I came to the conclusion that a kind of anarchist system was, after all, feasible. So I became an anarcho-capitalist while in college, and I have remained one ever since.

After college, I went to graduate school in philosophy at Rutgers University, which at the time was the #3 ranked philosophy department in the country (it subsequently rose to #2). Political philosophy wasn't (and isn't) my main area of interest, nor was it much emphasized at Rutgers. When I decided to become a philosopher, I was aiming (as I wrote in my statement of purpose for grad school) to solve the mind-body problem, the problem of induction, and the problem of skepticism in epistemology. I also had interests in free will, metaethics, and other big philosophical issues. I never did make much progress on the mind-body problem, but I eventually developed a theory of induction that I'm fairly happy with and a book-length response to skepticism.³ That book was based on my

³ See my "Explanationist Aid for the Theory of Inductive Logic," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 60 (2009): 1–31, and *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

PhD dissertation, which defends a direct realist account of our knowledge of the external world.

Upon graduating from Rutgers, I was hired on as an epistemologist in a tenure-track position at the University of Colorado. (This was the best job in epistemology advertised that year.) I have remained there ever since. For the first several years, including my pre-tenure period, I focused mainly on epistemology, plus some metaethics. I published my book refuting skepticism in 2001, and my defense of ethical intuitionism in 2005.⁴ I did it in that order because I had noticed that the most popular objections to intuitionism were really just *general* skeptical arguments that, if applied consistently, implied that no one had knowledge of anything whatsoever. So I decided to work out my response to general skepticism first, then move on to the special case of skepticism about ethics. (It's amazing how many people have absurdly skeptical positions about an enormous variety of things.)

I wrote a few articles on libertarian themes. A philosopher who was covering gun control in a class had remarked to me that it seemed as though there was at most a trivial right at issue, "the right to own a gun." That prompted me to write "Is There a Right to Own a Gun?", which sought to demonstrate that this is in fact an important right.⁵ Then someone invited me to contribute to a collection of essays on the drug war. So I wrote "America's Unjust Drug War,"⁶ which has since been reprinted in multiple anthologies. Later, I was talking to Bryan Caplan at some libertarian event when he raised the question of what is the most harmful law in the U.S. I suggested drug prohibition. He suggested immigration restrictions, on the ground that there are literally millions of people who would swiftly and drastically improve their lives if only they were allowed to leave the impoverished, oppressed nations they live in and come to the U.S. That prompted me to write "Is There a Right to Immigrate?", which has since become one of my most cited articles.⁷ (Immigration became a hotter issue in the culture wars after I wrote the paper.)

⁴ *Ethical Intuitionism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁵ *Social Theory and Practice* 29 (2003): 297–324.

⁶ In *The New Prohibition*, ed. Bill Masters (Minneapolis, MN.: Accurate Press, 2004), 133–44.

⁷ *Social Theory and Practice* 36 (2010): 429–61.

Around 2010 (five years after I earned tenure), I decided to write up my general defense of libertarianism. I didn't entirely agree with the defenses of libertarianism I had heard previously. I accepted the notion of individual rights against force and fraud, but I couldn't accept the sort of absolutist stance about it that I saw in thinkers such as Ayn Rand, Murray Rothbard, and (perhaps) Robert Nozick. Any moral consideration, I thought, could be outweighed by sufficiently large consequences; furthermore, I was never sure exactly how the principles of individual rights should be formulated. But I also did not think any of that mattered to the core motivation for libertarianism. I thought people like Rand and Rothbard were selling libertarianism short by portraying it as resting on extremely strong and hence doubtful moral assumptions. Observers were liable to say, "Well, I don't accept *absolute* property rights, so I guess I can now ignore the rest of this philosophy."

I saw libertarianism as resting on a much more modest foundation. To arrive at libertarianism, you need only accept some perfectly moderate, common-sense ethical intuitions, of a sort that are widely accepted on all sides of the political spectrum, *and apply them consistently to the state*. That part in italics marks the real difference between libertarians and non-libertarians. Non-libertarians make special exceptions for the state; libertarians apply the same moral constraints to the state as they apply to everyone else. Non-libertarians don't generally think, for example, that *you or I* may go around stealing people's money to give it to the poor. They don't think that a church may hire armed guards to kidnap people who are consuming unhealthy substances and lock them in cages. But they think *the state* may do these things. They think, in short, that the state has a special kind of *authority* that lets it evade the ethical constraints that apply to private individuals and organizations. So I wrote *The Problem of Political Authority*, seeking to show that there is in fact no satisfactory basis for this belief in the special moral status of the state.⁸

The book became a hit with libertarians, both within and without the academy. I think it is my best-known work by far (though my work in epistemology and metaethics has more citations). I got many new social media friends and followers, and I started to get podcasts and interview invitations, which have accelerated in the past year.

⁸ New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

A few years later, while looking for some low-hanging intellectual fruit, I turned to legal philosophy. It had long seemed to me that the legal world is dominated by certain baseless and irrational ideas that are nevertheless embraced with near-absolute conviction by many judges, lawyers, and even some scholars—views such as that it is wrong for judges or juries to use their own, independent moral judgment in resolving legal cases. So I wrote *Justice Before the Law* while on sabbatical in New Orleans. It exposes some of the most egregious injustices in the American legal system, then argues that agents in the legal system—including judges, jurors, and lawyers—should place justice ahead of fidelity to the law.⁹

Around the same time (2018), in view of the long, philosophical messages I had been posting on Facebook, and partly due to the worry that at some point Facebook might ban me for my political views, I started a weekly blog, “Fake Nous,” where readers can find my most accessible ideas.¹⁰ My aim is to share interesting thoughts and promote rational thinking.

That summarizes my political philosophical development. I was radicalized in college, so to speak, and I have stuck to the same basic point of view ever since.

⁹ New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

¹⁰ <https://fakenous.substack.com>. See also my personal web page, <http://www.owl232.net>.



Austro-Libertarianism's Existential Lessons

Allen Jeon

I became an Austro-libertarian seven years ago after going through two ideological shifts and learning some existential lessons in the process. A series of huge political-personal events at the same time as my conversion made me realize what it meant to be an Austro-Libertarian. I refrain from mentioning the names of certain groups and figures except in essential cases, however, because there is the risk that they would abuse Korea's defamation law to sue me. It's not easy to tell the truth in Korea.

My parents never instilled or imposed a particular political orientation in me. But I can say with certainty that I grew up in a politically conservative family not only because of my father's involvement in the Conservative Party's 2002 presidential campaign but also because my family has culturally conservative values. An incident that happened when I was nine prompted me to have an extreme "anti-communist" outlook. It was a visit to the Lee Seung-bok Children's Memorial Hall. Since the armistice of the Korean War on July 27, 1953, North Korea has sent armed communist guerrillas to South Korea several times for the purpose of terrorist attacks on infrastructure and assassination of politicians.

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In 1968, armed communist guerrillas from North Korea broke into Lee Seung-bok's family home and murdered the boy along with his family who said, "I hate the Communist Party." I was very young at the time and didn't know much about the concept of communism or the Communist Party, but I couldn't understand or accept that armed communist guerrillas could murder Lee Seung-bok for saying "I hate the Communist Party." Furthermore, the fact that a boy of my same age had died so cruelly was shocking and frightening to me. Since then, communism, the Communist Party, and North Korea have become unacceptable to me.

I became interested in politics and history as a teenager. The process of changing national boundaries due to historical circumstances, the alteration of a country's political system, and the cause of a nation's collapse stimulated my intellectual curiosity. I, therefore, aimed to study the reason for the rise and fall of each country and to find historical facts beyond what is generally told. I remember looking for various documentaries and books because public education could not satisfy my intellectual needs. I realized from historical studies that politics and diplomacy were very important devices for the rise and fall of a country. And I thought that the country should come first. This idea played a crucial role in changing my major from history to political diplomacy in the future. I also became interested in politics because of the lessons I learned from my father's 2002 Conservative Party presidential campaign activities. The candidate my father supported was defeated and I wondered how well the elected presidential candidate would govern. Since that time, I started reading newspapers regularly and became actively interested in politics.

As a university student, I was able to study political science and diplomacy in greater depth. And in order to know politics well, I thought it was important to participate in real-life politics and gain experience. Therefore, in 2013 I joined a conservative party in Korea (a so-called right-wing party) and began political activities. Looking back now, I realize that although I had anti-communist tendencies at that time, economically I was more of a leftist or a national socialist. My anti-communist tendency had always focused on opposing North Korea, not on a firm "libertarian" view of the economy. I believed that government intervention was needed to some extent because the free-market economy was disorderly and there was a risk of corporate monopoly, and government-led planning could drive economic growth. It was the policies of President Syng-man Rhee and Park Chung-hee, considered symbols of the "right wing" in

Korea, that represented my worldview. During this time, I had the opportunity to meet many journalists and politicians who said this typical thing: “We support the free-market but believe that there is a need for ‘government interference’ in economic issues.” I did not question this neoliberal concept.

At the end of 2013, however, there was an organization named after Hayek’s ‘evolutionary psychology’ that was recruiting young people with conservative and classical liberal tendencies. I joined the organization because I thought I should not neglect my economic studies while working in politics. There I became acquainted with William Park, the only Rothbardian in the organization, who prompted a big change in my inner thoughts and ideas. I was an atheist at that time, but I became a Christian again inspired by his actions and logic. I’ve never seen a Christian as faithful and consistent as William.

I gradually understood libertarian logic by reading Hayek’s works on empiricism and limited government as well as Frederic Bastiat’s *The Law*. These writings dispelled my belief in government interventionism. As I walked down the path of freedom, William Park showed me pure libertarian logic and libertarian utopia. Despite his soft personality, his writings and views were uncompromising. For example, in front of conservative novelists and army lieutenant generals, he asserted that conscription must be abolished immediately because it is slavery and inefficient. His view was a logic that I had not previously encountered and found quite shocking.

In August of 2014 William gave me as a gift Murray Rothbard’s *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*. I started reading this book in December of that year and was completely disarmed by Rothbard’s coherent logic. At the time, I was in favor of Hayek’s limited government, and yet I could not morally or economically refute Rothbard’s logic. Rather, I felt clear and refreshed when Rothbard revealed the contradiction between “right” and “left” and explained the fact that the axiom of self-ownership and the non-aggressive principle are the logical basis of Libertarianism. I even felt intellectual joy. Moreover, I felt anger when I learned that the Great Depression was not caused by market failures. Public education taught us that the Great Depression was caused by a lack of effective demand and stock of consumer goods, that is, a market failure. And it stated that the Great Depression was resolved through World War II. The Austrian Business Cycle Theory (ABCT) in *For a New Liberty* showed that such a claim was untrue. I came to realize even more the necessity of studying economics.

In early 2015, I worked as an intern at the Center for Free Enterprise (CFE) to learn Austro-Libertarianism in greater depth. But there was little I could learn from there. The Center for Free Enterprise's slogan was "free-enterprises, private property and limited-government." However, they adhered to Rhee Syng-man and Park Chung-hee's policies, which were far from the slogan, and they were dedicated to promoting the two presidents as the representatives of the free market and the right-wing. Yet the governments of Syng-man Rhee and Chung-hee Park made protectionism a major policy. This is far from a free market because the term "free market" literally means unlimited free trade without government control or interference. Moreover, these two governments implemented compulsory education, manipulated exchange rates, and censored music, books, and clothing for national security reasons. In the process, the private property and liberty of countless people were violated by the government.

Despite the lack of any Austro-Libertarian institution in Korea, I had the good fortune of encountering a colleague who knew the history of the Austrian School of Economics and was able to further expand my knowledge by introducing me to the works of Carl Menger and Böhm-Bawerk as well as to the Mises Institute in the U.S. Professor Jeon Yoong-deok is the only scholar in Korea to research all economic issues and Korean history from an Austro-Libertarian perspective. His *The Economy and Society of the Age of Statism* (2019) uses Austro-Libertarian theory to analyze the economic and social sectors from the US Army Military Government in Korea to the Fourth Republic (i.e., the period between 1945 and 1981). The book argues that the criteria for evaluating policies should be whether life, freedom, and property are violated, and it warns that the consequences of any policy appear not only in the short term but mostly over a long period of time. The book also gave me a clearer understanding of interventionism, socialism, communism, and capitalism, and it made me more prepared to scrutinize the behavior and motivation of the individuals who make up the government.

The CFE I worked for became increasingly pro-government, and eventually began to defend the Park Geun-hye administration's policies. For example, CFE advocated the nationalization of history textbooks and anti-terrorist acts and promoted "crony capitalism" by introducing it to the public as "politics-enterprise cooperation." William and I, therefore, created the Libertarian Party of Korea to counter such intellectual fraud. In our attempt to introduce true libertarianism to the public, we

first urged CFE to uphold the principle of Liberty. In response, they condemned us as a doctrinaire group. And in the wake of the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye, relationships with them began to be cut off one by one. The ongoing discussion of issues with so-called libertarians turned into an emotionally-charged battle. For example, a journalist in charge of market economy education at a well-known media company stated: “While studying Libertarianism, I have decided not to talk as much as possible with followers of Rothbard, not because they are ignorant, but because they have closed the other side of the brain completely as if they were born blind or deaf. Rothbard followers are very similar to Marxists in terms of the action of neurons, both being deaf and blind.”

I protested the journalist’s personal attack but could not receive any apology. A year later, he borrowed someone else’s mouth and made an indirect apology. Even some libertarian colleagues turned to their side again. From that event, I realized that a proponent of Austro-Libertarianism could never be in solidarity with a self-proclaimed “libertarian” group nominally favoring “free-enterprise, private property, and limited government” but without supporting a truly free market and free society. Privileging large corporations and their interests, awarding the prize of freedom only to politicians who temporarily reduce taxes or remove regulations that hinder the pursuit of their interests, and promoting “national freedom” or the statist policies of Rhee Syng-man and Park Chung-hee, are all antithetical to libertarian philosophy. If there is a Korean who claims to be a libertarian, one should investigate their activities and actions in detail. This is the existential lesson that Austro-Libertarianism taught me.

Later, while watching Professor Hans Hermann Hoppe’s speech, “Coming of Age with Murray,” presented at the Mises Institute’s 35th Anniversary celebration in New York City in 2017, I realized that he had a similar experience. I strongly agree with Professor Hoppe’s view that the main opponents of Austro-Libertarians are not traditional socialists but fake libertarians! They reject logical and ethical Austro-Libertarian theory and do harm to the liberty movement by usurping the name of libertarian.

Anyway, I left CFE and pursued activities for the Pure Libertarian Student Organization (Students for Liberty—Korea), which is not affiliated with CFE. I was engaged in various activities from 2015 to 2019 with a small number of colleagues, writing and helping to organize events through SFL. All the same, I felt limited and unable to produce any

significant results. In order for ideas to develop into a mass movement, it seemed to me, there must be a core group of scholars who can provide theoretical applications to real-world problems. There was, however, no group of scholars in Korea who had formed anything like the Mises Institute. For the record, there is a seemingly similar scholarly organization in Korea, but they hold the same right-wing government position as CFE.

I believe that education is the foundation of the liberal revolution and the only way out of the threat of statism. For this idea of a peaceful intellectual Liberty movement, I am also indebted to Ron Paul whose numerous videos and writings William first introduced me to in 2015. In September of 2019, I established the Mises Institute Korea with the goal of spreading Libertarianism and Austrian economics in Korea. Professor Jeon Yoong-deok agreed to serve as Mises Institute Korea's academic president in charge of the academic field. I hope that many students will be able to enjoy our work and speak out for sound money and freedom in the near future. Also, I hope a courageous public figure will step forward to unequivocally call out the intellectual fraud of so-called limited-government advocates who nevertheless unite with the big government for economic and political reasons. And I would like to thank Tho Bishop, Brett, William Park, Professor Jeon Yoong-deok, Jeff Lee, and my colleagues at Mises Korea who are helping me all the way in this process.



Learning from Libertarian Disappointments

Marc Joffe

I was very active in the libertarian movement as a college student in the early 1980s, was involved with libertarian new country activities in the 1990s, and, after a career in finance, am having an encore career as a policy analyst at libertarian thinktanks. I would like to use my limited space in this compilation to explain to readers how I got interested in libertarianism and what I learned from the libertarian movement.

FINDING LIBERTARIANISM

I grew up in a liberal New York Jewish family, becoming interested in politics at a very early age. I may well have grown into being a liberal Democrat had I not been influenced by a confluence of events in the mid-to-late 1970s.

First my dad, who had been my main political influence, passed away in 1974. In junior high, I faced some violent behavior from other students and started listening to right-wing talk radio. This was a time in which New York City was reaching its nadir, with dirty, unreliable subways,

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rising crime, and a weak economy. It seemed to me that the liberal ideas embraced by my family had failed, and so I switched to conservatism, perhaps exemplifying the old adage that a conservative is a liberal who has been mugged.

At Stuyvesant High School, where I was on the debate team, I began to realize that conservatism had contradictions, and I did not like letting others win political arguments by pointing out conflicts in my stated views. I was open to a system that was more internally consistent. I had also become interested in economics and investing, following the work of various “gold bugs.” At a public library, I found Harry Browne’s *You Can Profit from the Monetary Crisis*. It was primarily an investment advice book, but it also contained a description of a fictional European country that thrived despite the total absence of government. It was my first exposure to anarcho-capitalism.

Although I thought of myself as a libertarian when I started college in 1979, I still had a lot to learn about the ideology. Fortunately, I chose New York University which, at the time, had an active chapter of Students for a Libertarian Society and an Austrian Economics program. Also, within a couple of miles from the campus was Laissez Faire Books and the Free Libertarian Party (New York’s affiliate of the LP).

Chris Sciabarra did a great job of organizing the SLS chapter, and it was through this group that I got to meet such brilliant libertarian graduate students as Mark Brady and the late Don Lavoie. I also got to meet many of the excellent speakers Chris brought to campus, including Walter Block, Don Boudreaux, Gary Greenberg, Murray Rothbard, and Sharon Presley.

I also took advantage of the opportunities for students offered by national libertarian and free market organizations, such as Cato and Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) summer seminars. The Cato Seminar I attended at Dartmouth was especially impactful, as it included very memorable lectures from Murray Rothbard, Ralph Raico, and Roy Childs.

Other highlights included an opportunity to be an errand boy for LP Presidential Candidate Ed Clark and his campaign manager David Boaz when they visited New York on a summer day in 1980. I also had the privilege of taking Israel Kirzner’s Foundations of Capitalism class and Jerry O’Driscoll’s Economics of the Law class at New York University, accounting for 8 of the 128 credits I needed to graduate!

INTERNAL CONFLICT

In retrospect, I was exposed to the very best of the early libertarian movement at its peak. Unfortunately, I also witnessed its rapid decline in the early to mid-1980s.

Although Reagan Republicans stole a lot of the libertarian movement's thunder, I think the bigger problem for organized libertarianism was factional conflict. Having gotten involved at a low level as the conflict was brewing, I cannot claim to know all the particulars let alone have an informed opinion about who was right or wrong. But I did form a very strong opinion about the factional infighting which remains relevant to the LP's situation today. Fighting for control over organizations is generally a waste of time and energy as well as a negative sum game. To libertarians who do not like how the Party or other organizations are operating, I urge you to direct your energies elsewhere rather than engage in combat with other members.

Libertarians dissatisfied with the direction of a libertarian organization, or the statements of fellow libertarians, should realize: (1) ideological differences between any two libertarians are usually dwarfed by the gap between either of them and the general public, and (2) infighting often demotivates the combatants and, more importantly, other libertarians affected by the conflict. Due to these factors, the gains available from taking over any given libertarian organization in terms of influencing public policy are usually more than offset by the downsides of volunteer disengagement.

Given this, I recommend that, when confronted with an unsatisfactory organizational direction, libertarian activists should join or form alternative organizations, or find ways to work within the current organization that they find fulfilling and that minimizes conflict. Although voluntary organizations can use democratic procedures without in any way contradicting libertarianism, we should recognize that libertarian-informed social science critiques of democracy apply to both coercive and voluntary organizations. As such, I believe the "subscription model" is more appropriate for membership organizations than the "democratic model." We should treat our relationship with volunteer organizations as we think of our relationship to the magazines we read: if we like them, we renew; if we don't like them, we cancel and find alternative reading material; but we normally don't try to vote out the publisher.

FELLOW TRAVELERS

Although the approach I have advocated above may seem atomistic, I also think it is extremely important to identify allies and work together with them. The scope of such cooperation may be limited to a single protest, speaking event, academic study, or blog post. But working with “fellow travelers” is both a force multiplier and an educational experience.

At NYU in the early 1980s, I became aware of two groups that had interesting adjacencies with libertarianism. Georgists advocate a single tax on the value of unimproved property. As such, they oppose all other taxes and can thus be seen as allies in most cases. I also came to learn from them that their single tax can raise substantial revenue while having minimal adverse impacts on economic incentives. Anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-communists value personal freedom but have different ideas about private property. Interacting with them led me to question my own views of intellectual property and abandonment (i.e., does one’s right to a particular land parcel or building continue if one does not use or improve it for a certain length of time).

My college years were also a time of peace protests as students reacted to President Carter’s resumption of draft registration and fears of nuclear war increased during the early Reagan years. I was very involved in anti-draft and anti-war protests collaborating with both democratic socialists and Trotskyites to organize them. This worked for a while, but ultimately a Trotskyite group took over our national anti-draft coalition and forced through an additional plank opposing so-called economic conscription, i.e., people being obliged to serve in the military due to lack of resources. Since the solution to economic conscription involved forced wealth redistribution, the libertarian students chose to leave the coalition. The Trotskyite victory was a pyrrhic one, as the coalition achieved little after our ejection. Maybe the Trots should have also considered the subscription model!

RADICALISM VS. INCREMENTALISM

While I believe that much of the conflict among libertarians in the early 1980s was personal, there was at least one major intellectual question: should libertarians adhere strictly to the non-aggression principle or should they advocate policies that contain coercive aspects. In other words, should they be abolitionist or incrementalist.

I have to admit to “doing a 180” on this issue over the course of my adulthood. As a student, I would call anyone who departed from the pure libertarian position a “sell-out.” At the time of this writing, I work on a team that seeks state legislative reforms that could marginally reduce future tax burdens or increase government transparency: hardly objectives that would appeal to my 20-year-old self!

What changed? As an older person, I am keenly aware that I have less time available and would like to see some progress—any progress—during my lifetime. Also, the ideological environment has deteriorated over the last 20 years, suggesting that the opportunities for radical improvement are now much more limited.

A NEW LIBERTARIAN COUNTRY?

Even though there has been a massive lurch away from liberty-oriented ideas in the twenty-first century, it was already obvious to me in the 1990s that I would not live to see the establishment of a libertarian society in the United States.

An alternative that I started supporting at that time is the establishment of a libertarian country either on land in the developing world or on the water. After starting a new country newsletter, I had the opportunity to meet the late Mike Oliver who led two ill-fated efforts in the 1970s to establish such an entity. Oliver was the pioneer, but many others have followed. Unfortunately, none of the efforts to establish a libertarian new country have succeeded. Problems have included poor planning, underfunding, founders misappropriating investor funds, and forceful intervention from nearby governments.

This idea seemed to have had its main moment in 2008 when Patri Friedman obtained backing from Peter Thiel to start the Seasteading Institute. Nonetheless, despite more funding and a higher profile, this movement has yet to achieve sustained success. More recently, the surge in cryptocurrencies promised to provide Seasteaders or those planning to acquire land for a libertarian nation greater funding, but, as of this writing, cryptocurrencies have entered a bear market.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Looking back, I value my involvement with the libertarian movement. It has given me the chance to learn from many intellectual giants either in person or through their writings. It has also substituted for the role of religion in my life, infusing it with a sense of purpose and a model of right and wrong.

The fact that liberty is so hard to achieve is both a curse and a blessing. While success is extremely elusive, it is also a project that can occupy a lifetime—perhaps many, many lifetimes! With such a steep mountain to climb, I always welcome the chance to collaborate with others, whether self-described libertarian or not, while I hope to limit the time wasted on fighting people with whom I largely agree.



Building a Community of Leaders for Liberty in Africa

Kavuka L. Kiguhi

I grew up in Kenya at a time in which brain drain from the continent was a concern. Africa seemed to be losing its brightest minds who ventured abroad for greener pastures on failing to attain their desired opportunities at home. My young self was bothered by this and wanted to be counted among those who would one day contribute to making Africa great and better for all while staying at home.

I believe that education is the key to a prosperous society and realized that accessing education at the tertiary level was a dream for many but an opportunity available only to a few. As a student at the University of Nairobi's School of Law anticipating a professional career, I decided to use my knowledge to help young people, even one of them, change their perspective and hopefully improve their chances for a better future.

I needed a platform that would help bring about this desire of mine. After trying some clubs on campus that didn't pan out, I almost gave up. Then a friend introduced me to Students For Liberty. When I finally

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had the time to read their website after attaining my bachelor's degree, I was moved by what I saw. I signed up for their Charter Teams program, which was the starting point to volunteer as an international student. My application was successful, and after eight long weeks of training, I could not wait to dig in!

I was in the first cohort of trained volunteers from Africa and together we laid the groundwork for what would later become the largest student movement for liberty in the world. I became a missionary for liberty with a fiery passion as I moved from one university to the next with my colleagues, sharing ideas and recruiting new volunteers to set up groups on their own campuses.

Speaking to young people about a new concept, hoping that they would understand and be interested in learning more, was a humbling experience. I had to carefully read and internalize the organizational mission of SFL, its vision and goals, before selling it to others. With every interaction my interest and leadership skills grew, and I became increasingly invested in creating leaders for liberty in Africa. This did not come without challenges, such as having to build new teams every year and being accused of being brainwashed or bought by the West!

As our movement grew so did our programs, like the launch of our annual Regional Conferences that promise hundreds of young people in attendance the time of their lives as they learn about liberty. Interacting with fellow African youths was amazing as I got to compare my life, country, and goals with theirs, drawing similarities and differences. The more I learned, the more my sensitivity, tolerance, and appreciation for liberty grew.

The platform created by Students For Liberty connected me to fellow youth from around the globe. Comparing their way of life and thinking to mine motivated me to do much more and to be an example of inspiration back home. I learned from my mentors by following their work and, in turn, they saw and supported my efforts. Olumayowa Okediran, the founder of African Students For Liberty and my colleague, made my journey possible by opening key doors to various opportunities for me. I also learned from a number of Tom Palmer's publications that were available to us thanks to the generous support of the Atlas Network, and I am grateful for his guidance when he accepted my invitation to speak at our conferences.

The late Linda Whetstone, member of the Students For Liberty's Board of Advisors, never ceased to surprise me. Sharing a name with

such a great force has not been easy. Her tireless efforts, encouragement, mentorship, and support have also influenced my journey. I am also among the very few of my generation of leaders who got to meet the late Professor George Ayittey, and his lessons shall forever live with me. His texts have had a huge impact in my work as I have borrowed and shared his opinion on a number of issues.

I keep thinking about the five founders of Students For Liberty, asking what exactly they were thinking about when they created this organization. Co-founder and former CEO Alexander McCobin, in particular, touched the hearts of so many young people from around the world and inspired us all to make an impact in our societies by creating the change we wanted to see. The vision of the founders, which led to such a successful initiative, in turn, moved me to do as much as I can for my beloved continent.

My passion for mentorship and engagement with Students For Liberty attracted numerous invitations to speak at conferences around the world about my work, experience, and journey as an advocate for liberty, particularly in Africa, but, indeed, everywhere else as well. I have benefited from numerous skill training sessions hosted by a number of organizations, including the Atlas Network, Students For Liberty, the Network of a Free Society, and the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, all of which have positively impacted my life and contributed to making me the professional advocate for liberty that I am. They all prepared my transition from advocacy as a volunteer to working with think tanks as a professional.

My goal, which I hope and trust has brought thus far a positive result, has been to counter the very negative and grim picture about Africa and Africans held by those who get their opinion from the TV and hearsay. I am dedicated to showing the world who we are and adding my voice on many issues for our sake. And for my people, it is posing a radical and different point of view, a not-so-common opinion on social, economic, and political issues, with propositions for better ways to make Africa work, that is, a freer Africa for all.

There are places today where there is a struggle for the very basic and essential freedoms deserved by every human being. I have worked closely with refugees from Eritrea, South Sudan, and Ethiopia as I introduced them to these ideas. I had first-hand encounters that brought home how much privilege I had access to and took for granted living in a peaceful country with systems that worked to some extent. Connecting with a

young Burundian who attended our conference in Kenya in order to seek asylum until political tensions cooled down was humbling. Today I count so many friends from around Africa with whom I worked closely and supported as they learned and developed their leadership skills that they are now using to make a real impact in their societies through their own free market think tanks.

To be referred to as a mentor and inspiration for others to pursue advocacy for liberty and leadership has been most rewarding. The young leaders I have worked with these past nine years have become mentors themselves and, slowly but surely, we have a community of changemakers that the late Professor George Ayittey referred to as the Cheetah Generation. We have become a force to bring positive change for a free Africa for all.

I am glad to have personally contributed to the growth of the African community of advocates for liberty. Despite this success, I am convinced that my work is far from done. I am determined to leave a positive mark on the hearts of those I shall be privileged to mentor and train and together strive for a better future. Young people are the leaders right now. We have to be wise and courageous and do what is right. We have to stand up, speak, write, and lead. The internet has made the unthinkable possible and today the journey of a young Kenyan leader features among stories from around the world on the advocacy for liberty. Who would have thought?

The impact of war can take decades to reverse and we have witnessed this from the World Wars of the West. However, African states seem to ignore the clear lessons from them and we continue to see political instability in a number of countries, some of which have been at it for decades with never a long peaceful period for their citizens. Africa is now considered the future due to its young population and its projected rapid growth. But with unresolved issues such as political instability, war, terrorism, abject poverty, hunger, limited access to health care and education, how do we reach this high potential? Corruption and poor governance remain on top of the list of problems that are often ignored. The cycle of political instability thus continues as many Africans fight for their rights and freedom.

I strongly believe that free trade is the answer for the peoples of this continent. A key and committed focus on improving the business environments by removing barriers to trade and lowering taxes will enable us to lift our people from abject poverty. An initiative of the African Union has

led to African states signing and ratifying the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, that seeks to create a common market for the continent for the purpose of increasing intra-African trade that is now too limited. Since its official launch in January of 2021, we are yet to see the practical steps by Member States in implementing this agreement that has the potential to revolutionize business in Africa and also shake up the global value chains. We face serious protectionism from Member States and backlash from Africans who see this as a move to bring about negative competition where there are limited opportunities.

Community sensitization is a goal still to be attained, as is knowledge sharing of what a common market is and how a free trade area will have a positive impact on businesses, including access to more markets across borders. The healthy competition also means that prices of products will have to come down once supply is increased for the benefit of the people.

Are we any closer to achieving the free society envisioned by philosophers such as Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek? As the world continues to be a global market thanks to the connections made possible by technological advancements, shall we see fewer wars and better governance? Shall we witness the people realizing the power they have as citizens and their role in ensuring that politics benefit the people? There has not been a more important time than now for advocates of liberty to raise their voices higher and push for change toward a free and peaceful society for all.



My Story as an African Libertarian

Rowland Kingsley

I'm delighted to share my story and perspective as an African libertarian who has been fighting for freedom and liberal democracy in Africa for the past twelve years or more.

The behemoth called socialism has been destroying Africa's economy and human capital development since the post-colonial era. Government in Africa is synonymous with resistance to the rule of law, and authoritarianism is concealed under the garment of democracy. The realization of why freedom is important is leading young people in my country of Nigeria and across Africa to advocate the protection of property rights and wealth creation through a free-market economy. Although this movement toward freedom has encountered a high level of restrictions and human rights violations, we have nonetheless been making an impact by connecting with other young African libertarians from Ghana, Kenya, Cameroun, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere on this continent, and, indeed, around the world.

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My journey on this path started in 2010 when I encountered a collection of essays from young African historians and technocrats demonstrating the importance of African freedom and showing how socialism, corruption, and foreign aid messed up our economies. Around that time, fellow students and I had an opportunity to get training from video webinars online and also speaking conferences held at the University of Ibadan. These were organized by the leaders of Students for Liberty and the Atlas Network, who also provided us with various books and other literature. Ken Schoolland's *The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible: A Free Market Odyssey* (1995) was especially an eye opener for me. I also read some articles and books written by Dr Eamonn Butler, such as *Friedrich Hayek: The Ideas and Influence of the Libertarian Economist*, as well as Hayek's own *The Road to Serfdom*. These writings and others gave me enthusiasm and fueled my passion for promoting a free society.

Serendipitously, events began to emerge from various foreign libertarian organizations through Students for Liberty. These revealed to us how Africans have been exploited by our leadership through welfarism and foreign aid programs. I joined the Students for Liberty organization and became more involved as an activist. Abraham Anoba, Japheth Omojuwa, Linda Kavuka Kiguhi, Barrister Odunola Oledede, and Mayowa Okederain were mentors and libertarian colleagues at Students for Liberty, and we all worked together. In Washington, D.C., in 2010, Barrister Odunola directed with our collaboration the first play ever produced based on Prof. Schoolland's *The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible*.

My colleagues and I began to host local events to discuss the issue of free speech, the closed border system, and foreign aid in Africa. In this mission to empower the next generation of African leaders, we hosted seminars and workshops across several universities and cities in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and other countries in Africa. These were resisted by government agents through political propaganda to deter our movement.

In 2014 some fellow libertarian activists and I were petitioned and suspended for promoting free speech events at the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University. We were charged with promoting an ideology of misconduct against government institutions and instigating students against university management. Having been served a letter of academic suspension for a year, I began to resist this totalitarian approach. We publicized personal accounts of how our mission was resisted and

fought by those who opposed the liberalization of African society. We experienced police and institutional brutality against libertarians.

The libertarian movement today has required synergy and support from Western counterparts and friends to consolidate our efforts to improve our fight for freedom and a free market society. What Africa needs today isn't foreign aid but freedom and an open border system to encourage free trade across nations and eliminate business restrictions both inside and at our borders. We have also identified the need to push back against the War on Drugs by the government and also thwart the criminalization of drug use in Africa.

Young Nigerians and Africans over the years have been engaged in the fight against government import protection, which has created a more monopolistic market through government machinery and a bureaucratic system. This behemoth called socialism in Africa has done vast harm by the abuse of human rights and exploitation of Africans.

The movement toward freedom and freer society in Africa should be considered a serious issue for Africans. As an African, I must tell you that there's very little freedom in the Mother Continent because those who hold power are bent on preventing fellow citizens from progressing in order to make them live at the mercy of political elites.

While volunteering with Students for Liberty Africa, many of our vibrant and creative youths took the movement to heart because we wanted to have a freer society and encourage peace and prosperity across our countries. There was strong opposition as well as negative profiling by government institutions in order to thwart the movement's efforts to educate and provide opportunities for young Africans. Yet we have fought for political and economic freedom, we have stood our ground, resisted oppression, and held onto the ideals of peace and liberty. Today the movement is finally making headway as our new organization emerges to consolidate support and ideas from across the world to make it a better place.

I co-founded the initiative ROCKME (Rewards of Capitalism: Knowledge, MORALITY, Empowerment) with my friend Michael Malgeri in California. This initiative is designed to bring entrepreneurship empowerment to young Africans and college students. Through Liberty International we have hosted conferences on global capitalism every October 7 for the past three years. Each year we organize an essay competition and train young people to understand the importance of free markets in Africa. We believe that the best way to ensure the progress of the

libertarian philosophy in our continent is by electing libertarians into the African political system and also by teaching young Africans about libertarian opportunities and development.

The Ghanaian libertarian philosopher and economist George Ayittey saw Africa's future as a fight between Hippos—complacent, greedy bureaucrats wallowing in the muck—and Cheetahs, the fast-moving, entrepreneurial leaders and citizens who will rebuild Africa. He referenced us as the cheetah generation who will transform Africa through innovation, entrepreneurship, and championing classical liberalism without depending on the government. Professor Ayittey, president of the Free Africa Foundation in Washington D.C., professor at the American University, and associate scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, passed away in January of 2022. Although I did not have an opportunity to meet him in person, I have been inspired by his online speaking events and his publications. His TED Talks and writings, such as his recent book *Applied Economics for Africa: A New Textbook for African Students* (2018), have exposed countless young Africans to crucial economic issues regarding Africa. He is truly an African hero and an inspiration to all libertarians of my generation.

Michael Malgeri, my colleague and co-founder of the global capitalism awareness movement, has also motivated me and kept me on track. He wrote a book for high school students, *Johnny Profit*. Prof. Schoolland has been a support to me since I met him in Kenya at the Atlas Network African Liberty conference in 2019. As the vice president of Liberty International, he recommended that the Liberty International board appoint me as their African Representative. Liberty International has also provided financial support for conferences I have organized in Africa.

Liberty International president, Jacek Spendel, also recommend me as the African volunteer leader of the global peace movement Live and Let Live. The goal of LLL is to promote peace throughout the world thanks to the non-aggression principle, human freedom, and respect for individual aspirations. This movement was founded by Marc Victor, a libertarian lawyer from Arizona.

The future of Africa rests on the shoulders of its youth. Africa isn't poor. We are a rich continent, but we lack freedom. Let's continue to work together to strengthen the muscles of freedom and libertarianism in Africa. My service and call to promote freedom in Africa and the world gave me a better perspective on human relationships, and I am optimistic that we will arrive at a sustainable future thanks to the commitment of young people in Africa.



My Life as an Austrian Economist and Entrepreneurship Scholar

Peter G. Klein

*This essay draws on material from the “Introduction” to Peter G. Klein, *The Capitalist and the Entrepreneur: Essays on Organizations and Markets* (Auburn, Ala.: Mises Institute, 2010), pp. vii–xii, and Peter G. Klein, “My Contributions to Entrepreneurship Theory,” in David B. Audretsch and Erik E. Lehmann, eds., *The Routledge Companion to the Makers of Modern Entrepreneurship* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 146–53.*

As with many libertarians of my generation, it began with Ayn Rand. I grew up in an academic household where ideas were discussed and debated but libertarian views were not part of the conversation. My father, a historian, considered FDR the greatest American president and my mother, an attorney, held conventional center-left opinions. One day a high-school friend gave me a copy of Rand’s *The Fountainhead* and said, “You seem like the kind of person who would enjoy this.” He was right. I

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was captivated by Rand's novels and went on to read some of her nonfiction works. Her book *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* included a list of recommended readings in the back, and I headed to the library to track them down.

It was an idiosyncratic list featuring classic works by Henry Hazlitt and Ludwig von Mises along with Isabel Paterson's *The God of the Machine* and some now-forgotten books like Carl Snyder's *Capitalism: The Creator* and Benjamin Anderson's *Economics and the Public Welfare*. No Hayek, Friedman, or Rothbard, whom I would discover later. I probably started with Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson* or Mises's *Anti-Capitalistic Mentality*. I didn't understand the more technical parts of their analyses but was impressed with their clear writing, logical exposition, and embrace of liberty and personal responsibility. By the time I started college, I was hooked.

I ended up majoring in economics in college because, frankly, the classes were easy. It was mainstream, textbook stuff, and my reading of Austrian books on the side gave me an advantage in figuring out the background and context of the ideas. I challenged my professors, though I wasn't obnoxious; they appreciated a student who was engaged and asked questions, even if he had some odd ideas. My most interesting professor was the idiosyncratic William Darity who loved Marx and Keynes, but appreciated my intellectual curiosity and encouraged my growing interest in the Austrians. (I remember reading *The General Theory* and Hazlitt's *The Failure of the New Economics* side by side.)

As a college senior, I was thinking about graduate school—possibly in economics. By pure chance, my father saw a poster on a bulletin board advertising graduate-school fellowships from the Ludwig von Mises Institute. (This was a pre-Internet, physical bulletin board, with a piece of paper attached.) I was flabbergasted; someone had named an institute after Mises? I applied for a fellowship, received a nice letter from the president, Lew Rockwell, and eventually had a telephone interview with the fellowship committee, which consisted of Murray Rothbard. You can imagine how nervous I was the day of that phone call! But Rothbard was friendly and engaging, his legendary charisma coming across even over the phone, and he quickly put me at ease. (I also applied for admission to New York University's graduate program in economics, which got me a phone call from Israel Kirzner. Talk about the proverbial kid in the candy store!) I won the Mises fellowship, and eventually enrolled in the

economics PhD program at the University of California, Berkeley, which I started in 1988.

Meeting Lew and Murray changed my life forever. Before then, I had never encountered a libertarian intellectual—or any libertarian, really—in the flesh. I was soon drawn into the libertarian intellectual community surrounding the Mises Institute. It started before my first summer of graduate school when I attended the “Mises University,” then called the “Advanced Instructional Program in Austrian Economics,” a week-long program of lectures and discussions held that year at Stanford University and led by Rothbard, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, Roger Garrison, and David Gordon. (I’ve attended this event every year since—thirty-three straight as of this writing.) I later met most of the other Austrian economists from Rothbard’s generation to the present as well as other libertarian intellectuals at events such as the Austrian Scholars Conference, Libertarian Scholars Conference, Mont Pelerin Society, Liberty Fund conferences, and other meetings and societies.

When I was in graduate school in Berkeley, the Mises Institute had an administrative office in Burlingame, California, a short drive away, and I worked there as an intern. Through Lew I met Burt Blumert, then president of the Center for Libertarian Studies; George Resch, who had helped Baldy Harper establish the Institute for Humane Studies; and Justin Raimondo, who would later found *antiwar.com*. Also in the Bay Area were David Theroux and his colleagues at the Independent Institute as well as the staff of *Laissez-Faire* books. There was also a libertarian group at Stanford led by Bill Evers. It was an exciting time to be in the Bay Area.

Through Evers, I got wind of a summer job opportunity as a research assistant for W. W. Bartley III, who was editing *The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek* for the University of Chicago Press and Routledge. Bartley had been a student and close colleague of Karl Popper (who was also Hayek’s second cousin), though Bartley and Popper later had a falling out. Besides the *Collected Works* Bartley was working on intellectual biographies of both Hayek and Popper. He hired me to assist with the project, including preparation for what would become Volume IV of the *Collected Works* containing Hayek’s writings on the Austrian school. I was honored that Bartley invited me to serve as co-editor on that volume. A few months later, however, Bartley passed away suddenly. His successor, Stephen Kresge, asked me to edit the volume myself. This was quite an

unusual role for a PhD student but I somehow pulled it off, with the volume appearing in 1992—my first academic publication.

In my second year of graduate school, I took a course from the 2009 Nobel Laureate Oliver Williamson, “Economics of Institutions.” Williamson’s course was a revelation, the first course at Berkeley I really enjoyed. The syllabus was dazzling, with readings from Ronald Coase, Herbert Simon, F. A. Hayek, Douglass North, Kenneth Arrow, Alfred Chandler, Armen Alchian, Harold Demsetz, Benjamin Klein, and other brilliant and thoughtful economists, along with sociologists, political scientists, historians, and others. I decided to write my dissertation in the area of organizational and institutional economics, and that has been one of my main professional interests ever since.

I completed my Ph.D. in 1995 and took a position at the University of Georgia where my colleagues included Larry White, George Selgin, and Dwight Lee. I later moved to the University of Missouri to work with the Contracting and Organizations Research Institute which had been established by Coase to study contract design. During that time I became increasingly interested in entrepreneurship, particularly as it relates to organizational and institutional issues, and within the framework of the broader Austrian tradition. In 2015, I left Missouri for a professorship at Baylor University which has a strong program of entrepreneurship research, teaching, and outreach.

I had begun thinking more carefully about entrepreneurship while writing two papers applying Austrian economics to the theory of the firm.¹ The second paper included a section on “Financiers as Entrepreneurs” in which I discussed the argument that unregulated financial markets will not produce enough disciplinary takeovers, because shareholders in an underperforming target firm will refuse to tender their shares to a raider or acquiring firm for less than their share of the post-takeover value of the firm, leaving no profit for the acquirer. This kind of argument, I realized, assumes that all market participants have the same beliefs about future share prices and are equally willing to bear the uncertainties associated with the restructuring process. In

¹ Peter G. Klein, “Economic Calculation and the Limits of Organization,” *Review of Austrian Economics* 9, no. 2 (1996): 51–77; Peter G. Klein, “Entrepreneurship and Corporate Governance,” *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 19–42.

contrast, I saw post-takeover profits (and losses) as returns to exercising the entrepreneurial function. The analysis of firm governance could not, then, be understood without seeing financial-market participants as entrepreneurs who seek to exploit gaps in the market or specialize in bearing fundamental uncertainties.

Describing business restructurings as entrepreneurial actions led me to think more systematically about entrepreneurship and to read more widely in the contemporary entrepreneurship literature. I quickly realized that while profound thinkers like Joseph Schumpeter, Frank Knight, Kirzner, and even Mises were often cited in this literature, their ideas were only superficially understood. Around that time Nicolai Foss (whom I had met in 1997 at the inaugural meeting of the International Society for New Institutional Economics) and I were invited to contribute to a *Festschrift* in honor of Kirzner. We assumed that most of the participants would write about Kirzner's concept of entrepreneurial discovery and we wanted to do something different. My wife, also a trained economist, reminded me that Kirzner wrote an interesting and underappreciated book on capital theory.² There Kirzner argued, building on earlier work by Ludwig Lachmann, that the nature and value of an asset or resource is determined not by its objective properties (size, weight, location, construction, technical capabilities), but by its imagined place in the subjective production plans of a forward-thinking entrepreneur. Kirzner's capital theory seemed to provide a useful means of integrating the theory of the entrepreneur and the economic theory of the firm, two bodies of literature that had developed largely in isolation, despite much overlap in approach and subject matter. Developing and extending Kirzner's capital theory led to the *Festschrift* chapter,³ several follow-up papers, and Foss's and my 2012 book *Organizing Entrepreneurial Judgment*.⁴

I usually describe my approach here as the "judgment-based view" of entrepreneurship. The term *judgment* was used both by Knight and Mises to describe decision-making under uncertainty that cannot be modeled or parameterized as a set of formal decision rules. Judgment is midway

² Israel M. Kirzner, *An Essay on Capital* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1966).

³ Kirsten Foss, Nicolai J. Foss, Peter G. Klein, and Sandra K. Klein, "Heterogeneous Capital, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Organization," *Journal des Economistes et des Etudes Humaines* 12, no. 1 (March 2002): 79–96.

⁴ Nicolai J. Foss and Peter G. Klein, *Organizing Entrepreneurial Judgment: A New Approach to the Firm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

between the “rational decision-making” of neoclassical economics models and blind luck or random guessing. We sometimes call it intuition, gut feeling, or understanding. In a world of uncertainty, and heterogeneous capital resources with attributes that are subjectively perceived and unknowable *ex ante*, some agency must bear the responsibility of owning, controlling, deploying, and redeploying these resources in the service of consumer wants. That, in my formulation, is the role of the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur’s job is to combine and recombine heterogeneous capital resources in pursuit of profit (and the avoidance of loss). When entrepreneurs are successful in acquiring resources at prices below their realized marginal revenue products—i.e., when entrepreneurs exercise good judgment—they earn economic profits. When their judgments are poor, they earn economic losses. Competition among entrepreneurs (and those who provide financial capital to entrepreneurs) tends to steer ownership and control of productive resources toward those entrepreneurs with better judgment. This perspective, while not the dominant one within the mainstream entrepreneurship literature, is becoming increasingly important and influential, with many applications to entrepreneurship in the colloquial sense (startups, venture capital, technology commercialization) as well as public policy.

While I’ve spent the bulk of my career as an academic (I did do a stint at the White House Council of Economic Advisers, but we all have skeletons in our closets), I devote time to popular writing, speaking, business consulting, and other activities with immediate, real-world impact. Being a professor provides lots of opportunities for travel and engagement with a wide variety of audiences and I try to seize those as much as possible. At the same time, I’m inspired by Albert Jay Nock’s famous idea of the “Remnant.” I’m not expecting a libertarian revolution in my lifetime, and maybe not in my children’s lifetime. But it’s worth fighting the good fight even if you don’t win—and you never know what influence you might have in the future.



If You Are a Tyrolean...

Barbara Kolm

There is an old saying that “Being a Tyrolean means being a human being.” In Tyrol the people with the closest connection to the land—the farmers—have for centuries enjoyed a degree of independence unknown in other parts of Austria. They’re down to earth, self-reliant, and fiercely independent. If they don’t speak in abstract terms, such as liberty, it’s because they live it and they treat other people with the fundamental dignity and respect owing to all human beings.

I am from Tyrol, a proud, history-conscious, and contentious region whose residents are known to have a mind of their own. I too have often been told that I have a mind of my own ... and this is not always meant as a compliment, even if I have always taken it as one. My parents were born during the troubled interwar years and had nothing but their education and will to work. And with this, they built a great home for our large family. As children, we were exposed to education, sports, culture, travel,

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and other unique experiences. Ultimately, the most important thing my parents taught me was to fight for independence and cherish freedom.

During my childhood, Austria was beginning to change from a conservative meritocratic society into a steadily growing welfare state. In my family, the dangers of this development were discussed often. In one of these conversations, I heard the name Friedrich von Hayek for the first time—he happened to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1974. In spite of the rise of the welfare state, we children were encouraged to earn what we desired to attain. I learned that I was free to decide and dispose of everything I had achieved through my own efforts.

As children, we learned early on the value of property rights, wealth, money, and especially the changing values of different currencies. Our parents used to give us some money to purchase ice cream to understand exchange rates. We were often in Italy and we saw how in one week an ice cream cost the equivalent of 3 shillings, but the following week it cost 2,50. We learned that if we waited and saved our money then we could purchase cheaper later on and have some money left over. We also learned that if we worked together we could combine our remaining money and buy another ice cream to share. Or later we were introduced to another phenomenon: When inflation hit all of a sudden the same type of ice cream we had enjoyed the previous year cost almost twice as much. From an early age, we learned to prize fiscal discipline and cooperation.

But some of the most formative experiences of my childhood were meeting people from the other side of the Iron Curtain. Until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Austria's eastern neighbors were under communist rule and, with the exception of Yugoslavia, were part of the Warsaw Pact. Parts of Eastern Europe had been ruled by Austria until 1918, so there were emotional ties to the region, especially with Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Sports competitions provided one of the few opportunities to travel across the Iron Curtain. During these trips, I formed close friendships and gained deep insights into what socialism ultimately leads to a poor and dependent life behind barbed wire.

During each trip across the Iron Curtain, it was normal for my family to pack a few extra pairs of jeans or basic goods like washing powder as gifts for the local population. This served as a demonstration that totalitarianism does not work in practice—an early practical alert that later was confirmed by studying Hayek in theory. An example of what was taken for granted in the free West and not available behind the Iron Curtain is demonstrated by a letter that a family friend from Czechoslovakia sent

to my mother. In the letter the friend seemingly described the family's activities, including a birthday party in which her daughter Irina received "these fashionable pants and a thick jacket as a gift. She is almost a young lady now and almost as tall as you are. Her younger sister is much smaller. When they jump around the room to the radio music, their long hair swirls around and Grandma gets a headache from the apple smell." Yet this innocent letter was actually a coded shopping list and the above citation was a request to purchase and bring to them 2 pairs of jeans, size 34 and 38, 2 warm jackets, size 34 and 38, apple-scented shampoo, music tapes (Western charts), and aspirin.

With this experience of communist Europe, my education, competitiveness, independence—my Tyrolean spirit—how could I *not* be a libertarian? From then on everything else fell into place like the pieces of a puzzle.

In the 1980s, as the US and UK were trying to put an end to the stagflation of the 1970s, I deepened my understanding of economics by taking a Masters of social and economic sciences at the University of Innsbruck. Austria was but a small country in a big world, and Tyrol, a small province in Austria, has historically always stood at a tangent to the broader Austrian culture. So, following idols like Carl Menger and Crown Prince Rudolf, I thought that my origins and education demanded that I travel abroad and familiarize myself with the experiences of other countries. I found that Yugoslavia, despite being communist, fared better than the USSR satellites because of its comparatively greater freedom of movement. Sweden could afford its welfare state due to massive post-WWI and WWII industrialization and the growth that resulted in a capitalist system. Switzerland was a model country with its cantons competing to attract human capital and enterprises.

But foremost among all the countries I visited in my youth stood the UK. I have always felt a close affinity to the UK—my mother spent her formative years there and she was always eager to impart to us her love of British culture. When I first visited the UK in my teenage years in the 1970s I was disappointed by how grim it was: rampant unemployment and poverty, rundown infrastructure and dirty streets, strikes...was this really the Great Britain idolized by the liberals? In one way at least it did not depart from its glorious history: it could still produce courageous statesmen. Or, in this case, a stateswoman. Who hasn't heard of the famous Conservative Party meeting when Margaret Thatcher pulled a copy of Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty* from her handbag and slammed

it on the table, proclaiming “this is what we believe”? In Thatcher I saw a politician motivated by the right ideas and who had the skill and tenacity to turn them into effective policy. New schools and hospitals were built, train lines were renovated, protests diminished—some people grumbled, but everyone prospered.

Thatcher was a businesswoman and a politician, who inspired me also to start multiple careers simultaneously. After my Master’s studies, I began consulting and teaching as an associate professor in the tourism department at the University of Innsbruck. I also tried my hand at politics. I sat on Innsbruck’s municipal council and was keen on improving the city’s infrastructure and making it a more attractive place for tourism (which was also the topic of my doctoral dissertation in those years). Above all, I wanted to ensure that we stayed within our budgetary constraints. Unfortunately, politics moves slowly, if at all. At one point a representative from another party confessed to me: “My dear colleague, I’m afraid we don’t move as fast as your car.” I was reminded of Hayek’s advice to Sir Antony Fisher, who would later go on to found the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, that if you want to effect political change, then it’s best not to go into politics. Instead, you should talk to ordinary people and try to convince them through the power of ideas—politics will follow.

And so in 2000, I was elected to direct the Hayek Institut, the first Austrian think tank to promote the teachings of the Austrian School in an increasingly Keynesian environment. In the early 2000s, I successfully positioned the Institut as a premier research and educational facility in Austria. I am immensely proud of the Hayek Institut’s role in showing the world that there are indeed “real Austrians” in Austria. I am equally proud that I have been able to share the teachings of the Austrian School of Economics with students in Central and Eastern Europe and especially at the University of Donja Gorica in Montenegro, where I have been a faculty member since 2010.

But the lessons of the Austrian School extend beyond Europe. Accordingly, in 2007 I founded the Austrian Economics Center, which conducts research and teaches libertarian approaches on an international level. The collaboration with several hundred partner institutes across the world led me to launch a project in 2008 that is now considered the largest of its kind in the world: the Free Market Road ShowTM. With up to 45 stops every year, we deliver the ideas of the Austrians—showing how they serve as libertarian solutions to today’s problems—to every corner of Europe, neighboring regions, and selected locations in the Americas. We promote

the principles of free market economics, sound money, property rights, the rule of law, free trade, and responsibility. I am proud and grateful that the Free Market Road Show is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year.

As I reflect on my libertarian background, I am thankful for all of the intellectuals and practitioners who have influenced my passion for liberty and the Austrian School of Economics. I owe a special debt to the works of Hayek. I have always been astounded by the rigorous intellectual edifice he constructs in *The Constitution of Liberty*, and the fact that he devotes the final third of the book to the practical application of his philosophy. I also appreciate the way in which Hayek develops his ideas on spontaneous order and the relation between law and the market in *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*. His critique of social justice remains essential reading. Most of all, I am grateful for the tireless efforts of the partners and staff of the Hayek Institut, Austrian Economics Center, and Free Market Road Show. They are relentless in their commitment to liberty and the Austrian School.

Coming all the way from little Tyrol to the international stage has been as invigorating as it has been humbling. But I'd like to think I haven't lost my roots: a few years ago when our family took a vacation on a cruise ship, the first thing I wanted to do upon boarding was to go down into the engine room and see how the ship actually worked. I had an idea of how it worked in theory but I wanted to see it in practice. The captain duly obliged and gave me a tour himself. I was especially interested in the functioning of the wings that were deployed to stabilize the ship—after all, our father was a pilot. He had always emphasized how important it was to be independent, to be able to do things ourselves, and to not be afraid to get our hands a little dirty fixing or building something. Above all, whenever we wanted to know what the outcome of something would be, he always used to say, “you’ll see soon enough,” meaning that we had only to try and find out for ourselves. I have always tried to live up to his example of self-reliance, essential to the Tyrolean tradition, but realizable by all human beings.



My Life Without Liberty

Mitchell Langbert

My father had been a member of the Brooklyn chapter of the Communist Party USA, but he left it in the 1960s when I was in grade school. He spoke with regret about the catastrophic harm that communism had caused in Eastern Europe, but he and my mother, who was a socialist and vocal supporter of New York City's United Federation of Teachers, stuck to left-wing views for their entire lives.

I grew up in an apartment complex, Queensview West, a few blocks south of what is now Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's congressional district. The neighborhood, Astoria-Long Island City, was highlighted as a blue-collar bastion in the 1970s sitcom *All in the Family*. Queensview was a left-wing enclave: our neighbors included one of the founders of the field of women's studies, Gerda Lerner, and my junior high school girlfriend's father was Walter Rosenblum, a professor of photography at Brooklyn College and associate of labor photographer Lewis Hine. A handful of my friends also evolved into libertarians, and conservative pundit David Horowitz and libertarian pundit Walter Block grew up in similar environments a few years before me in neighboring Sunnyside and Brooklyn,

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so my development into a libertarian was not unique, but it wasn't the norm, either.

All of the institutions that educated me were biased left: I attended the Bronx High School of Science, where we read Marx but not Smith; Sarah Lawrence College; UCLA, where I studied management; and Columbia Business School, where I studied industrial relations. I spent 32 years in higher ed, mostly at Brooklyn College. Even the corporate world, where I spent the first ten years of my career, was linked to the Progressive state.

After graduating from college, I explored Young Americans for Freedom and the conservative movement associated with William F. Buckley. A friend at Sarah Lawrence College, Gabriel Schoenfeld, convinced me to work on Pat Moynihan's senatorial campaign in 1976. It was, however, a TV commercial for Roger MacBride's 1976 Libertarian Party presidential candidacy that started me on my political path. The ad drew me to New York's Free Libertarian Party, which at that time was located in the West Thirties in Manhattan. There, I learned about Rothbard, von Mises, Hayek, and Friedman.

I was called to jury duty in 1977, and I spent the week plowing through *Atlas Shrugged* as well. The title of Jerome Tuccille's book *It Usually Begins with Ayn Rand* didn't apply to me since I had already picked up *Human Action*. I had first heard of libertarianism in high school, and the notion that libertarians "were so far right that they were left" appealed to me. A *New York Times Magazine* article that appeared in 1971 about the libertarian group at Columbia University deepened my interest. In those days the left claimed to favor the First Amendment and freedom of speech, and my taste for freedom fit with the 1960s counterculture. I had long hair, took drugs, and attended Grateful Dead concerts.

My parents told me that I had watched the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearing on my father's knee when I was less than a year old. That same year they bought a vinyl recording of a radio-show-style satire of McCarthy, Reuben Ship's *The Investigator*. The plot is that McCarthy dies and is greeted at the gates of heaven by the Hanging Judge, Torquemada, Cotton Mather, and Titus Oates, fabricator of the fictitious "Popish Plot." The cabal convinces McCarthy to investigate Socrates, Jefferson, and Voltaire, whom they describe as agents of a foreign power who have infiltrated "up here," and McCarthy investigates and sends a long list of Enlightenment and liberal thinkers "to down there." Each defends himself with a famous quote, and John Stuart Mill defends himself with

one from *On Liberty*: “If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.” I listened to the album so many times that when I tried to lend it to my philosophy professor in college it wouldn’t play. I copied down and posted the *On Liberty* quote on my bedroom wall.

During my high school years, I began to question both left-wing dogma and the credibility of the New York media during the series of public sector strikes that contributed to the city’s near bankruptcy. I became interested in studying management to learn why the city was so bad at it. I later learned how federal urban development and the road building of Robert Moses had destroyed the city’s business base. By the time I graduated from college in 1975, the city had just escaped ruin.

As well, I read Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* in 1976, the year after I graduated from college. I realized that the mass killings of the twentieth century, starting with the Armenian genocide of 1915, constituted a grievous pattern that needed furious resistance. The liberalism to which the Ship recording pretended had been demonized, and without it, we faced not only economic decline but also the horrors that collectivism has consistently produced.

I was active in New York’s Free Libertarian Party from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. I met Murray Rothbard a couple of times and became an advocate for the gold standard with my fellow goldbug Howard S. Katz. My childhood friend from Queensview West, Daniel Shapiro, had become a noted libertarian philosopher at West Virginia University. When I followed him into academia 10 years later, I decided to take up the cause of academic freedom. I became active in the National Association of Scholars, and I have done research in recent years on faculty political affiliation, which has contributed to the national debate on the politicization of higher education.

My work on faculty political affiliation evolved from my personal experiences. My dissertation had been about the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and how corporate special interests shaped employee benefits law. I published that work in *Journal of Economic Issues*, a left-oriented journal; *Journal of Labor Research*, a libertarian-oriented journal; and several academic-practitioner journals. I followed up that work with studies of wellness programs, human resource management history, and total quality management.

By the early 2000s, I had experienced the left orientation of higher education, and I was concentrating on teaching full-time at Brooklyn College and as an adjunct at New York University's Stern School of Business. In 2013 I noticed that I was the only political donor at Brooklyn College who had contributed more than \$200 to a Republican or Libertarian candidate. I became interested in studying the political affiliation of academics and began compiling FEC data. I worked on finding the best way to handle the data for two years.

In early 2015 Bruce E. Kaufman of Georgia State University asked me to organize a session concerning the ideological slant of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA), the leading learned society concerned with industrial relations. Inspired by what I was discovering, I wrote a piece for the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal entitled "Industrial Relations: Another Academic Field Captured by Ideology." Professor Kaufman got annoyed with me about the piece and dropped out of the panel he had been helping me to assemble. I offered to drop out too, but the conference organizers urged me to soldier on. When the panel was held in Pittsburgh, Thomas Kochan, a former president of LERA; David Lewin of UCLA and formerly of Columbia, who had worked with me in the doctoral program and also was a former president of LERA; and several other insiders used the panel to attack me.

The experience led to my recognition that better data about the political affiliation of academics were needed. Fortunately, Daniel B. Klein of George Mason University contacted me when he saw my James G. Martin piece. Dan suggested that I do a careful analysis of both the donations and political registrations of the LERA membership, and that became my first study of academic political affiliation, "The Left Orientation of Industrial Relations," which appeared in the January 2016 issue of *Econ Journal Watch*. Dan suggested that we follow up that study with a larger-scale study of social science departments in leading research institutions. That piece, written with Dan and Anthony Quain, "Faculty Voter Registration in Economics, History, Journalism, Law, and Psychology" also appeared in *Econ Journal Watch* in 2016.

Realizing that the exclusion of the classical liberal tradition has become most acute in the liberal arts colleges, which ought to be taking the lead in transmitting it, I worked on a third piece, which I published in *Academic Questions* in 2018: "Homogeneous: The Political Affiliations of Elite Liberal Arts College Faculty." In 2020 I published, with the help of

Sean Stevens, a study of leading colleges in 30 states, which appeared in the blog of the National Association of Scholars: Also in 2020, I published a piece in *Econ Journal Watch* on the exclusion of libertarian economists from the leadership of the American Economic Association. In 2021 Sean and I published a multivariate analysis of the flagship data. The piece appeared in *Studies in Higher Education*. This work has been cited or quoted multiple times in the *Wall Street Journal*, in *the New York Post*, in *the Washington Post*, on Fox News, by the late Walter Williams in his columns, and in many other media outlets.

Through my teaching, I introduce many of my business students, often products of the New York City school system, to classical liberal ideas for the first time. I have run for local political office and am engaged in litigation to improve New York's tyrannical labor policies. Although we have not won most of the battles, I continue to fight the relentless trend toward totalitarianism. America may no longer be a land of liberty, but we can reinvent it.



It Began with Richard Nixon

Peter T. Leeson

I thank AVO Syncro Caribe for stimulation. I apologize in advance if I have misidentified some date or other detail of the path described.

My path to libertarianism, which was coextensive with my path to Austrian economics, began strangely: with Richard Nixon. As I teenager I decided that Nixon had gotten a bad shake. He was universally reviled for Watergate, but I thought him a victim of the “leftist establishment.” Why Nixon interested me in the first place is a mystery. I grew up in an apolitical household. Perhaps my parents voted, but if they did, they didn’t discuss it. Prior to my interest in politics, I don’t recall a single political conversation in my family. My initial attraction to politics—and to Nixon, of all figures—thus seems to have been ulterior. I enjoyed argument and provocation immensely, and since nobody liked or would defend Nixon, he was a handy spoon with which I could stir the pot.

My infatuation with Nixon moved me to learn about the Republican Party. That quickly brought me to Ronald Reagan. Unlike Nixon, Reagan had devoted fans. But like Nixon, Reagan also had staunch

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critics—another handy spoon. For Reagan, however, I developed abiding admiration. The low-tax logic I encountered in reading “supply siders” like George Gilder, Jude Wanniski, and Paul Craig Roberts strongly resonated with me. The smaller-government rhetoric of “Reagonomics” thus became my rhetoric, and the Republican Party became my party—insofar as a tenth grader can have a political party.

I started volunteering at the GOP headquarters in my hometown, Midland, MI. I stuffed envelopes for a state senator. I went door to door for a state house candidate. And in 1996, I did grunt work for Bob Dole’s presidential campaign.¹ My enthusiasm for Dole was limited to the fact that he was the Republican candidate and that Jack Kemp—a Reagonomics architect—was his running mate. In the primary, I rooted for Steve Forbes, the supply-side candidate, who promised a flat tax. But Forbes was out of the running early on, and when Dole brought Kemp aboard and the team ran on a 15% across-the-board tax cut, I found another ticket I could get excited about. One of my fondest adolescent memories is attending a Dole–Kemp rally and waving a large, yellow “15%” sign that was handed out to rally attendees at the door.

I found politics incredibly fun. Intellectually, however, I had already started down a different path. When reading the supply siders, I came across the name of Ludwig von Mises. I couldn’t pronounce that name, but I could look it up in the card catalog at the library of Northwood University (then Northwood Institute), which happened to be in Midland. I didn’t realize it at the time, but among Northwood’s faculty were Austrian economists, such as Dale Haywood.² Presumably for that reason, Northwood’s library had a selection of works by Mises and other Austrians. Looking back on it, that was an incredible stroke of luck. It seems unlikely that libraries in other small towns are stocked with the works of Austrian economists. Had I inhabited one of those towns instead, my search for the writings of Mises almost certainly would have been a bust (the Internet was, for me at least, only just becoming a convenient resource), and I probably would have moved on.

I started first with *Human Action*, encouraged to do so by its subtitle: *A Treatise on Economics*. Surely a treatise would contain everything I

¹ As a result of this work, I got to meet Elizabeth Dole one-on-one (save her security, of course).

² Sadly, Haywood passed away in 2006.

needed to know! As it turns out, it pretty much did. But having no previous exposure to economics apart from what I encountered in the supply siders, much of what I read in *Human Action* went over my head. It was therefore a great help when I came across Percy Greaves' *Mises Made Easier*. Other books helped too.³ There was, for instance, Henry Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*, for which I saw an advertisement in *National Review* (I was a subscriber); Mises' *Economic Policy* and his *Liberalism*; and George Reisman's brick-of-a-book, *Capitalism*. The latter had just been published and was not available through Northwood's library. It was, however, available through Laissez-Faire Books.⁴ Alas, *Capitalism* was very expensive (\$100, I think). At Christmas I therefore asked my parents for *Capitalism* and for Peter Boettke's (also absurdly expensive) *Elgar Companion to Austrian Economics*. They obliged. The more I read, the more I learned, prompting me at each instance to go back and reread *Human Action*, applying my improved understanding. As a result of that process, before finishing high school I had pored over Mises' magnum opus numerous times.

I became a passionate advocate of the kind of government that Mises advocated: government limited to providing police, courts, and national defense. Like Mises, my advocacy of private activity over public activity was (and still is) based not on deontological considerations but on consequentialist ones: capitalism improves human welfare. In terms of policy, therefore, I considered myself a libertarian. Even so, in the realm of politics, I still considered myself a Republican. Hence, on the one hand, I gifted my (left-leaning, kind, and encouraging) high school economics teacher a bumper sticker that plead "Legalize Capitalism." And on the other hand, I wore a GOP lapel pin in my yearbook picture. I was aware that, unlike me, the GOP didn't favor legalizing capitalism. But I also

³ I did not read my first Ayn Rand book (*The Virtue of Selfishness*) until I began at the Mackinac Center, where an employee (William Maze) recommended it to me. That book didn't do much for me, and *Atlas Shrugged*, which I tried later, did nothing for me at all. It still does not.

⁴ I don't recall how I learned of Laissez-Faire Books. It is possible that they, too, advertised in *National Review* or one of the other right-wing magazines at the time? Or maybe they shared a mailing list? I doubt it. But I can't think of another way I would've come across the catalog. Anyway, I did.

thought that politics was the only way to affect policy, and the Republican Party struck me as the best shot of moving things, however slightly, in the right direction.⁵

I was disabused of that thinking when I began an internship at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a market-oriented think tank, which, in another fortune of fate, is also in Midland, MI. I believe I was then in eleventh grade. I published an op-ed defending the Industrial Revolution in the *Midland Daily News*, which caught the eye of the Center's president (and later FEE president), Lawrence Reed. He kindly invited me to meet with him, resulting in an internship. Reed, Michael LaFaive (a Center policy analyst), and Joseph Overton (the Center's vice president) generously took me under their wing.⁶ I greatly benefited from their tutelage, as an economist, a libertarian, and a writer. If Overton's name sounds familiar, that's probably because you've heard of the "Overton Window": the notion that policy change is driven by ideas, which determine what's politically acceptable, rather than by politicians or political parties, which merely respond to what voters consider politically acceptable. Overton introduced me to his "window," which changed my thinking about politics.

Overton also introduced me to anarchism. At the conclusion of a conversation in perhaps my second or third week on the job, he pulled a book off his shelf, passed it to me, and said "read this." That book was David Friedman's *Machinery of Freedom*. Up to this point, I hadn't thought about anarchism. Mises mentioned it in *Human Action*, but with reference to leftist utopians, and his take was decidedly negative. What I found in Friedman, however, was totally different. Here was the logic of markets articulated in Mises and others I had read but applied unflinchingly. I called it "consistent capitalism," for it merely took to a logical conclusion the principles of which I and other capitalists were already convinced. Soon after, I read Murray Rothbard's *Ethics of Liberty* and *For a New Liberty*. But it was Friedman's conception of "anarcho-capitalism" that persuaded me. When I arrived at Hillsdale College a year or so later, I thus arrived sympathetic to the idea that markets could do it all: police, courts, and maybe even defense, included.

⁵ I was aware of the Libertarian Party, but I did not think it serious.

⁶ Sadly, Overton passed away in 2003.

That idea, however, was not the one that moved me. By this stage what mostly moved me was positive economics. And what I cared about most was the nature of economic science—economic epistemology and methodology—whose paramount importance I had picked up from *Human Action*. Thus, while I often argued with people about anarchism when I was in college, what I argued for most passionately was the aprioristic status of economic law, derived from the axiom of human purposiveness, and that law's universal applicability to human behavior, hence for understanding social cooperation, whatever its domain. These Misesian insights were (and still are) my guiding lights.

I chose Hillsdale College for undergraduate study because it is home to Mises' personal library and because, at the time, it was home to Richard Ebeling—the Ludwig von Mises Professor of Economics. Ebeling and his wife, Anna, mentored me throughout my time at Hillsdale, during which I also had the fortune of studying under Gary Wolfram and Wolfgang Grassl. My Hillsdale professors, like my Mackinac Center mentors, were exceedingly generous to and humoring of me. One of the first economics exams I sat for in college contained a question about a piece I had published. One of my economics professors invited me to lecture in his class—which was also my class. And back in Midland, Professor Haywood invited me to lecture to his Northwood class on economic methodology. Quite a confidence booster for an 18-year-old.

When the time came to consider graduate study, there was only one place I really wanted to go: George Mason University. There I could pursue my PhD under the direction of faculty who valued and were experts in Austrian economics, such as Donald Boudreaux (who I first met when I was still in high school) and Peter Boettke (who I first met when I was in college). The research I produced in graduate school and continue to produce to this day reflects my guiding Misesian lights noted above: economics as an all-powerful analytical engine for understanding social cooperation, whatever its domain. Sometimes that domain is anarchic, populated by, for example, eighteenth-century pirates or twenty-first-century Somalis. Other times the domain is medieval Christendom, where, for instance, judges asked accused criminals to plunge their arms into cauldrons of boiling water to determine their guilt or innocence and where monks cursed their enemies. Still other times the domain is that of American street people: panhandlers begging change

from passersby on their way to work. On and on it goes. New domains of human behavior and social cooperation for study are endless, hence, so is the application of Mises-inspired economics. And to think, somehow it all began with an infatuation with Richard Nixon.



Discovering a World of Hope for Liberty

Brad Lips

I didn't become passionate about libertarian ideas until my 20s, despite the best efforts of my uncle David Lips, who got involved with the Libertarian Party and interned at Cato in the 1970s and then worked at Liberty Fund in the 1980s. I was a teenager as the Berlin Wall fell, and President Reagan had made the problems of communism and the merits of limited government seem like common sense. Dave's efforts to get me excited about spontaneous order and sound money fell on deaf ears; after all, I then was obsessed with indie rock and other music subcultures and I had little time for Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*, or Ludwig von Mises' *Theory of Money and Credit*, among other Christmas presents Dave sent to me in my teens. I would only discover the wisdom in those books, and then in many others from the Laissez Faire Books mail-order catalog, several years later.

In between, I got my undergraduate degree from Princeton University and my MBA from Goizueta Business School at Emory University. The sad reality is that I just wasn't intellectually curious or rigorous during those years, except as related to my interests in music and popular culture.

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I was sympathetic to socialism in that period, although it was more of a fashion statement than a coherent philosophy.

All this changed after I joined an equity research team at Smith Barney, Inc., and began reading *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial page daily. I also read Ayn Rand's novels and essays, recommended to me by my sister. Rand helped me organize a more coherent belief system that flows from respecting the dignity of each individual. She was wonderfully brutal in knocking bad ideas from my mind and replacing them with a reverence for individual liberty and the institutions that allow human creativity to flourish. It was exciting to understand why expansive government inevitably fails and how markets incentivize value-creation and social cooperation.

But the impact of *Atlas Shrugged* was also very personal. At age 26, I was living with a girlfriend who had a never-ending assortment of problems, and—to live up to my self-image as a good person—I felt a duty to sacrifice my interests to put her needs first. Rand gave me the language to see that my behavior wasn't moral but immoral. I had deceived my girlfriend; she thought she was loved, when all that was left in our relationship was pity. Being honest was painful at first, but both of us wound up on much happier (and separate) paths in the aftermath.

Freed from a dysfunctional relationship, I began thinking very purposefully about what I wanted to do with my life. I considered myself lucky to have a job at Smith Barney that paid me well, but I didn't have a passion for finance. I figured I was young enough for a career change that might align my work and my libertarian passions, even if taking an entry-level think-tank job at The Progress & Freedom Foundation meant a 75% pay cut. So that's what I did in the middle of 1997. And I never looked back.

Certainly, it helped that my two siblings made their way into the freedom movement around that time as well. My sister Carrie Lukas started at the Cato Institute and went on to run Independent Women's Forum, and my brother Dan Lips joined us in the DC area after graduating college two years later, starting what would be an accomplished career in think tanks and on the Hill.

Within a year of my arrival in DC, I joined Atlas Network (then, Atlas Economic Research Foundation). Its President and CEO, Alex Chafuen, had advised me that, while I might aspire to be a celebrated author, my comparative advantage was in strategic planning and management. There were lots of great thinkers in our ranks, but few effectively-run institutions. Antony Fisher's original vision for what would become

Atlas Network was to help “intellectual entrepreneurs” popularize free-market ideas with the effectiveness we associate with private industry. Alex pointed out that few MBAs took an interest in the think tank space, and perhaps I could add something unique here.

I do think I added some important leadership to an organization that has become, I’d argue, one of the most important in the liberty movement. But my mind turns to how grateful I am for all I got back. Working at Atlas Network put me in the perfect place to learn from think tanks leaders from around the world; from philanthropists like Sir John Templeton and Donald Smith; and of course from the mentors and colleagues I found inside Atlas Network, including Alex, Leonard Liggio, and Jo Kwong in my first decade on our staff, as well as John Blundell, Bill Sumner, Dan Grossman, and Linda Whetstone on our Board.

I discovered something else in my early days at Atlas Network: a chance for libertarian ideas to claim the moral high ground. While I was proud of my first think tank role—researching ways to create more competition in energy markets—it had no chance of persuading the people I knew at Princeton or within my music scenes. Through Atlas Network, however, I met Venezuelans, Kenyans, Lithuanians, and North Korean refugees who could explain, better than any American, the value of liberty and the dangerous consequences of expansive government. I continue to believe that, as politics has become more polarized in the U.S., examples from abroad are among the most effective tools for changing minds.

I became CEO of Atlas Network in 2009, following a transaction with Cato Institute which brought Tom Palmer and his team to Atlas Network to run programs that spread libertarian ideas in many languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Persian, Portuguese, and Russian. We became a truly global organization thanks to Tom’s energy and expertise.

The best hire I made was arguably in 2010: Matt Warner explored other disciplines for insights that focused our business strategy and expanded our influence to the area of development economics. Matt discovered that some mainstream economists and aid agencies were wrestling with the failure of their top-down development strategies. They increasingly talked about localization strategies, which provided an opportunity to explain where Atlas Network was having success: identifying local civil society groups, with plans to increase economic freedom through policy reform, who wanted to learn from our network while trusting that we would honor their local knowledge and sense of priorities. This is a still-developing story of potentially great consequence.

Matt's (unfair) competition as "best hire" was Stephanie Giovanetti, who became Atlas Network's event planner in 2007—and then my wife, several years later. Stephanie made me a better person and a better CEO. Her extroverted style compensated for my introvertedness, and together we've helped people in the worldwide freedom movement realize that there's a real beating heart—offering friendship and solidarity—within what I continue to build via Atlas Network.

Atlas Network and the community around it has grown so much in recent years that it's difficult to identify what I might think of as career highlights. Certainly, something that meant a lot to me was the privilege of organizing, in Miami in 2016, the Mont Pelerin Society's first General Meeting in the U.S. in more than a decade. I'm proud that the meeting is remembered within Society as an important one that created more space for innovation and new voices. In 2022, I was proud to be elected Chair of Mont Pelerin Society's Membership Committee.

In 2020, as Atlas Network approached its 40th anniversary, I began work on a book to celebrate the impact over four decades of the pro-liberty organizations I've come to know via Atlas Network. My ambitions changed, however, as the COVID-19 global health crisis turned into a global freedom crisis. The book that appeared, *Liberalism and the Free Society in 2021*, was much more about the future than about the past. In its final chapter, I present my views about how we might popularize authentic liberalism, as an antidote to the maddening polarization of our era. We can stake our claim to popular bedrock principles abandoned by the woke left and the populist right, while simultaneously showing that libertarian solutions are grounded in compassion, inclusivity, and common sense.

I am an optimist at heart, but I acknowledge things may need to get worse before a large audience will get on board with a serious effort at downsizing the role of government and unleashing the ingenuity of free people. In the time since my book was published, we have seen little good news for liberty, except for the silver lining that "dictator envy" may be declining in the wake of disastrous missteps by Russia and China.

Can we wake people up to understand that the course of history is not preordained? Can we inspire people, as Friedrich Hayek had hoped, to make the revival of classical liberalism into a "deed of courage"? Can we show, in practice, how our libertarian principles foster more compassionate societies? These are the challenges that stay front of mind as part of my day-to-day job.

When I took that 75% pay cut in 1997, I explained to my friends that pivotal chapters in history were certainly going to be written during my lifetime, and my biggest ambition was to be helpful to the “good guys” in the epic battle of ideas that awaited. We’re now in the throes of it. I can’t make an objective assessment of our odds of survival, much less of decisive victory (whatever that would mean). But I certainly can testify that it’s rewarding to be in the fight. What a great privilege to have a career in working for liberty!



Some Notes in View of an Intellectual Autobiography

Carlo Lottieri

Many and diverse paths can lead someone to become passionate about individual freedom. In my experience perhaps it all started in a soccer field in the small village in Northern Italy where I grew up, Bagnolo Mella. When I was between 6 and 10 years old, I often found myself playing with friends in an area made available by the parish, but on many occasions, we were pushed away by slightly older boys. I almost always reacted and got into fights, as I found that behavior intolerable. A certain pathos for justice, I think, is rooted in those experiences as a child.

Mine was a family in which respect for the freedom and dignity of others was considered important. This is also why, still in my high school years, I started to frequent anti-communist student groups and, later, the small Italian Liberal Party. In its headquarters in Brescia, I found a book by Henri Lepage, *Tomorrow, Capitalism*, which opened up a world to

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me.¹ Reread today, that volume by Henri (who later became my friend) appears deficient from various points of view, not least because the entire Austrian school of economics is not even mentioned, but in those years European political culture was dominated by such interventionism that even James Buchanan and Milton Friedman could appear to be subversive authors. It was a start because—as often happens—each author I got to know was an opportunity to discover others.

After high school, I moved to Genoa, where I studied philosophy in a cultural environment dominated by scholars who focused their attention on authors such as Nietzsche and Heidegger. In another university, however, I met a Czech dissident, Vaclav Belohradsky, who spoke to me about Bruno Leoni for the first time in a seminar.² I had already read Friedrich von Hayek, but I had no idea that the most libertarian indications on the subject of law found in *Law, Legislation and Liberty* actually came from the criticism and suggestions of his Italian friend. (Leoni would later become one of the main objects of my research.³) At this stage, I considered myself a classical liberal and had witnessed with pleasure the turn that American and British politics had taken during the 1980s, thanks to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. I believed that the state was a necessary evil and Robert Nozick's 1974 volume (*Anarchy, State, and Utopia*) had seemed very persuasive.

At some point in the early 1990s, I read Murray Rothbard's *The Ethics of Liberty* in French—thanks to François Guillaumat's translation.⁴ I have always found it curious that the language in which the modern state was forged, French, introduced me to the most radical critique of this institution. I certainly found the Rothbardian perspective convincing and have not changed my opinion on the matter since.⁵

In those years my contacts with the libertarian universe developed thanks to a catalogue of books that I received by mail, *Laissez Faire*

¹ Henri Lepage, *Tomorrow, Capitalism*, translated by Sheilagh C. Ogilvie (Chicago and LaSalle IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1982 [1978]).

² Bruno Leoni, *Freedom and the Law* (Indianapolis IN: Liberty Fund, 1991 [1961]).

³ Carlo Lottieri, *Le ragioni del diritto. Libertà individuale e ordine giuridico nel pensiero di Bruno Leoni* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006).

⁴ Murray N. Rothbard, *L'éthique de la liberté* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1991 [1982]).

⁵ Enrico Diciotti and Carlo Lottieri, *Il libertarismo di Murray N. Rothbard* (Siena: Digips, 2002); Carlo Lottieri, *Every New Right Is A Freedom Lost* (Plano TX: Monolateral, 2016).

Books (which allowed me to discover additional authors and traditions of thought), and also thanks to the summer initiatives of the European branch of the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), which later became the Institute for Economic Studies—Europe (IES). I still remember with great pleasure a seminar that was held in the southern French village of Chambon-sur-Lignon. On that occasion, I made the acquaintance of Bertrand Lemmenicier, Jacques Garello, Pierre Centi, Boudewijn Bouckaert, and other European libertarians, whom I also met at the summer schools organized every year in Aix-en-Provence.

A few years earlier I had worked for a couple of years in the Milan office of CAER (Centre for Applied Economic Research), a think tank that had been founded by Antonio Martino, a former student of Friedman's in Chicago, to affirm the principles of economic freedom. I later moved to Paris for my doctorate at the Sorbonne and then also to Geneva, where I studied at the Graduate Institute of European Studies (created by Denis de Rougemont) and started to become interested in Swiss uniqueness.⁶ During that time I dealt with Guglielmo Ferrero and especially with Gaetano Mosca's elitist theory, which was the subject of my doctoral thesis (under the supervision of Raymond Boudon) and whose severe look at political affairs never left me.⁷ When I was in Paris one day I went to the Alps headquarters where I found the nineteenth-century editions of the *Journal des économistes*. I photocopied some articles that I then translated into Italian: from "Justice and Fraternity" by Frédéric Bastiat to "The Production of Security" by Gustave de Molinari. The resulting anthology *Contro lo statalismo* was published in 1993 by Aldo Canovari with the publisher Liberilibri, which then as now continues to be a column of libertarian culture in Italy.⁸

In the meantime, the Italian political order seemed to be swept away by those localist movements in the North that at times called for secession, at

⁶ The Swiss federal order will return to the center of my interests on several occasions, also as a result of courses held at the University of Italian Switzerland (USI) and especially at the Faculty of Theology in Lugano. The main outcome of that research can be found in Carlo Lottieri, *Un'idea elvetica di libertà. Nella crisi dell'Europa* (Brescia: La Scuola, 2017).

⁷ Carlo Lottieri, "Élitisme classique (Mosca et Pareto) et élitisme libertarien: analogies et différences," in Alban Bouvier, ed., *Pareto aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), pp. 199–219.

⁸ Frédéric Bastiat and Gustave de Molinari, *Contro lo statalismo*, ed., Carlo Lottieri (Macerata: Liberilibri, 1993).

other times for more autonomy. I joined the Northern League and for a few years harbored the illusion that it could produce major changes. With four libertarian friends (Luigi Marco Bassani, Nicola Iannello, Guglielmo Piombini, and Alessandro Vitale) I also organized a summer university in the Brescian Alps financed by the Lega Nord senatorial group: a week in which anarcho-capitalism was intertwined with the defense of the right of every territorial community to secede.⁹

The Northern League later abandoned any reference to community self-government and was completely absorbed into national politics, and yet that historical passage served not only to favor the coagulation of a small Italian-speaking libertarian group but also to introduce me to a political scientist, Gianfranco Miglio, who had the merit of understanding the importance but then also the fragility of Schmitt's decisionist theory and who formulated a theory of political parasitism with many points of contact with the tradition of liberal class struggle made known by Ralph Raico, David Hart, and others.¹⁰ If I felt the need to rethink the reasons for freedom in the light of the vicissitudes of state sovereignty and political theology, this is also and above all due to my growing acquaintance with this twentieth-century political thought.

When I began teaching at the University of Siena, where I remained as an assistant professor for almost twenty years, I worked together with the philosopher of law Emanuele Castrucci, who dedicated many important analyses to Schmitt and Miglio. Even after moving to the University of Verona, I did not abandon those themes.

At the end of the last century, I naturally began to attend—less than I would have liked, unfortunately—the Mises Institute in Auburn. I went to Alabama on several occasions, but I particularly remember the time when, as a non-economist, I had the opportunity to follow a detailed analysis—chapter by chapter—of Ludwig von Mises' *Human Action*. The speakers were Joseph Salerno, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, David Gordon, Walter Block, and many other animators of this crucial institution of the libertarian scene. If in 2003, together with Alberto Mingardi and Carlo Stagnaro, I took part in founding the Bruno Leoni Institute in Milan,

⁹ In the following years, I have returned to the subject several times. See, for example, Nicola Iannello e Carlo Lottieri, eds., *Secessione. Una prospettiva liberale* (Brescia: La Scuola, 2015). The title of my introduction is “Modern state, democratic systems and independence aspirations. A libertarian defense of the *dret a decidir*,” pp. 5–36.

¹⁰ Gianfranco Miglio, *Le regolarità della politica* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1988).

this is also due to the admiration nurtured over time for those institutions that, like the Mises Institute, over the decades have defended a series of principles and values.

When in the year 2000, together with Bassani, I was commissioned by an Italian institution to organize an exhibition on liberty (“The Path of Freedom”), hosted in Milan’s Sforza Castle, the conference marking the occasion included the participation of Raico and Hoppe, whose speeches left their mark on me.

Many stimulating opportunities over the years have also come from the Liberty Fund seminars. For several years, these initiatives have allowed me and others to approach authors of the past whom I would otherwise hardly have read, along with valuable colleagues with whom I have had the opportunity to engage. I myself have organized two seminars for this institution that has done so much in recent decades to encourage discussions and interactions among libertarian scholars: one in Ravello (near Naples) on the modern state and another one in Padua on the thought of Bruno Leoni.

Every summer, I also had the opportunity to meet libertarian scholars and young academics in the summer schools organized by the IES under the direction of Pierre Garello. If in the past century, I had participated as a student, in the current one I have spoken several times as a lecturer: in Germany, France, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Ivory Coast, Morocco, and other countries. And on each occasion, I have been able to engage with eminent scholars: suffice it to mention Douglas B. Rasmussen.

Trying to look from a distance—some decades after the start of my intellectual research—at the path I have traveled so far, a few things become evident to me. It is clear that my libertarian awareness would not have been possible without that American culture that—from Lysander Spooner to Rothbard—has been able to preserve certain values of the Western tradition even in the darkest phases of our history. And at the same time, in my writings, I believe there is a libertarianism nourished not only by political realism (the relevant debts not only to Mosca, Schmitt, and Miglio, but also to Vilfredo Pareto and Max Weber) and legal realism (starting from the lesson of Leoni)¹¹ but also by a historical reading of

¹¹ Carlo Lottieri, “Classical Natural Law and Libertarian Theory,” in Jörg Guido Hulsmann and Stephan Kinsella, eds., *Property, Freedom, and Society* (Auburn, AL: The Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2009), pp. 197–210.

the sovereign state as the main competitor of religions¹² and as the denial of any local self-government (as Miglio emphasized in his writings).

Today, it seems to me that the greatest challenge stems from the coming together of those elites (political-bureaucratic, cultural, economic) who in Europe are pushing for an ever more perfect union and at a global level are working toward the establishment of an ever-more refined surveillance system linked to supranational powers justified in the name of security, health, and environmental protection.¹³ And again, a very effective strategy for the protection of individual freedom is one that suggests the break-up of the current states and the multiplication of small, local jurisdictions.

¹² Carlo Lottieri, *Credere nello Stato? Teologia politica e dissimulazione da Filippo il Bello a Wikileaks* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011).

¹³ Carlo Lottieri, ed., *Leviatano sanitario e crisi del diritto. Cultura, società e istituti al tempo del Covid-19* (Macerata: Giometti & Antonello, 2022).



From Moscow Toward Liberty

Yuri Maltsev

Like many other libertarians of the East, I was introduced to Austrian economics through F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*. When I was a junior at the Moscow State University, I was given a copy by a friend for just one night. Hayek laid it down in such a clear, apodictic, and revealing way that I became very interested in learning as much as I could about him and the Austrian School. After I changed my major to History of Economic Thought and Economic History, I was given permission to read Western-published books and journals in the "closed" collection of Lenin's Library in Moscow. I had unlimited access to Western economic publications and could study as much as I wished at the Soviet government's expense. I was warned, however, not to tell others what I had read. Even under Gorbachev, you could not just say, "this Communist system is criminal and nothing else but public slavery." You could only go about it slowly and covertly, exposing its inefficiencies and failures, which is exactly what I did in my lectures and writings in the Soviet Union.

After receiving my MA in history and social sciences at Moscow State University, I went on to complete my Ph.D. in economics at the Institute

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for Labor Research in Moscow (1980). I also worked for the Institute of Labor Research in Moscow in the 1970s while pursuing my degree. There I could observe first-hand the limitations of central planning. The Institute set 460,000 wage rates and over 90 million work quotas for 110 million government employees, while the State Committee on Prices set and “managed” over 23 million prices. At one of the economics conferences I attended at that time, the Head of the Price Committee, Nikolai Glushkov, was grilled by the audience and ran out of arguments. He said, “We only have 400 employees and 23 million prices! What could we do?” The inevitable result was chaos and widespread shortages.

I also worked as a Chief Consultant for the Bank for Foreign Trade and taught at the Academy for Foreign Trade and other institutions of higher learning in Russia, Ukraine, France, Italy, and Lithuania. When, in 1985, President Gorbachev announced a program of Soviet economic reform called “perestroika,” I was asked to become a member of the senior economics team formulating the new program. I initially viewed the project as the first, credible opportunity to get rid of the communist system. My hopes waned, however, as half-hearted and piecemeal reforms, in tandem with a corrupt and bureaucratic Soviet government, proved largely ineffective. My disappointment was largely responsible for my decision to defect to the United States in 1989.

After arriving in the US, I met giants of libertarian thought and famous Austrian school economists such as Murray N. Rothbard, Llewellyn Rockwell, Burt Blumert, Walter Block, and Gottfried Haberler and was honored to become a Senior Fellow of the Ludwig von Mises Institute at Auburn, Alabama, the most radical libertarian think tank in the world. I also became a Fellow of the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington D.C. My principal research project at the Institute, “Easing the Trauma of the Soviet Union’s Transition to a Market-Based Economy,” was focused on the theoretical problems of privatization, deregulation, and the necessarily attendant institutional changes. My work with the Institute of Peace also involved extensive public speaking and briefing members of Congress and senior officials of the executive branch.

I have presented my research in the field of the economics of transition and international political economy through numerous panels, symposia, and conferences, including papers given at the Mises Institute, American Economic Association, Canadian Economic Association, Western Economic Association, Southern Economic Association, Atlas Economic Research Foundation, Property and Freedom Society, and

Lithuanian Free Market Institute. I have also appeared on Fox News, PBS NewsHour, Cable Network News, C-Span, CBC, and other American, Brazilian, Canadian, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Finnish, Russian, South African, and Spanish television and radio programs. I have authored and co-authored eleven books and hundreds of articles published in the US and internationally. In addition, I serve as a member of the editorial board of the *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*.

Throughout my career, I have combined positions in research with teaching. I have been a professor of economics at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, for the last thirty years. I recommend that my students explore the Austrian School perspective in all my classes, leaving them the opportunity to choose their favorites themselves. The Mises Institute, the world's largest research center and depository of books, journals, video, and audio materials on the Austrian School, has extremely valuable resources for teaching and learning. Many of my students have developed a deep interest in the Austrian School and have attended Mises University. I remain in contact with many of my former students who have developed a life-long interest in Austrian economics and are practicing economists, businessmen, lawyers, and other professionals.

The Austrian School of Economics is the economics of freedom, economics for free people, and economics of human action, not of government design. It is the only school that accurately predicted the fate of the socialist experiment, which cost over 150 million lives over the last century. It absolutely convinced me that there are no alternatives to freedom and voluntary exchanges in any sphere of human life and endeavor. Ludwig von Mises showed with precise and irrefutable logic why socialism could never work. His personal motto was: "Tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito" ("Do not give in to evil, but proceed ever more boldly against it"). I urge my students to fight back against any attempts to limit their freedom of speech, but I also advise them to be tactful and polite in their discussions with fellow students and professors as shouting and sloganeering are the habits of the Left.

Austrian school economists have definitively proven that without private property in the means of production, even with a million years of computer time, they still could not make socialism work. Pro-market policies in Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and Czechoslovakia greatly eased the pain of economic transition. Even in countries that had been integral parts of the Soviet Union with more repressive controls, scholars have witnessed an insatiable interest in the Austrian school. The Prime Minister

of Estonia, Mart Laar, told me that he and his friends had been studying free market literature at their weekly informal seminars at private apartments in Tallinn long before the collapse of the USSR. Today free market foundations and think tanks are spread all over Eastern Europe and in Russia itself. Several hundred websites promote and explain Hayek's ideas.

In 2010, Dr. Tom Woods and I were invited by a popular TV personality, Glenn Beck, to discuss *The Road to Serfdom* on Fox News. The book had been prohibited in the USSR along with Hayek's other writings. Indeed, any such "capitalist propaganda" would be seized from foreign visitors at the border, while Soviet citizens could be imprisoned for having—and especially disseminating—such "anti-Soviet literature." This discussion provided us with an opportunity to tell our stories about the book and warn viewers about apparently simple solutions that usually result in "unintended consequences." As I remarked, it is almost impossible to make a U-turn on the road to slavery, and there is only one end to this road—the dead end. Glenn Beck's program stirred so much interest in reading and rereading *The Road of Serfdom* that the print version reached #1 on Amazon and the audio version rose to #2 on iTunes (Greg Ransom, "The Beck Bomb," <https://mises.org/wire/beck-bomb>).

In short, I have made it my mission to promote liberty and free enterprise and to educate Americans and, indeed, people everywhere about the dangers of socialism and communism. The lessons we can learn from the tragic experiences of nations enslaved in the Soviet empire and Hayek's critique of socialism also provide us with a better perspective on the dangers of our own large and out-of-control governments pursuing socialist schemes.



No Greater Love Than Choice

Lipton Matthews

As a second-grade student, I was punished for refusing to redo an assignment that had already been assigned and completed weeks before. At that moment, I recognized that being forced to rewrite the assignment was a violation of my right to choose. Of course, children will be assigned tasks to promote their development, but compelling me to do an old assignment conferred no benefits and was simply impractical. Although only eight years old, I was politically aware. I had no concept of libertarianism, but that was irrelevant because I understood that coercing people to act contrary to their will was immoral when expressing one's will did not harm other people.

Though unaware of the mysterious world of libertarianism, I became an ardent defender of one's right to self-expression. For many people, libertarianism is a philosophical outlook, but for me, it is a way of life. My peers quickly became attuned to my independent nature and would frequently solicit my assistance to quell problems. Again, in the second grade, one girl was reputed to be an outsider to the chagrin of her classmates. As such, her mates were planning to ostracize her, and I was asked

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to prepare her for the coming expulsion. But instead of chiding her for being different, I informed her infuriated mates that expecting her to change to appease them would be wasteful because she could only be herself.

To my surprise, these second graders listened and actually became quite tolerant of this young girl and her quirks. Although I was a new kid who had just arrived from another school, I earned my stripes in the second grade because I never wavered under pressure. When most people conformed to gain the validation of their peers, I remained steadfast to my worldview. Usually, it is thought that isolation is a terrible experience when in fact it's really a blessing. It is in the midst of isolation that we acquire an awareness of the self.

Isolation may be ostracizing, but it is also reflective since we often engage in self-reflection to identify flaws that make us unattractive to other people. However, in our hour of solitude, it might become evident that changing ourselves to suit other people can only invite unhappiness and that if people expect us to transform so that they can experience happiness, then obviously such people are serving an anti-social agenda and therefore ought to be unworthy of our attention. Humans are social animals; however, sacrificing your well-being to be part of a social group is indicative of the totalitarian mindset that led to genocidal regimes across Europe. Our decision to socialize must be voluntary and doing so under duress makes us anti-social creatures incapable of self-expression.

There can be no socialization without free expression. Conforming to prevent exclusion just results in people becoming slaves to foreign agendas. Losing your identity to attain the acceptance of a group makes you a failure in the long-term even if you achieve material success because you will have failed to pursue your own goals. Surely, by now you get the importance of self-expression and some could consider my examples of bravery to be flimsy, but remember that they reflect the infantile stance of second graders. Let's jump to the fourth grade before going to the tumultuous years of high school.

In the fourth grade, there was a popular girl who commanded the attention of the class. She was affable and would lavish gifts on her friends. One day we had a minor disagreement, so she decided to turn the students against me. People were afraid to challenge her because they enjoyed being showered with gifts. Nonetheless, I was undaunted and stood my ground. Surprisingly, after recognizing that I was unperturbed by her contempt, she befriended me again. The lesson of this story is that

desperation is unattractive. When people think that you are hungry for validation they will always treat you with indignity.

Now we can fast-forward to high school. High-schoolers struggle with insecurities so it's really brutal for people who don't conform. Conforming is not my style, so as early as the seventh grade, I was beginning to become a thorn in the side of my classmates. High school was a period of intellectual awakening and my peers found my interest in current affairs to be quite weird. Whenever we had spare time, I wanted to engage them in political debates. I had just discovered the electrifying philosophy of Ayn Rand and felt that I had to preach the gospel of self-esteem. However, my classmates thought that I was so annoying that they arranged a session with our homeroom teacher to criticize my peculiarities. As a logician, I was unimpressed by their arguments so as expected there was no change in my behavior.

My teenage classmates also took issue with my attire. As a skinny guy, I had difficulty finding clothes, so my pants were a bit big for my size. Apparently, my clothing made me an object of ridicule, yet I found them comfortable, so despite the mocking I refused to alter my attire. If other people are bothered by my attire, why should that be my problem? Other than subjecting me to mockery, my deportment was not incurring real disadvantages, so I thought that changing it to please other people would be senseless.

Notwithstanding our differences, my classmates still elected me to become the Peer Counselor. Interestingly, for two terms, I also served as a Student Councilor and was a Prefect throughout upper school. My peers clearly recognized that people who are easily swayed by cheap rhetoric are likely to be inept representatives. But despite my political successes, I was still an outsider, especially because my promotion of libertarian ideas became more aggressive. By the tenth grade, I was immersed in the writings of people like Murray Rothbard and Walter Block. Jamaica was frequently compared to countries like Botswana and Singapore that became independent in the 1960s, since unlike Jamaica, these countries were economic superstars. Botswana and Singapore had pursued a less statist approach to development than Jamaica and I thought that it was important for my classmates to appreciate the roots of Jamaica's failure. Hence, to effectively communicate the benefits of free market capitalism, I invested greatly in reading the lucid writings of Rothbard and Block.

Sharing these ideas made my relationship with schoolmates quite contentious. Invariably, people thought that I was unhinged and my refutation of the splendor of the socialist '70s created much distress. However, during my last year of high school, I was told by teachers and peers that many admired my bravery. It was also intriguing to learn that people even appreciated my free market philosophy. Though my views weren't seriously entertained at first, I guess that my conviction was so overwhelming that it led others to do their own research and arrive at similar conclusions. My independence had paid off.

After high school, I decided to join the youth group of the National Democratic Movement and became its general secretary. The NDM is a third political party in Jamaica and people had told me that no one would have time for third parties. But in my role as the general secretary, I traveled throughout Jamaica educating young people about constitutional principles. For the first time, these students became acquainted with doctrines like the separation of powers and popular sovereignty. So although the NDM is still not a major political power in Jamaica, I am proud to have spent time empowering young people and helping them to become aware of their rights as citizens. A better-educated population is more equipped to remind politicians that rights are inalienable and that their powers are limited by the constitution.

At the same time, I started a YouTube show a year ago to combat censorship. Instead of criticizing BigTech for censoring self-expression, I think it's more impactful to create a space conducive to a plurality of thoughts. Critics warned me that YouTube would attack the channel and it has in fact sent warnings, but I am undaunted. I have had the occasion to interview esteemed libertarian thinkers like Walter Block and Peter Boettke. Indeed, I am really proud of the Block interview because Walter is considered a renegade intellectual even in some libertarian circles. However, since the program is committed to self-expression, I have also interviewed mainstream academics and critics of libertarianism like Richard Nisbett and Peter Lindert.

We should always be aware that libertarianism is a practical philosophy. One can read the great treatises penned by Ludwig Von Mises and Murray Rothbard, but if you fail to apply these principles to daily life you are just another person reading literature.



A Libertarian Literary Lawyer

Allen Mendenhall

I was raised in a conservative family in a town with conservative values and attended local public schools. My church—I grew up Southern Baptist—supplemented my education. Too young to vote in the 2000 election that pitted Al Gore against George W. Bush, I watched as my friends, at 18, cast their first ballots. Although I leaned Republican at the time, mostly because my parents did, curiosity drove me to explore new ideas and open my mind to different ways of viewing the world.

Ever the romantic, I followed my high school girlfriend to Furman University. My first day of college was 9/11. I remember walking back from Philosophy 101—my first experience in a college classroom—only to watch big commercial planes striking the World Trade Center and people jumping from the buildings to their deaths. Politics took on a rare intensity then. My peers fell into a patriotic zeal that seemed irrational. The hallways of our dorms were lined with American flags and images of George W. Bush; fraternities held militant rallies and called for retaliatory

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blood. With few exceptions, my friends celebrated the military invasion of Iraq, which I opposed.

If students opposed the Iraq War, they had to be quiet about it to remain socially acceptable. My professors, however, almost uniformly opposed the war. Talking to them about my opinion on American foreign policy felt safe. They generally agreed with me and made me feel comfortable sharing ideas that were beyond the pale among the mostly conservative student body. I wasn't aware at the time that conservatism had enjoyed a long and storied skepticism of military intervention into foreign affairs, and I knew nothing of libertarianism even though classical liberals like Adam Smith and John Locke appeared on my syllabi.

Because of the Iraq War, I felt politically homeless. On the one hand, Republicans were united in support of the war and the president. On the other hand, Democrats seemed hostile to the norms and conventions to which I had grown accustomed and which I believed to be proper and good. I was wild in college, no doubt, and spent too much time mimicking the rollicking lifestyles of my favorite literary eccentrics, but I knew in my conscience—in my heart of hearts, as they say—that an ordered society requires extensive virtue, discipline, and restraint.

The case for government intervention, for example, is untenable where people give charitably, respect private property, behave well and do not commit crimes, improve their minds, maintain healthy diets and lifestyles, work hard, and honor the dignity and integrity of every human person. In such an ethical and moral place, the people are self-regulating and self-governing. Of course, there is no Utopia. Nowhere on a map can you locate a spot with perfectly harmonious living conditions among like-minded people with shared values, mores, and customs. But, in general, the point holds: there are fewer prosecutions where crimes are rare, less “need” for welfare where people enjoy wealth, fewer environmental problems where people can afford sustainable practices, fewer healthcare issues where people exercise and eat nutritious meals, and so on and so forth.

Although I had come under the spell of leftwing English and humanities professors during college, I realized, over the years, that my desire to help others required that I abandon the left, both its social and economic premises. While living in Japan, before I entered graduate school, I discovered the Mises Institute through Internet searches. That discovery led to other discoveries that led, in turn, to other discoveries: more books and articles on Austrian economics and libertarian political thought.

When I began law school—I earned my M.A. in English through evening courses while attending West Virginia University College of Law during the day—I read Mises and Hayek and Rothbard and many others and found in them so much that I already believed but had never myself articulated. These thinkers expressed ideas that were, to me, at this stage in my development, merely inchoate or embryonic. I also learned economics for the first time and realized, to my dismay, that many of the political policies I had embraced as an undergraduate had deleterious consequences that disproportionately impacted those whom I wanted to help the most: the poor, the marginalized, and the powerless.

The Ron Paul 2008 presidential campaign energized me, and I began to participate in conferences hosted by the Institute for Humane Studies and Liberty Fund. I met other graduate students who were interested in Austrian economics, classical liberalism, or libertarianism and encountered a wide variety of intellectuals who embraced the “libertarian” label. Rothbard’s consistency and purity appealed to me, but I wrestled with anarchocapitalism because I couldn’t envision a world in which it would exist on a large scale rather than at merely a tribal or community level. I decided over time that Rothbard presented the ideals toward which we ought to strive, but that fallible human beings would struggle to translate those ideals into practical reality. Rothbard himself engaged in politics and with politicians and authored heated polemics; he must have felt that abolishing the state, however theoretically sound and desirable, wouldn’t happen any time soon.

After law school, I took a short-term position as an adjunct legal associate at the Cato Institute where Ilya Shapiro was my supervisor. Hoping for a career in higher education, I sensed that I needed to earn a Ph.D. I could, I thought, become a law professor with a doctorate in literature to marry both my legal and literary interests while researching and writing about libertarianism. My passion for literary study was so intense, and my love of poetry and creative prose so powerful, that I could not imagine a professional career without novels, plays, and poems involved. Paul Cantor and I had been corresponding for a couple of years, and he and Stephen Cox had just published *Literature and the Economics of Liberty* with the Mises Institute, generating buzz and acclaim within libertarian circles. I therefore scheduled a call with him to discuss doctoral studies in English. At the time I was in my parents’ home in Marietta, Georgia, still in my twenties and studying for the bar examination. He

and I devised an implausible plan to include him on my doctoral dissertation committee, chaired by one of his former students who was, then, a professor in the English Department at Auburn University, which I would soon attend.

But, alas, it wasn't to be. Although I enrolled in the doctoral program at Auburn, Paul did not sit on my dissertation committee—not for lack of desire, but because I did not write my dissertation about Austrian economics and literature as I had hoped to do. (I wrote it on Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.) I did, however, publish *Literature and Liberty*, my first book, while I was a graduate student and regularly corresponded with Paul and followers of his work for many years. In those days I thought we might inspire an exciting movement, that a new school of literary theory and criticism would emerge to challenge the various offshoots of Marxism and anticapitalism that dominated (and still dominate) the discipline. “We could change literary studies,” Paul enthused during that phone call. Holding the phone to my ear, I believed he was right.

Perhaps he was, but the prospect of revitalizing and reorienting literary studies has, lately, appeared grim. It has been well over a decade since *Literature and the Economics of Liberty* reached print. Although a few of us who work in literary studies have discussed hosting a conference on Austrian economics and literature, nothing of that magnitude has ever occurred. Paul himself is gone now, having passed into the Great Beyond. You won't find “Libertarian Theory” in an anthology of literary theory and criticism, yet a few books and articles are beginning to investigate the claims and ideas that Paul propelled into the mainstream.

During my doctoral studies, at any rate, Jeffrey Tucker interviewed me at the Mises Institute for a now-defunct program called “In Studio at the Ludwig von Mises Institute.” That interview, in which I decried the state of literary studies, got me into hot water with my dissertation advisor at Auburn. She objected not just to my claims in that interview but to my decision to speak to Tucker for media produced by the Mises Institute. My relationship with her changed instantly as she grew hostile toward me and my work. Although my dissertation had nothing to do with libertarianism or Austrian economics, my dissertation advisor labored to obstruct my progress and prevent me from earning my doctorate. After the intervention of the university ombudsperson, she was removed as my dissertation advisor. I received a new advisor and quickly completed and defended my dissertation, which she had never allowed my other

committee members to review. This experience revealed to me the corruption and bad faith that can occur on university campuses, especially in the humanities where faculty are, or can be, unwelcoming to ideological diversity and against free markets.

In 2020, Matt Spivey, who chairs the English Department at Arizona Christian University, published a shrewd and fascinating book, *Re-Reading Economics in Literature: A Capitalist Critical Perspective*, with the potential to invigorate what Cantor worked so hard to create, namely a dynamic and broadly accepted school of literary theory that champions individual liberty. Although twentieth century schools of literary theory and criticism have undergone principled, pointed critique from libertarians generally and adherents of the Austrian school in particular, certain elements of these schools provide insights into, and parallels with, seminal ideas of the Austrian school of economics.

Though I am a lawyer who researches and writes about jurisprudence, and though I direct a university center devoted to the study of free-market economics, literature remains my first love. How I wish that English and other humanities departments would discover the workings of economics, and how I wish that economists and libertarians would pursue literary interests and texts. If we want our economic or libertarian ideas to take hold, we must cultivate creative arts and influence culture.



A Woman of the Libertarian Right

Ilana Mercer

The overuse of the first-person pronoun in opinion writing, my bailiwick, is a cardinal sin. But since this is a first-person account by request, I cringe a little less. Here goes:

For over two decades, I've written a paleolibertarian weekly column in which firmly held first principles and a reality-based analysis have combined to yield predictive writing on the most controversial and pressing issues of the day. Is there anything I've not expatiated upon? From war, driven by America's Disneyfied, angels-and-demons foreign-policy, to every other aspect of the government's ongoing warfare against the citizen, to race, trade deficits, fractional reserve banking, the Deep State, Deep Tech—and whatever else lurks under the crag of the Permanent State—to anarcho-capitalism, immigration, populism, nationalism and natural law, and Critical Race Theory, which is, as this column was first to point out, exclusively and ethnocidally a theory of anti-whiteness, not Marxism, as conservatives allege. As one reader put it, "We've learned to trust you."

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There's the rub. When all is said and done, my closest relationships throughout this odyssey have been with my readers. My best friends have come from the ranks of readers. That I am not invited to join the Smart Set of the think tanks, conferences, and lecture circuits, or bedeck the author lists of publishing houses, whether libertarian or establishmentarian—these things may have irked me in the past, but no longer do. On the contrary, my position as a permanent outsider is cemented. My independence as a public intellectual has certainly not ingratiated my work with *The Gatekeepers*—or is that a palliative psychological defense mechanism? (The grinning emoji applies here). Guess which interpretation is easier on the ego (Grin again).

The reason for readers' trust, I believe, is that the strength of ideas rests on their relationship to reality. Reality is the rational man's anchor. People are converted to the libertarian philosophy when liberty's missionary—the proselytizer—refuses to levitate in the arid arena of pure thought but anchors his reasoning in reality and in “the nit and the grit of the history and culture from which [the philosophy] emerged,” as a reviewer of this writer's work put it. Fidelity to reality must always trump theoretical purity, although the two needn't conflict. After all, the self-evident truths trumpeted by libertarians are axiomatic truths, propositions that cannot be denied when squared with the reality around us.

Avoiding economic reductionism has also worked in this libertarian's favor. America's deplorables, my readers, bristle at a political philosophy that atomistically neglects the fellow feeling among countrymen. Readers aspire to see their country as more than an economy. While they understand that the United States is a territory for trade—a mighty market place for goods and services into which millions arrive each year to make a living and engage in acts of acquisitiveness—this audience worries less about commerce and consumption than about the glue that binds us. The State has turned the US into a Walmart with missiles. And it is libertarianism that offers America a plan to recreate those Burkean “little platoons,” the “first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections,” via informal acts of secession.

Social reductionism I've avoided, too. Yes, we're silhouetted by The State. Nevertheless, when it comes to the nature of man, this Hebrew takes the biblical view, tested by time. As stated in Genesis 8:21, “the instinct of man is evil from his youth.” Evil is integral to the human condition, always has been, always will be. Evil can't be wished away, psychoanalyzed away, medicated away, legislated away, or dissolved by

absolute liberty. Evil is here to stay. Social determinism—expressed either in our “state-made-him-do-it” argumentation or the Left’s “society-made-her-do-it” excuse-making—is likely misplaced. What we observe in the political landscape is a function and a reflection of human nature, acting in aggregate. Over and above the idea that we get the government that we deserve is the devastating reality that this government doesn’t stand apart from us. It is us.

Libertarianism, however, offers converts so much more in navigating the shoals of a chaotic world. In 2021, soon after the January 6 contretemps, it became imprudent, even dangerous, to speak freely about this defining event, what was to shape-up as a civilian PSYOP (Psychological Operation), constituting a long-term, albeit reflexive, cynical political ploy to marginalize MAGA America. As in every vexing matter, libertarian theory did not fail to guide me through the January 6 labyrinth of brute statism. Against the background din of “insurrection” charges leveled at deplorables, it was never clearer to me what the hardcore libertarian take needed to be. While the staunchest of conservatives asserted that storming the Capitol building was much worse than “burning down strip malls,” principled libertarians, as I saw it, were compelled to think the opposite.

As libertarianism preaches, the state is governed by aggression; whereas the institution of private property is rooted in peaceful, just, and voluntary transactions between consenting participants. Morally, libertarians who live by the non-aggression axiom must always privilege the man who proceeds against the State (the ragtag men and women who stormed only the well-padded seat of power and corruption that is Capitol Hill, once), to the man who destroys private property and the livelihoods and businesses of private citizens (the armed wing of the Democratic Party: Black Lives Matter, Antifa, and other criminal riffraff who trashed, looted, and leveled private property).

In delivering me to this truth, nobody has played a greater role than Professor Walter Block, in his enunciation of the centrality of the non-aggression axiom. Walter found me writing a weekly column for the *North Shore News* (NSN), a community newspaper in British Columbia, Canada, for which I worked from 1998 to approximately 2000. That the NSN had an editorial page that would have engaged an intellect like Walter’s is in itself noteworthy. In retrospect—and given how mainstream media have since decomposed and putrefied—I realize now just what an excellent little paper the NSN was during that period. Why, we even made *Time* magazine for publishing Doug Collins, a Canadian Pat Buchanan

in style and pugnaciousness, who, err, posed some impolite and impolitic questions about the Holocaust. The paper allowed it; the nation—nay the world—erupted. Those were heady times for freedom of expression before the pal of American, private-sector-propelled Wokeism and the Canadian, state-driven equivalent (the Human Rights Court) blanketed the scribbling profession.

I was born in South Africa. My parents immigrated to Israel, where I grew up and underwent primary, secondary, and some tertiary schooling. I returned to South Africa, which was never far from my heart, married, and had a daughter. My husband and I left for Canada in the late 1990s, as “mobocracy” dawned. Our South African honeymoon had been spent dodging riot pockets resembling the riots that engulfed more than 200 American cities in 2020, an eventuality presaged in my 2011 book, *Into the Cannibal’s Pot: Lessons for America from Post-Apartheid South Africa*. My *cri de coeur* was meant to convey to Americans that the loss of the rule of law in societies riven by race—anti-white racism, in particular—is especially devastating.

From Walter I learned that I was ... already libertarian. Intriguing news that piqued my curiosity. In my habit of making tight arguments, I had imagined I was merely argumentative. Oh, no, countered Walter, that’s praxeology, you’re a natural. What others had insisted was a dogmatic, polemical style of argument was the libertarian habit of searching out those self-evident truths, those axiomatic verities and propositions that cannot be denied when squared with reality.

Walter introduced me to libertarianism’s founding texts and towering founders. Given my natural attachment to process-driven argument and a priori truth, the sterling metal of Dr. David Gordon’s teachings on praxeology were indispensable. Likewise, the late genius philosopher-cum-psychiatrist Thomas Szasz was a dear friend and a philosophical soulmate. All the same, it quickly became clear to me that, in the non-aggression axiom, the libertarian thinker has the most precious gift of all: the very structure of liberty, to use Randy Barnett’s phrase. Into this superstructure would go my own formulations. Thus, over and above his Socratic style of persuasion and sagacity, Walter’s greatest gift to me has been in exquisitely framing “the non-aggression axiom [as] the lynchpin of the philosophy of libertarianism.” It forms the basis of my own normative libertarianism.

To wit, libertarianism is a political philosophy concerned with adjudicating the justified use of force. Put in this way, any self-styled libertarian

who justified or rationalized Genghis Bush's war on Iraq, Barack Obama's elimination of Libya as we knew it and droning-to-death of thousands of civilians by 2012, or Donald Trump's misadventures in Niger, Syria, and beyond is no libertarian at all. This and this iridescent principle alone decides the ambit of libertarian law. The non-aggression principle accounts for why I've burned as hot as a Babylonian kiln against Uncle Sam's adventures abroad.

As to paleolibertarianism: Many libertarians refer to themselves as neither left nor right. I've never done so. I'm a woman of the libertarian hard-right. As a reactionary libertarian, I cast reactionaries as enlightened conservators. Yet another clever reader put it thus: "She's so right that she's left." Yes! That's as it should be. I'm a "dirty hippie" when it comes to the Vietnam War.

Another defining issue for our tumultuous times is speech. Social and political pressure being immense, some establishment libertarians have joined the neoconservative and neoliberal clique in the habit of sniffing out racists. This is an absolute no-no for all self-respecting libertarians. Thought crimes are nobody's business in free societies. True libertarians should not prosecute thought crimes or persecute "thought criminals." The words people speak, write, and tweet; the beliefs they hold, the flags they fly, the symbolic, non-violent ceremonies, and rituals they enact, the insignia, paraphernalia, goose-stepping, Hitler salutes—all that is protected speech, licit in natural law.

By logical extension, in defending Deep Tech's prerogative to visit economic and social violence on innocent individuals and businesses by tossing them off their platforms—so enormous and irreplaceable—for infractions of speech, libertarians are not defending the rights of private property to merely conduct itself as it wishes. Rather, libertarians are marching down the pirate's plank on a ship of state commandeered by Big Tech pirates in competition with the state.

Innocent, law-abiding individuals ought to have equal access to social media's irreplaceable public square—to Amazon, Facebook, Twitter, Google, Apple, PayPal, and other banking facilities—without being singled out for excommunication absent a crime. Consider financial deplatforming: Barring someone from PayPal is like prohibiting a passenger from crossing the English Channel by high-speed train, ferry, or airplane. Since a negative duty requires only that we refrain from injuring others in the real sense (as opposed to the bogus, snowflake sense, which encompasses hurt feelings), *I have no qualms about imposing that harmless*

negative duty of tolerance on intolerant tyrannical entities—business or bureaucracy—when in violation of individual, natural rights. All the more so considering that the commodities the Tech overlords must be enjoined to tolerate are harmless, ethereal pixels, words wafting into the ether.

The coda to my story has to be COVID. As the West careens toward the COVID-centered anthill society, few have identified and defended the individual's dominion over his body and his right to reject the Pharma-State's Hemlock prescriptions for that body. Republicans, a controlled opposition, have merely prattled about religious exemptions (state granted!) and natural-immunity-based exemptions (stamped by the state!). The progressive's preening aims to emphasize his or her own providential purpose in the universe. To that end, progressives like to cancel the rest of us. As an unvaccinated American among many, I've been denied care and deemed unworthy of Hippocratic Oath practices by dour State-of-Washington-statists. With renewed commitment, then, the onus is on us libertarians, left and right, to continue to defend the natural or God-given right (whatever floats your boat) of self-ownership from which all rights issue.



Confessions of a Proto-Austrian Libertarian

John Mosier

Like the mythical woman who discovered she had been speaking prose all her life, I was convinced of the fundamental correctness of the Austrian School of Economics long before I'd ever heard the term. Or, to be more precise, of what I now believe to be their fundamental observations. Putting them crudely, and with apologies to all and sundry: the subjective nature of value, and hence a theory of marginal utility; the importance of price; and their understanding of why central planning could never work.

The same can be said of my libertarian sympathies. I was disposed to the key ideas, believed them to be true, long before I'd even heard the term.

There was thus no sudden conversion, no Saul on the Road to Damascus event, and certainly no moment of disillusionment. In fact, it's not much of a story at all, not unlike my life. Rather it was like the German expression *Es is passiert*: it just sort of happened. But the parts of my life that made it so may be of some interest.

These inclinations first developed in my boyhood in Northeast Louisiana, owing to the influence of my stepfather and his friends. As

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veterans of the First World War they had experienced first-hand the extent to which governments manipulated their citizens into positions that were not in their interest (our involvement in the war), how they allowed minority groups to force their obsessions on everyone (Prohibition), how they expanded their powers via allegedly emergency measures that then became permanent (the income tax), and the idiocies of central planning (the New Deal).

Their orientation was largely owing to their education in science and engineering, as well as the fact that they were representative of a peculiarly British class: gentleman farmers. That is, they wore suits, lived in town, and drove cars, but they could also describe the innards of a tractor so perfectly you could practically see it even though I doubt any of them had ever sat on one. I say a “peculiarly British class” because at least three of them, including my step-father himself, had at least one parent from Great Britain. They possessed all of the characteristics of members of that class immortalized in some of the great eighteenth-century English novels, together with some of the attributes of their opposite numbers in Russia as described by Tolstoy in *The Devil*.

They probably, like me, had never heard the word “libertarian.” But they knew the Constitution, believed that it gave Americans freedom of speech and property rights and that we had the right to self-defense. Their experiences with government interference made them staunch defenders of free markets, and in their view—which quickly became mine—the best government was the least government. And they believed firmly that this principle was enshrined in the Constitution, mourning its steady erosion.

So when, half a century or so later, I read *A Libertarian Manifesto* and *The Road to Serfdom*, I felt pretty much like Charles Ryder in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*: I’d been there before. It was a good feeling to realize I wasn’t the only one, since after a career in higher education, so-called, I had often wondered about that. And in fact, I was a full professor in the later years of my career when I finally met an actual libertarian—Walter Block, one of my colleagues at Loyola University in New Orleans.

There were two aspects of my education that predisposed me still further to Austrians and libertarians. Although technically my degree was in English literature, I actually had as many courses in German and Russian and that led me to a fascination with the explosion of intellectual and artistic talent in Vienna between 1870 and 1920: music, art, and literature, but also medical science, psychology, history, and philosophy. That

there were brilliant men there whose work changed our understanding of the fundamentals of economics was hardly surprising.

The other relevant aspect of my education was that I had an unusually heavy concentration of coursework in science, mostly mathematics and chemistry, including a demanding one-year course in calculus. It met five days a week, and credit was given accordingly. I did poorly, but it allowed me to take the basic one-year economics course (in those days a second-year course), as a year of calculus was the prerequisite. That course made me understand the intellectual foundations of the assumptions I had held growing up.

At that point, my course in economics converged with my understanding of Austro-German literature and thought. The one explained why Marxian economics was rubbish and the other placed him firmly in the camp of third-rate German faux-intellectuals who confused impenetrable prose with serious thought. That last is a problem still with us today.

At this point, I should explain how, since I spent my career as a professor of English, I not only became, variously, an established film critic and then a military historian but remained a most unlikely fundamental Austro-libertarian. I ended up with three degrees in English literature because it was easy—no calculus and it didn't involve using a slide rule—and the job opportunities were infinitely better than in music (I had a graduate fellowship in both music and English). So I got three degrees in seven years, and then a job at Loyola University in New Orleans.

That was in 1967, and I then spent five years in university administration (first as associate dean, although most of the time I was the acting dean, and subsequently what nowadays would be called associate provost). Technically only five, but it felt more like twenty. I bring that up for two reasons. One of my jobs was overseeing the development of the university's first institutional research office, so I saw first-hand how central planning doesn't work, how it will never work, and how trying to make it work only makes matters worse. I also had an up close and personal experience with how dysfunctional university faculties were: criminal behavior, fraud, public nervous breakdowns, alcoholism, drug addiction, and truly bizarre personality disorders. The anonymous wit remarked that "University faculty are mostly very broken people. Society figures that, since most of them aren't violent, it was cheaper

to employ them at colleges than house them in mental institutions where they belong,” had a point.

But aside from emerging with a stock of humorous anecdotes, that experience led me to ponder a more serious point. To what extent did Marxism–Leninism, in its various permutations and imitations, attract these people because they were missing a few tiles from their roof? I know! Correlation isn’t causation. But still ...

After my (subjectively) twenty years of university administration, I quit, and, as I wanted to do something serious, I got into film criticism. In those days—the early 1970s—the field was wide open, and I was lucky. I spent fourteen years covering film at international film festivals, chiefly Cannes, where I was on the *camera d’or* jury for four years. Given my interest in foreign literature, I was also interested in foreign films, specifically, those of the Soviet Bloc countries, where many filmmakers not only shared my interest in the relationship between literature and history but were trying as best they could to reveal the shoddy foundations and false ideas of the state. As a result of the time I thereby spent in Soviet bloc countries, I also personally witnessed how when Marxist–Leninist ideology was put into practice, it not only revealed the basic failures of Marxian economics but destroyed the moral fabric of society as well. Going out to a pub, my “minders,” who were basically congenial fellows bribed and coerced to keep tabs on me—as one of them later confessed—would carefully choose a table close to the women’s toilets because, as one of them explained helpfully, when some inebriated young woman came out, you were positioned to grab her. The young women here, one observed, would have sex with you for a few cigarettes. His colleague was incensed: No! It takes a carton. Like most of the more bizarre anecdotes I collected, this one was all too true.

Fifteen years and about a million words later (seriously), I was burned out and decided to do something more substantive. Along the way, I had been privileged to work with some accomplished film critics and to interview some talented filmmakers, but I had also noticed a curious tendency. When a film touched on a currently fashionable socio-political issue, it seemed to erase the normal standards of judgment. The critics, who in my rather old-fashioned view, were supposed to mediate between the artist and the audience, suddenly became either breathless fans or totally hostile judges.

That disturbed me. It reveals a superficial idea of art. Appreciating why Sergei Eisenstein was a great film artist is independent of seeing that

his films were exercises in Bolshevik propaganda. By the same token, we should be impressed by John Milton as a great poet, and Leo Tolstoy as a great novelist, without buying into the former's theology or the latter's ideas about history. You either have standards or you don't. Blinding yourself to the defects in a work whose views you share is a dagger in the heart of any reasonable standard, which was, and still is, the basis of Marxist–Leninist thought. Judgments are subordinated to whatever the current ideological needs require.

A sobering realization; however, it didn't have much to do with why I changed gears and got into military history. I was burned out as a critic, wanted to do work that was more scholarly, and my work in Central European film had stimulated an interest that had already been present. That led to six books on military history, mostly on the two world wars, including one on the Eastern Front in World War Two, in which I observed that the supposedly mighty Red Army was actually a ramshackle affair, incompetently led, badly trained and equipped—a notion widely regarded as heretical, but which the first months of the Ukrainian War have already proven to be pretty accurate.

Now this seems like an enormous leap, but without going into the details, my intellectual experiences only strengthened my early convictions. To begin with the arts, it seems to me that our greatest economic thinkers were trying to discover—and to enunciate—the basic principles that govern socio-economic activity. But properly speaking aestheticians and critics are struggling with the same problem. And in both cases, not only is this complicated but we have to be able to speak to the why of what seems to be the case.

Likewise, once you drilled down through all the details, realized that already, by 1914, the major military powers were surprisingly far along “the road to serfdom,” their successes and failures in the war were largely a function of the degree to which there were still relics, or remnants, of Austro-libertarianism that the state had not managed to stamp out. That was a major complication, because by 1914 just about everyone's government was fouling things up by meddling.

Historians had missed that, partly because so much of what they wrote was dominated by the same tendency you could see in art criticism, the difference being they were better at camouflaging it by sins of omission, and there was the inevitable ignorance caused by academic overspecialization. Someone with a degree in Medieval Albino Panda Studies

wasn't likely to know much about either subject and next to nothing about anything else.

But the most successful armies, like national economies, were those with the least centralized management, and their weaponry was better because their development was more a result of competition.

But then again, *hominis operatur, sicut in eius vita nihil est, sed illusio*. Or, as Jacques Audiberti put it, *La vie est faite d'illusions*.



My Intellectual Journey in Search of a Social Order Beyond the State and Politics

Antony P. Mueller

I was born in 1948 and grew up in Northern Bavaria very close to the border with East Germany and Czechoslovakia. No one during that period of the Cold War could exclude the possibility that an invasion of Warsaw Pact troops would start overnight from that territory. The Soviet Union was expanding its nuclear power in an arms race with the United States. We all were very aware that at any moment the conflict could turn into a war that would annihilate large parts of the world, with Europe as its center of destruction.

Nevertheless, during the time of my early youth, these territories east of West Germany's frontier did not matter much to me personally. They were practically non-existent, and I felt no desire to visit any of them. My focus was on the West and my first trips abroad beginning at the age of 16 brought me to all of the British Isles, France, Spain, and Scandinavia. I also made a tour through Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, but only for

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the purpose of visiting Greece and Turkey. I was lucky enough to be in London during the “summer of love” in 1967.

At the beginning of my time as a student at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU-EN) in Erlangen, Germany, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were many radical student groups claiming to represent “student rebellion” through some kind of “Socialism,” “Marxism,” or “Maoism.” They fought mainly against each other more so than against their presumed common enemy, which they, due to the lack of a more precise definition, simply called the “establishment.” Indeed, the badge “Socialist” was sometimes worn as a means to distinguish oneself from the conventional “establishment view.” As such, the student movement also had a rebellious anarchistic touch. That was a time before “activism,” which came later—in the horrible form of terrorism such as that by the “Red Army Fraction.” A hot topic was the Vietnam War, of course, from different ideological angles.

Although I never joined any of these groups, I participated in their discussions. During a “Marxist Schooling Workshop” offered by the “Socialist University Association,” the topic of the “Austrian School” came up and I volunteered to prepare a report about “The Concept of Value in the Austrian School of Economics.” Without knowing I jumped right into the heart of the matter—the decisive difference between not only all variants of the Socialist movements but generally all kinds of statism, on the one hand, and the movement toward liberty that I began to associate with the Austrian School, on the other. Subjective valuation versus some kind of imposed objective valuation drew me to the Austrians right from the start. I thus became an Austrian by participating in a Marxist workshop! The groundwork was laid and without knowing that this concept existed, I had also become a libertarian. Carl Menger’s insight into the subjective nature of values and the individualism that goes with it became fundamental for my political views.

Although I studied the standard Socialist literature, my favorites were the classical liberals and the individualist anarchists. Nevertheless, I still sympathized with some of the leftist positions that were so popular among the students but that were always superficial. My embracement of free market capitalism came later as the result of my study of economics. At the time when I entered the university, it was still possible to choose several areas of specialization and I registered for economics and law as majors, and political science, philosophy, and foreign languages as minors. In fact, the way to study during this period was still similar to the way that

the university was organized at the time of Mises and Hayek. You chose certain professors more than specific disciplines and, beyond some core fields, you could create your own bouquet of study. Only the final exam mattered.

In preparation for a master's thesis on public choice theory, I spent a short time in 1978 at the Center for the Study of Public Choice, at that time still located in Blacksburg, Virginia, where I came to know James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock and participated in their classes. In retrospect, I would say that my study of Public Choice awakened anew my interest in Austrian economics. Thus, when I started teaching mainstream economics at the university and even when using macroeconomic models, I always tried to integrate the perspective of methodological individualism.

It was fortunate that the department where I started teaching as a substitute professor, at the Erlangen Campus of the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU-EN), had one of the oldest economics departments in Germany. The institute still bore the traditional designation of "Staatswissenschaft" ("state science") for economics in its name. My treasure trove was the institute's library, which was filled with the classics of the Austrian School. At that time, in the late 1970s, preparing my doctoral dissertation and being employed as an assistant professor, I read almost all the major works of the Austrian School in their original editions. I always had a stack of these old books from the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century on my desk—to the amazement of my colleagues and students.

This institute where I began my academic career specialized in social policy and my contributions from the perspective of the Austrian School were in fact welcomed as a source of counterarguments against the expansion of the welfare state that was in full swing in the 1970s in West Germany. Yet this changed quite rapidly, and it became ever more difficult to speak up against the expansion of the state. At the same time that the social-democratic state began its political and ideological dominance, I became an outspoken libertarian although I was not yet aware that this concept existed. Instead of seeing the state as a solution, I began to realize that government itself is the problem.

Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* and Israel Kirzner's *Competition and Entrepreneurship*, both of which had already appeared in German, helped in formulating more clearly my intellectual positioning.

Unfortunately, Walter Block's *Defending the Undefendable* was not available in German and I did not know of it. When I read it much later, I was already so much of an advanced libertarian that I could agree with it.

I studied the economics of the Austrians as an antidote to the welfare state. At a time when there was almost a complete consensus that social policy is a good thing and its expansion the great task of the modern state, I became ever more its opponent and consequently was increasingly isolated. Even if I had wished to do so, I could not have refuted the arguments in favor of free markets and the minimal state that I had learned by studying the works of Carl Menger, Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, and many more, including many of the lesser-known Austrians.

In my doctoral dissertation, I dealt with the question of the public budget as an instrument of social policy. This work is full of quotes from the Austrian School. Investigating the Social Economy, which was all about redistribution and social security problems, I compared the ideas of the Austrians with other approaches, particularly the social policy ideas of the German Historical School, but also with aspects elaborated by Vilfredo Pareto and Joseph Schumpeter and some contemporary economists from public finance.

In Germany at this time the process to become a professor entailed not only a first doctoral thesis but also a comprehensive post-doctoral thesis. I imagined that an additional area of qualification, such as international economics, would be useful, and thus in the early 1980s, I began my studies in international finance. I did empirical studies on the external debt crisis and even here I could use some aspects of the Austrian approach that formed the basis of my rating model. With my research of the international debt crisis came the next insight into the evils of state interventionism, this time in monetary matters.

The other big topic that came up was the preparation of a Single European Market and the launch of a European Monetary Union. These were naturally multidisciplinary areas and as the universities were officially encouraged to offer classes for students of all disciplines on the matters of European integration, I held seminars and did presentations in this area for many years. While at first enthusiastic about European integration, I became a skeptic the more I learned about it.

Nevertheless, my specialization in international finance and European economic and monetary integration proved very helpful in getting a Fulbright Scholarship for the United States and later a scholarship to

Brazil from the German-Brazilian Academic Exchange Program. The extension of my scope also helped broaden my horizons, and in consulting work, I visited many parts of the world, particularly developing countries. I did a series of case studies about the Southern enlargement of the European Community and evaluated the foreign debt situation of several developing countries.

Even though the dominance of Keynesianism had already been broken by the monetarist counterrevolution, even in the 1990s there was not yet much to be heard about the Austrian School in my academic environment, and I felt that I was the only libertarian Austrian. I saw no chance to publish in this area and thus did not do systematic research from this perspective.

As I became increasingly skeptical of European integration, an area of my research and teaching at that time, the international debt crisis also became less of a hot topic. My interests began to shift away from specific academic studies and move to financial speculation. At that time, I did less and less academic work in favor of financial speculation, particularly with currencies. In the second half of the 1990s, I entered a period of very low professional satisfaction.

When I then received an offer in 1999 to spend a couple of years as a visiting professor in Brazil, I was ready to take the opportunity. I had planned to retire thereafter. Yet the move to Brazil marked a new era in my life. It was only after I arrived in Brazil that I started writing explicitly from an Austrian perspective and these studies led me to discover the Mises Institute in Auburn, Alabama—simply through Internet research. Since 2000, I have often participated in the institute's annual conferences, thereby coming to know many of its scholars and making many friendships. Since then, I have also regularly contributed articles to the Mises Institute website.

The next big step forward to becoming a full-fledged libertarian was the launch of the Brazilian Mises Institute in 2007. I participated in its formation as its first academic director, and I have contributed regularly to its platform by writing articles and academic papers and speaking at its major conferences as well as teaching in its graduate program. Since its foundation, the Instituto Mises Brasil (IMB) has experienced tremendous growth. There is a proper academic journal with special issues and the "Mises Academy" as its think tank. The impact of this institution on Brazilian intellectual and political life is of historical proportions.

My time in Brazil was interrupted by two stays at Universidad Francisco Marroquin (UFM) in Guatemala. I gave a series of talks there in 2004 and taught a course on Austrian Economics in 2006. I have continued my collaboration with the UFM for its online courses, including their extension to Spain and Brazil.

To my delight, a German Mises Institute was set up in 2012 and began to prosper. Since 2014, I have been a regular contributor as an author. In 2019, I was a speaker at its annual conference in Munich. Each voice counts and it is great to note that I get more resonance than expected.

In retrospect, one can say that I have been a libertarian since my youth even though I was unaware of the concept. My first encounter with Austrian Economics at a Marxist seminar organized by the Socialist Students Association made me an Austrian, and the sustained study of Public Choice led me to become a serious Austrian economist. After a detour into the areas of international finance and European integration due to professional demands, my path eventually brought me to anarcho-capitalism.

As a kind of wrap-up of my intellectual journey, I have published a comprehensive book in the German language in September 2021 and hope to have a version in English ready to be published under the title *Capitalism, Socialism, and Anarchy. Towards a Social Order beyond the State and Politics*.



A Presumption in Favor of Liberty

Michael C. Munger

I was born in 1958 to two Yankees who had transplanted to rural central Florida, one of the most historically racist parts of the South. Ocoee, the nearest place with a store or a stoplight, had been the scene of significant violence in 1920, and was still a “sundown town.” We had little money in the early days—my father had been dismissed from high school and worked in a lumber yard—but my parents eventually saved enough to buy 22 acres of orange groves, and we lived on a lovely lake. I hated it—our house was not air-conditioned, and picking oranges is hard work—but in retrospect, it was an idyllic setting, with a lot of space and quiet places for reading and fishing.

My high school was integrated in the late 1960s, and when I began 7th grade in 1970, there were still fires set in the hallways, guns and knives in the gym locker rooms, and a lot of fights. My grades were mostly B’s and a few C’s, in math especially I expected to study English or History in college. I also expected to go to the University of Florida and smoke pot with my friends.

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Fortunately, my parents saw through this clever plan, and I was lucky enough to get a National Merit scholarship through my father's employer, the Bendix Corporation. That enabled me to go to Davidson College, a small liberal arts school near Charlotte, North Carolina. I was assigned a frank adviser who snorted when she saw my test scores and said that I was not "terrible in math" (my words); I was more likely "just really lazy" (her words). She "suggested" that I take calculus and physics, or else get a new adviser.

She was quite right; I ended up majoring in economics, with almost enough math classes for a second major. By pure luck, it also turned out that Davidson offered a six-quarter course called "Humanities," which started with the earliest written records and moved slowly forward through art, literature, and philosophy, finishing up at the start of the twentieth century. For someone whose high school experience had been as weak as mine, this was an indispensable opportunity to catch up with students who had been reading the classics for years.

One of my economics professors, Charles Ratliff, was so charismatic and entertaining as a teacher that I resolved to go to graduate school, having no idea what that actually meant. I applied to more than 15 graduate programs in economics and got into exactly one: Washington University in St. Louis. Expecting to study post-Keynesian economics with Hyman P. Minsky, I ended up working instead with Barry Weingast, Arthur Denzau, Kenneth Shepsle, and Douglass North, who together gave a remarkably dynamic and exciting introduction to the then-bourgeoning (it was the early 1980s) "Public Choice" movement.

I also worked as a research assistant for Murray Weidenbaum, who had just returned from chairing Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers. Murray's approach to academics, and his effectiveness as a public intellectual, have long been important models for me. Most importantly, Weidenbaum argued for the core libertarian presumption: voluntary decentralized action is both socially better *and* morally more defensible than top-down coercive force. The collection of many diverse individual plans and purposes, reconciled through the price mechanism, will always outperform a central plan, even if no one can predict in advance exactly what will happen.

In 1984, after finishing my Ph.D. but being unable to find a position as an academic economist, I worked for the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, in the Bureau of Economics, under Wendy Gramm, spouse of Texas Senator Phil Gramm and an important economist in her own right. I also

worked with Jim Miller, then Commissioner of the FTC and about to move to Budget Director, to take over after David Stockman's resignation. At this point, I was a libertarian-leaning Republican, but that part of the Republican movement in Reagan's second term was sufficiently broad that I felt as if the "revolution" were moving along well.

But it wasn't. While Reagan *sounded* libertarian, what he actually *did* was quite different. For every speech about the need for free trade, and "government *is* the problem!," there were protectionist taxes and subsidies for rent-seeking domestic industries with political power; for every "Tear down this wall!" speech, there was an Iran-Contra scandal or other adventurist, intrusive foreign policy blunder. And the defense spending. So much defense spending, and new larger deficits.

After a stint at Dartmouth (as a visiting professor), my (new) wife Donna Gingerella and I moved to Austin, Texas, where I secured my first tenure-track position. The other faculty at the University of Texas—I was in the Government Department, having despaired of ever being an academic economist, after three straight years of failing even to get an interview on the job market—included Gary Cox, James Enelow, Melvin Hinich, Mat McCubbins, Peter Ordeshook, Benjamin Page, and Thomas Schwartz, one of the best group of rational choice and political economy scholars anywhere in the world. It was a crucial period of learning and retooling.

It was also a time of intellectual evolution. I became less and less enamored of the Republican Party and felt politically disaffected. In 1990 (now with son Kevin), the family moved to North Carolina, where I was first a faculty member, and then Dean, of the Master of Public Administration program. The MPA degree at UNC focused on training city and county managers, especially for the state, but also for municipal governments around the nation. I'd like to think that there are dozens of local government officials who still have a healthy and informed skepticism of statist, top-down policy solutions as a result of taking my statistics and policy analysis classes, but that may be overestimating my influence.

Personally, I worked on reconciling my own skepticism about government with the fact that, in the current system, *someone* is going to occupy these government jobs. This may be the origin of my "directionalist" philosophy of libertarianism, as opposed to "destinationists" who judge policy proposals against an ideal slate of restrictions on state action. Whereas destinationists want to eliminate public schools altogether, directionalists recognize that this is politically a non-starter, and work to enable

more parental involvement and responsibility through charter schools and vouchers. Yes, the state is still involved, but working to improve policy at the margin is more likely to have an impact than sitting back and bragging about one's unalloyed ideological irrelevance.

To be fair, many libertarians have a lot of irrelevance to be proud of; perhaps we all like to specialize in what we are best at doing. After seven years at UNC, I moved to nearby Duke University in 1997, in the Department of Political Science. Since I lived in Raleigh at the time (the third city in the Chapel Hill—Durham—Raleigh “Triangle”), this actually shortened my commute. It was a bit of a culture shock, however, since Duke was an internationally focused research university, whereas at UNC I had been focused almost exclusively on cities and counties in North Carolina. Given my administrative experience, I was chosen to be Chair of Political Science, a position in which I served for a decade.

Being an administrator had not been what I had in mind when I had set out to teach in college, but then neither was being in a Political Science department. One large advantage to serving as chair was the ability to hire Public Choice-aligned scholars, the most important of whom was Geoffrey Brennan, longtime coauthor of Nobel Prize-winner James M. Buchanan. Since I was able to hire several such faculty, there are thousands of Duke students who graduated in the past quarter century with a lingering, informed skepticism about the desirability, even the viability, of state control over the economy. The study of “government failure” has been expanding in academic publications and discourse, challenging what had long been an unthinking confidence in state action as a panacea.

In March 2003, two events took place that changed my political commitments to match the changes in my broader views of political economics. First, on March 20, the U.S. military invaded Iraq. Second, later that week, I had dinner at the Washington Duke Inn with U.S. Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania. The former event horrified me, as I had been confidently predicting that the Republican establishment would never endorse an unprovoked attack focused on “nation-building;” we are terrible at that, and always have been. The latter event was my own fault, since Duke’s administration had needed someone to host Senator Santorum and I said “sure!”

The invasion of Iraq is already recognized as one of the top two or three U.S. foreign policy blunders of all time. “My dinner with Rick” revealed to me the hypocrisy of the Republican establishment on domestic policy. The Senator recited a litany of “small government, cut taxes”

nonsense at the same time that he was pushing for dramatic expansions in spending and government regulation of education, drugs, and the personal morality of citizens. Clearly, I was not a Republican, and it wasn't even clear that (to paraphrase Reagan) "I didn't change, they did." This kind of government activism and intrusiveness had always been the core Republican belief, and my flirtation with Reagan's rhetoric had simply been self-delusion.

So, I became a "Big L" libertarian, joining the party and working in 2004 for the campaign of Michael Badnarik, the LP Presidential candidate. He was an odd candidate—his refusal to carry ID or even to have a driver's license meant that flying, especially in the post-9/11 era, was rather difficult, and the U.S. is a large place to campaign if you can't use air travel—but it was interesting to be involved in grass-roots political organizing. We had to collect more than 100,000 signatures to secure the state's gracious permission to be on the ballot, which seems like a violation of basic rights, but it meant I got to talk to a lot of potential voters.

In 2008, I ran for Governor of North Carolina, using a strategy of early radio advertising in July to get decent poll numbers. And it worked: I passed the 5% threshold that put me into the televised debates with Pat McCrory and Bev Perdue, the candidates from the state-sponsored parties. I managed to get nearly 3% of the vote in November, which meant that the Libertarian Party was ballot-qualified in the state and needn't spend a quarter million dollars or more on a signature campaign for the next election.

Concerned about accusations of "spoiling" the election for Republican Pat McCrory, I emphasized social issues and ran hard on the left. The exit polls showed that 65% of "my" voters also voted for Barack Obama, meaning that I likely "took" more votes from the Democratic candidate (as if votes belonged to parties, not the voters!). I have run for two state offices since, the NC House and the NC Senate, and continue to find the connection Murray Weidenbaum had shown me, between policy and ideas, a fascinating area to write and think about.

The notion of a "presumption in favor of liberty" has many advantages as a way of understanding policy problems. The presumption is rebuttable, in the sense that it is possible that some situations require centralized coordination and enforcement. But the burden of proof must

always be on those who want to use coercion, rather than being the default assumption. The idea that “we should do something!” has proven ruinous for much of what made the U.S. an energetic and productive place. Restoring a general presumption in favor of liberty should be a task we all take seriously.



How I Became an Austro-Libertarian

Robert P. Murphy

My journey to libertarianism began with my father. He was a fan of Rush Limbaugh and would often have his show on the radio when I rode around in the car with him. (For younger readers who either don't know who Rush was or who only knew him once he was an elder statesman in the conservative movement, let me just assure you that in the early 1990s, Rush could be hilarious and his show was a lot of fun). When Rush explained how he thought handing out condoms in public schools would actually lead to *more* teenage pregnancies, I was blown away. As a freshman in high school, I had literally never considered the idea that well-meaning programs put forth by American politicians could backfire.

Besides listening to Rush, my dad also unwittingly paved my path by subscribing to a weekly digest called *The Conservative Chronicle*. It compiled the nationally syndicated op-ed articles from a dozen or so conservative writers, including such people as Cal Thomas, Mona Charen, William Safire, Phyllis Schlafly, and media critic Brent Bozell. Each week when the *Chronicle* showed up in the mail, I would devour it. But I soon realized that it was the *economics* articles that fascinated me the most, and

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my favorite contributors in the *Chronicle's* stable were the economists Walter Williams and Thomas Sowell.

From this starting point provided by my dad, I soon took things further. I subscribed to the magazine *National Review* (which had been founded by William F. Buckley, whom I admired in my youthful innocence but now consider a tool of the CIA/warfare State). I believe it was in *National Review* that I came across a writer who criticized some politician for saying that a recent natural disaster would at least stimulate the economy and then remarked offhandedly that “Henry Hazlitt must be rolling over in his grave.” This led me to order Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson*, which (in the preface) mentioned the author’s debt to Ludwig von Mises. (The episode reminds me that it’s important to write “pop pieces” making introductory points for the general public because such pieces might provide the initial link that draws a young reader into this wonderful and important body of work).

However, I’m getting a little ahead of myself. If memory serves, the first economics book I actually bought was Milton Friedman’s *Money Mischief*. I was in a bookstore and went to the relevant section, and of course, I had heard of Friedman and knew his views dovetailed with those of the conservatives/libertarians I was reading. Ironically, I remember being excited to see “an actual equation!” in his book. (Before being seduced by economics, I had planned to become a theoretical physicist, and at this point in my learning I didn’t know that something could be a science without aping the methods of physics). I also remember that it was through Friedman’s other pop books (*Capitalism and Freedom* and *Free to Choose*) that I learned of his theory of the Great Depression being caused by the Fed. This reassured me since until that point I agreed with laissez-faire in theory but still believed what I had been taught about the 1920s in school as a boy—namely, that it was unregulated capitalism that had plunged the U.S. into Depression. Ironically, much later I would encounter Murray Rothbard’s take and modify my opinion. The Fed still caused the great crash of 1929, but not because it had fallen asleep at the wheel, as Friedman maintained. Rather, it was *loose* money during the 1920s that inflated the Wall Street bubble in the first place.

While still in high school (I believe), I also got my hands on the Liberty Fund catalog (I don’t remember how I learned about this organization). This is how I *really* started diving into the classics of free-market economic thought. Through high school and college, I would either buy myself or request as Christmas presents, the next books on my list. In this

way, I read works by David Hume, Mandeville, E.G. West, Bertrand de Jouvenel, and many others.

Soon enough in my studies—certainly while I was still in high school—I realized I was a libertarian and not a conservative. However, I was still (what I would now call) a minarchist. I thought you needed a government to set the laws and collect taxes to fund the police and military. I obtained Murray Rothbard’s *For a New Liberty* and remember disagreeing with his “extreme” views on completely abolishing taxation and privatizing everything, including courts and bombers. It wasn’t until my freshman year in college that I relaxed enough to think “everything would be OK” if society rid itself of a coercive State.

The book that had the single biggest impact on my worldview was, hands down, Mises’ *magnum opus*, *Human Action*. I had to call the bookstore at Hillsdale College to locate a copy; this was well before the days when everyone just went to Amazon to find relatively obscure titles. I’m not claiming I *understood* it, but I did read it cover to cover as a senior in high school. Besides learning economic theory, I found that Mises blamed the fall of Rome ultimately on price controls and inflation and that he thought only the U.S. war machine provided the support that kept the Russians in the fight against Nazi Germany.

In short, by the time I was applying for college, I no longer wanted to be a theoretical physicist with Richard Feynman as my hero. Instead, Mises was my hero now, which is why I went to Hillsdale College to learn not just economics but *Austrian* economics. Hillsdale housed Mises’ personal library, and I studied there under Richard Ebeling as well as Gary Wolfram, Lee Coppock, and Charles van Eaton. The rest is history, as they say. I eventually went on to obtain the Austrian fellowship at New York University, which was overseen by Mario Rizzo. While at NYU I participated in its weekly Austrian colloquium attended by Israel Kirzner, Joe Salerno, David Harper, Bill Butos, Gene Callahan, Roger Koppl, Sandy Ikeda, Young Back Choi, Pete Johnson, and Father James Sadowsky, S.J., among others (I should mention that when I presented my critique of the pure time preference theory of interest—a paper that was critical of Kirzner, who was sitting at the table as I presented—by far the trickiest objection I received was from Father Sadowsky. Everybody else’s responses I had anticipated and were on the battlefield I had chosen, but Sadowsky’s was the kind of statement that made me think, “Well sure, if you look at it *that* way, then I have no real point”).

While at NYU, I was reading the website *antiwar.com* on a daily basis, I believe because of the war in Kosovo. At some point, Justin Raimondo announced that the website *LewRockwell.com* was being launched and that his readers should check it out. I did so, learned about the Mises Institute, and by my second summer in graduate school began the first of 20+ (and counting) annual visits to Auburn, Alabama, where I first learned from, and then taught alongside, faculty such as Guido Hulsmann, Peter Klein, Mark Thornton, Jeff Herbener, Hans Hoppe, David Gordon, Roger Garrison, Tom Woods, Ralph Raico, Tom DiLorenzo, and of course, the indefatigable Walter Block.

The last topic I will mention is the origin of my rivalry with Paul Krugman. During the mid-2000s, I was regularly writing pop economics articles for the Mises Institute's website. I often found myself criticizing the latest NYT op-ed from Krugman because he so clearly articulated the Keynesian orthodoxy that typically was the polar opposite of the Austrian perspective. After the financial crisis in 2008, the Austrians and Keynesians vied for the public's attention in explaining what happened with the housing boom and bust, and what the proper government/Fed response should be. A young woman emailed me to say she had attended a book signing by Krugman, and during the Q&A she asked if he would debate an Austrian on business cycle theory. She told me Krugman answered her along the lines of "You're going to consider this an elitist response, but no serious economist listens to the Austrians anymore and I won't give them a platform by debating them."

Because of this attitude, in the fall of 2010, I launched my public debate challenge. I found a website called *The Point* (which was the precursor to *Groupon*) that allowed users to make financial pledges that would only be activated if a certain condition had been met. In my case, I set it up so that a food bank in New York City would receive the pledged donations *if* Paul Krugman debated me on business cycle theory. I made some silly videos promoting the debate (see, for example, "Stoke the Fear" on YouTube, which has 30,000+ views), and at the peak, we had over \$100,000 in pledges (In case you're wondering, Krugman never debated me).

Five years later, Tom Woods proposed to me that we start a weekly podcast dedicated to critiquing Krugman's latest article. At first, I resisted the suggestion because I didn't want to be pigeonholed or let Krugman

define the terms of the conversation, but then I reflected that my favorite blog posts at that time were when other economists would showcase Krugman's hypocrisy (typically by contrasting his writings when it was a Republican versus Democrat in the White House). So I agreed with Tom's proposal, and our popular podcast "Contra Krugman" launched in the fall of 2015.



A Sower of Freedom in Latin America

Hector Naupari

For me, freedom was a process of impact, enlightenment, learning, planting, and harvesting. From a very young age, I read and followed the life and work of Mario Vargas Llosa with special interest. In 1987, when he was in his fourth year of secondary school at the Salesian School in Lima, he attended the rally against the nationalization of banking advocated by then-president Alan García Pérez and against which the consecrated writer revolted. Considering Vargas Llosa the best Peruvian writer, I immediately assumed that his would be the best ideas for Peru. Listening to him talk about freedom, modernity, and the development of free societies, it was clear to me that his were the ideas for which we had to fight.

From 1987 to 1990, years in which Peru was gripped by hyperinflation and terrorism, the speeches of Vargas Llosa, like those of other prominent classical liberals such as Enrique Gherzi and Federico Salazar, established the principles for which they had to fight. They aimed to achieve a free market economy, without inflation, and ending the violence

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of the Marxist criminal organizations. Mario Vargas Llosa created a political organization called the Liberty Movement, and I would participate in their rallies, meetings, and other activities whenever my schedule permitted.

In 1990, supported by the Peruvian Aprista Party and the conglomerate of leftist parties, an unknown engineer defeated Mario Vargas Llosa in the elections. The latter had suffered from the dirty war of both organizations as well as the disdain of his own allies, such as Popular Action and the Christian Popular Party. However, this was also the year in which I entered the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, in February, and the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, in July, to study Law and Political Science. The latter was taken over and completely defaced with communist slogans by the Marxist forces of the Communist Party of Peru and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. I decided to confront them.

As a result, fellow law students and I sought out first-year students who had the same inclinations for freedom. We brought them into the Freedom Movement to take training classes on liberal ideas with Federico Salazar and we formed a study group, which we called the Ludwig von Mises Studies Circle in homage to the author of books such as *Human Action*, *The Theory of Money and Credit*, *Socialism*, *Theory and History*, among others. Favio León Lecca, Paul Laurent Solís, Christian Aliaga Castillo, Nelvar Carreteros Torres, and Alexander Sáenz Tejada, with whom I founded the Mises Studies Circle, were at those initial gatherings. Meeting every Saturday at Federico's house and determined to advance our training, we began by reading Mises's *Six Lessons on Capitalism* and *Liberalism* before tackling larger works.

Our study group was a surprising event for the Marxist students and professors of all persuasions at the University of San Marcos, who until then had an incontestable monopoly on ideological debate there. We promoted the ideas of freedom in San Marcos by organizing public debates to which we took our mentor, Federico Salazar, a member of the faculty at the University. The communist students engaged in debates with us. We decided to spread our libertarian ideas further and we bought a blackboard that we placed on one of the most visible walls of the Law School. In it, we provided quotes from all the classic liberal authors we read, especially Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Karl Popper, and Adam Smith, among others. It was very curious, and edifying, to see the communist

students writing the quotes in their notebooks as soon as we finished putting them up.

We spent two and a half years studying and debating the ideas in Mises's main work, *Human Action*, with Federico. Our actions and events caught the attention of Enrique Ghersi, a prominent disseminator of liberal thought and colleague of Hernando de Soto, author of the magnificent *The Other Path*. We began to organize events with his institute Center for Research and Legal Studies (CITEL), including conferences with distinguished free market supporters such as Carlos Alberto Montaner, Alberto Benegas Lynch Jr., and Dora de Ampuero, among others. We also proposed to launch a magazine in which we would publish our articles, and we founded the *Open Society Magazine* with Ghersi's support.

Pressed by the need to work, upon finishing my studies in law and political science I ended up leaving the Mises Studies Circle and the role of director of the *Open Society Magazine*. I began working with Beatriz Merino, a recently elected Congresswoman of the Republic of Peru. Merino had been a Senator of the Liberty Movement and her five-year period in Congress, from 1995 to 2000, served to spread the liberal ideas that we shared. That the Mises Studies Circle did not continue in San Marcos made me reflect on the need to train more people in the ideas of freedom. With the members of the Mises Circle, we decided to create another magazine, this time electronic, taking advantage of the growing influence of the Internet. We named it *Ácrata*, which means a supporter of the doctrine that proposes the suppression of all authority.

During this time, I was also active as a poet. In 1999 I published my first book of poetry, entitled *In the Basements of the Twilight*. The same year, I made the decision to study abroad. Thanks to my liberal training, I decided to apply for a Doctorate in Private Law at the University of Salamanca, the birthplace of late scholastics such as Francisco de Vitoria, Tomás de Mercado, Luis de Molina, Juan de Mariana, and Martín de Azpilcueta. In 2000, at the end of my work for the Peruvian Congress, I left for Salamanca. There I began to make contact with Spanish and European liberals and to interview them for *Ácrata*. I recall with special affection the interview with Jesús Huerta De Soto, the most important Spanish liberal and owner of Unión Editorial, the main publisher of liberal thought in Latin America and Spain. He became a decisively influential mentor for me, and, when time permitted, I also attended his brilliant

classes at the Faculty of Economics of the Complutense University of Madrid.

In June of 2001, I traveled to Bayonne, France, to an event on Bastiat organized by the International Society of Individual Liberty, with which I still maintain a beneficial relationship to this day. After about a year of delivering lectures at the University of Salamanca and writing articles for *Ácrata*, I secured a teaching position at Francisco Marroquín University of Guatemala, the academic center of freedom in Latin America.

In Guatemala, where I taught for a semester, I met many of the liberal Latin American thinkers, such as University President Fernando Monteroso. One of the articles that he published in *Ácrata*, called “Third Way, Dead End” won the Charles S. Stillman Award for best journalistic article in 2001.

At the end of that year, I decided to return to Peru. We had to fight to maintain and, if possible, advance the liberal policies that were bringing relative prosperity to my country. I decided to create a think tank with friends who shared the same libertarian ideas. We called it the *Institute of Human Action Studies*, in homage to Mises. I resumed contact with Harald Klein, director of the Naumann Foundation in Lima, who asked me to create a network of liberal organizations, a kind of “foundation of foundations” that could disseminate information about events, actions, congresses, and publications throughout Latin America. I named it the Liberal Network of Latin America, RELIAL. After seventeen years of uninterrupted work, RELIAL currently has thirty-seven active organizations throughout Latin America.

In 2004, I published the book *Libertarian Pages*, which brought together all my articles and the interviews I had previously conducted. In its prologue, I wrote that freedom is the answer that overcomes poverty, hunger, and misery; not as a panacea, but as a possibility for human beings to give their maximum when facing these evils and, in that way, to survive and progress. Freedom encourages creativity, innovation, competition, sacrifice, the vocation of service to others, and all the feelings that make human beings noble and worthy.

I also returned to poetry, and in 2006 I published *Rose of the Winds*. Meanwhile, thanks to the brilliant Ecuadorian economist Dora de Ampuero from the Ecuadorian Institute of Political Economy, to whom I owe so much, in 2006 I made my debut as an international writer presenting *Libertarian Pages* in Guayaquil.

With RELIAL we made unsuccessful efforts to counteract the socialist wave; we were dismayed to see how our efforts crashed against the firm intention of Latin Americans to commit collective suicide. Talking about freedom policies from an economic perspective only sounded to our compatriots, intoxicated by that identity and socialist delirium, like the speech of an invading army.

That is why I decided to change the focus of my articles and reflections from a narrow economic perspective toward libertarian ideology and culture. This change began with my book *Liberty for All* (published by Editorial Grito Sagrado, Argentina, 2008, with a prologue by Carlos Alberto Montaner), which aimed to inspire people about libertarianism and convert them to this philosophy. Only in this way will liberalism become widespread and popular. They will defend it as a child is protected from danger by his parents. That is and should be the measure of our success. Everything else is a failure. That same year, Gustavo Lazzari from the Atlas Foundation and I compiled the book of essays *Successful Liberal Policies 2, Solutions to Overcome Poverty*, in Mexico, under the auspices of RELIAL and the Naumann Foundation for Liberty, now directed by Ulrich Wacker.

The following decade continued to be productive, and some of the highlights deserve mention here. The year 2010 saw the publication of another compilation of essays, entitled *The New Path of Freedom, Four Liberal Essays*. In 2012, I began my collaboration with Unión Editorial, publishing my new book of essays, *Liberal Sense: the Urgent Path of Freedom*, presented and prologued by my teachers Carlos Sabino and Jesús Huerta de Soto, respectively. In 2015, I published *Liberalism is Freedom*, with a foreword by Ángel Soto. In 2019, I discontinued my relationship with RELIAL and returned to poetry again, publishing *Malevolent your Absence*, comprised of 19 poems about an equal number of literary female characters, from Odysseus's wife Penelope to Golden Feet, the courtesan of Vargas Llosa's novel *The City and the Dogs*. In 2020, I published my poetry gathered in a book that I called *Shadow's Mouth*, in homage to Víctor Hugo, the exceptional French creator who wrote that "romanticism is liberalism in literature."

I can say, in this part of the journey, that two wonderful passages from the Bible define me: that of the voice in the desert (John 1: 6–8) and, above all, the parable of the sower (Matthew 13: 18–23). Indeed, my failures to make Latin Americans understand the suicide they commit when they vote for the communists and socialists make one preach in the desert,

as in recent years, without learning the lesson. I fail when my libertarian preaching falls on deaf, weak, or worried ears; but the freedom that I will always defend, until the last day of my life, bears fruit when it falls on fertile, willing, committed spirits, and, by my word and my deed, those spirits become “practical men who have the cause of freedom genuinely in the heart,” as Hayek wrote in *Intellectuals and Socialism*. It is there that freedom seems to triumph. But the cause of freedom must be permanent and without reservation because it has too many enemies. For this reason, as the Cuban poet Fayad Jamis wrote in his poem *For this freedom*, “For this freedom / beautiful as life / we will have to give everything / if necessary / even the shadows / and it will never be enough.”



Opening Minds and Sharing the Passion for Liberty

Radu Nechita

Thursday, April 22, 1993. If I had to pick one specific date for my encounter with classical liberal ideas, it would be this one. I arrived back in Cluj, Romania, from spring break at Babeş-Bolyai University and went straight from the train station to attend a two-day workshop with three French professors: Jacques Garelo, Jean-Pierre Centi (both from Université d’Aix-Marseille III), and Bertrand Lemennicier (from Université Paris-Dauphine).

I still remember the “aha” and “wow” moments during the lectures about the history of economic and political thought, philosophy, and theoretical and applied economics. Suddenly, all my disparate thoughts and fuzzy intuitions arranged themselves into a meaningful order. As everything started to make sense, I felt a strong desire to learn about and understand better ideas and facts previously unknown to me. Like

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the strange idea of banking systems without a central bank. Or privatizing roads. And the courts. And even national defense. (I must confess that I am still struggling with the last one.)

As a third-year student in economics at Cluj, I had not yet been exposed to those ideas. When could I have been? During my high school years, before the fall of the communist regime in 1989? Back then, for my university entrance exam, I had to learn by heart a textbook full of Marxist political economy and Romanian Communist Party propaganda. And who could have promoted those ideas? Because of censorship, my university professors had had extremely limited access to classical liberal literature throughout their careers. After 1989, many of them did amazing work, a swift upgrade using previously forbidden—and at that time still hard to find—fundamental classical liberal books. However, Political Economy Departments at universities remained under the control of Marxist professors, despite the violent regime change that had occurred in the country. Consequently, it took a long time before there was a meaningful shift toward a more free-market-oriented approach to economics.

That workshop connected me to the world of classical liberals (foreign and Romanian) and to the “right books.” It was around that time that I started to read Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* and *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Henry Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson*, and Paul Heyne’s *The Economic Way of Thinking*. Furthermore, it was that same workshop that gave me the opportunity to learn about the Institute for Humane Studies-Europe (since then renamed Institute for Economic Studies-Europe), in particular their student programs, which turned out to be pivotal for my career and life.

During the summer of 1993, I attended two of those programs, organized in France: a seminar in Chambon-sur-Lignon and a summer university in Aix-en-Provence. In Chambon, in just one week, Professors Victoria Curzon-Price, Jacques Garello, Henri Lepage, and Angelo Petroni succeeded in significantly upgrading my understanding of classical liberalism. I still have the reading materials, which include texts by Lysander Spooner, Murray Rothbard, James Buchanan, Alain Laurent, and John Stuart Mill. The central ideas of those programs have remained engrained forever in my mind and have guided me throughout my professional life as an economist: individual freedom is the most important political objective, and its defense must integrate economic, moral, juridical, and historical arguments.

The Summer University, at its sixteenth gathering, had already become a large-scale and well-attended event, transforming every year the little town of Aix-en-Provence into the “capital of French liberalism,” with about five hundred European students attending lectures given by classical liberals from all over the world. It was then that I had the privilege to listen for the first time to Professors Israel Kirzner, Leonard Liggio, Don Boudreaux, and Douglas Rasmussen.

In the following years, I attended again various other I.H.S.-Europe seminars and about a dozen meetings of the Summer University of Aix-en-Provence. One of the major intellectual benefits of my participation in these events was listening to and meeting in person fabulous speakers and authors whom I knew from my reading and admired, such as Gary Becker, Steve Davies, Lord Harris of High Cross, Tibor Machan, Tom Palmer, Douglas Rasmussen, George Selgin, and many others I regretfully am not able to mention here due to space constraints. Each one helped me learn new ideas, understand them a little bit better, and defend them in a more convincing way. I even had the chance to meet some rare palatable politicians, such as Alain Madelin, whom I perfectly remember quipping that “when you are facing a problem, never ask a politician for a solution, because the politician is the problem.”

In 1995, Professors Jacques Garelo and Jean-Pierre Centi placed their faith in me even more and invited me to attend a Master’s program (Diplôme d’Etudes Approfondies) in Economic Analysis of Institutions at the Université d’Aix-Marseille III, a life-changing opportunity for which I will forever be thankful. By that time, my interest in the monetary competition had already been crystallized, encouraged by Professor Centi, who agreed to be the director of my future research in that field. The first book I had read on the topic was George Selgin’s *Theory of Free Banking*, a very thoughtful gift from Véronique de Ruyg (at that time, the Assistant Director of I.H.S.-Europe).

I will always owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Jacques Garelo, not only for his intellectual influence but also for his personal and practical support. Together with Professors Jean-Pierre Centi and Gérard Bramoullé, he persuaded me to pursue a Ph.D. in banking regulation and to start teaching at the university level. Leading with his example of dedication to the cause of classical liberalism, he encouraged me to promote those ideas to a wider audience. I had the privilege of being part of a small team of researchers that Professor Garelo mentored to teach “economics for non-economists” and, under his guidance, I wrote

approximately 200 articles for www.libres.org, a website whose purpose is to educate the French public in classical liberal ideas.

In my intellectual and professional journey, I have always had the total support of my family, without any significant ideological conflicts. Probably the most significant exception I can remember is one of my first discussions with a beautiful and smart young woman: we had a slight (or perhaps sharp?) disagreement on the flat versus the progressive income tax. The argument was eventually resolved, thanks to a couple of books: a collection of Frédéric Bastiat's essays and *Théories contre l'impôt* (*Theories against Taxation*), a selection of texts compiled by Alain Laurent. As a side note: while that woman eventually became my wife, I would not necessarily recommend the flat tax as a good first-date topic.

My family's support and influence on my political and economic thinking had started much earlier and prepared me for my 1993 encounter with classical liberalism. From 1978 until 1982, my parents worked as high school teachers in Morocco, taking advantage of a unique opportunity. (Morocco contracted with some of the countries in the Socialist bloc to bring in French-speaking teachers of which they were in great need.) At a time when most Romanians were not allowed to even leave their country, my family had the opportunity to live in Casablanca and even visit many Western European countries during summer holidays. All this was possible without being members of the nomenklatura, but purely thanks to the education, grit, and courage of my parents, who learned a foreign language, took risks, and went to a different continent to improve the life prospects of their children. While living abroad as a Romanian coming from an officially atheist country, but with a mostly Orthodox-Christian population, I learned French in a Jewish school alongside Jewish and Muslims Moroccans.

This experience opened up my eyes to a new world. It was the French I learned in my childhood that enabled me even before 1989 to read forbidden books, such as translations of Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, borrowed from Nicolae Weisz, a French language teacher and family friend. And it was also French that helped me, years later, to take advantage of the opportunity to study in Aix-en-Provence.

Just as importantly, the memories from my childhood in Morocco made me immune to the ubiquitous communist propaganda. Among these memories are the comparisons that even as a child I could draw not only between socialist Romania and the countries of Western Europe

but also between Romania and Morocco—a so-called “developing country” as it was considered at that time. The diversity of cars, abundance of goods, and solicitude of salespersons in Morocco contrasted sharply with the monotony of the Dacia 1300 (the Romanian version of the Renault 12 produced for 20 years), shortages of almost every kind of merchandise, and indifferent shop assistants of socialist Romania.

That immunity to communist propaganda was further strengthened by the “real history” taught to me by my grandfather; an educated farmer and self-taught bee-keeper who had seen the family’s eight hectares of land, purchased by his own father with immense sacrifices, confiscated by the communists in the 1950s. Moreover, tuning in with my parents, almost on a daily basis, to the programs of Radio Free Europe, The Voice of America, BBC, and Radio France Internationale, allowed me to bypass censorship and access news and information from the free world. I believe that these radio stations’ public financing during the Cold War was not the worst way to spend taxpayers’ money. In any event, these experiences generated in me, at a young age, a distrust in big government and central-planning policies, and created the fertile ground in which the seeds of classical liberal ideas could take root and flourish later on.

After earning my Ph.D., I had to decide my path forward, which was to return to Romania to teach at the university level, becoming, in turn, someone who could plant the classical liberal seeds in future generations. This decision came with a significant monetary sacrifice, as it entailed a 90% reduction of my income, but I felt that I would have a more meaningful life and be more useful in my own country.

The leadership and staff of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj have provided me the platform and necessary support to teach economic disciplines in the European Studies Department since 2002. I have enjoyed since the very beginning a total freedom of speech (which is increasingly appreciated by our international students, many of whom do not enjoy the same degree of freedom in their home countries). This allowed me to organize, since 2003, a series of weekly lectures under the name of the “Friedrich Hayek Seminar,” an extracurricular activity that has attracted a large number of students from various backgrounds and majors. We were only five at our first meeting but at times reached more than two hundred. Students have considered the discussions at the seminar to be eye-opening for them; they have also greatly appreciated the many presentations given by guest lecturers, including Tom Palmer, Douglas Rasmussen, Gregory Rehmke, and Pierre Garello, as well as the books donated to our small,

but growing, “Freedom Library.” The activities of the “Friedrich Hayek Seminar” were awarded an Honorable Mention by the Atlas Economic Research Foundation and the Templeton Foundation. Thanks to the strong ties maintained with I.E.S.-Europe and to its support, I was also able to organize in Romania two international seminars, similar to those I had attended as a student.

In order to reach a wider audience, I have translated into Romanian various articles and books. (Leonard Read’s *I, Pencil*, Mark Skousen’s *Economics in One Page*, Johan Norberg’s *In Defense of Global Capitalism*.) I have written dozens of articles for the general public in the mainstream media and participated in about a hundred TV and radio shows and interviews, helping to bring a classical liberal perspective to the debate on pressing issues, such as retirement plans and taxation. I even dared to deliver “economics for non-economists” training to two or three political parties in an attempt to open up their minds. (That was my closest contact with politics.)

In all my mass-media appearances I have advocated fiscal moderation and accountability, monetary stability, entrepreneurship, and limitations on politicians’ discretionary power. I have consistently promoted the idea that economic education is the only available cure against demagoguery. My most recent paper, “Wrong Policies Increase the Cost of Living,” written with Christian Năsulea and Diana Năsulea from IES-Europe, with the financial support of the European Policy Information Center in Brussels, reached an audience of more than three million in Romania, among which one million were from my interview with the top-rated national television channel alone. More remains to be done, however, to increase the reach of the classical liberal movement through a more cohesive and impactful team with the numerous colleagues in my hometown and in the country who share similar views and values.

Reflecting back on my journey so far, I realize that, while working in education was not part of my initial career plan, I cannot now imagine it any other way. Teaching in France during my Ph.D. program was a chance occurrence and the first step in this direction, and my students’ positive feedback gave me confidence that I could continue on this path. Having the privilege to study and work for seven years at Université d’Aix-Marseille III in the world of classical liberal ideas gave me the will

to make this intellectual feast last forever. Jacques Garello's encouragements gave me the energy to continue when I had second thoughts. Tom Palmer, with his personal story and example, convinced me that "paying it forward" by disseminating liberty-promoting ideas was the moral thing to do and, as Douglas Rasmussen would say, an inseparable part of my personal flourishing.



From African Socialism to Libertarianism

Wanjiru Njoya

*When I asked myself, “Am I truly free?” I began slowly to understand the nature of man and man’s situation on this planet. I understood at last that every human being is free; that I am endowed by the Creator with inalienable liberty—Rose Wilder Lane, *Give Me Liberty* (Caxton Printers, 1954)*

I live in Devonshire, where the colloquial “tis what tis” is often used to express the idea that reality is not simply a figment of our imagination, nor is it a mere social construct that may be whimsically re-engineered at will. This common-sense wisdom coheres with my understanding of libertarianism.

Libertarianism to me is a philosophy of liberty, a set of principles according to which each individual can live a meaningful and happy life. Libertarianism in that sense is more than a party-political programme, more than a way to understand economic and monetary systems, indispensable though these are to peaceful coexistence. The essence of libertarianism lies in the principle that every human being is born free and remains so throughout the course of his life.

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I was born in New Jersey. My father was then a student at the Princeton Theological Seminary. Our box set of *Little House on the Prairie* books was a gift from my parents' American friends, which may partly explain why Rose Wilder Lane's philosophy appeals to me on a very personal level. She recounts events that I know to be true. In the end, this desire to live according to principles one knows to be true goes a long way in explaining why anybody follows one philosophical path rather than another.

Following my father's graduation from Princeton, our family returned to Kenya. I was raised in a bookish home with a wide range of fiction from African writers (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe) to Ayn Rand. Perhaps it is this, more than any other single factor, that explains why I was never beguiled by the socialist orthodoxies which nowadays dominate the liberal universe. When I first read *Atlas Shrugged* I regarded it as nothing more than an engaging work of fiction with tales of heroism and valour, but that may have been enough to make me in due course alert to the wiles of statist schemers and meddlers. That, and the failed "African socialism" experiments which we studied in school were instrumental in my intellectual odyssey. There was a faint air of "socialism doesn't work, but it has never really been tried, so if we add Africanism to it, it's sure to work." It was socialism with what were said to be redemptive African features, such as Julius Nyerere's "ujamaa" which promoted the collective interest of tribe or village above individualism.

Thence began my journey to discover why some countries are rich and others are poor, and specifically the role of property rights in economic growth. We were taught that the essential evil of colonialism lay in imposing private property rights onto a pre-capitalist society. Lenin's writings were prescribed reading in my property law classes at the University of Nairobi. Later, as a research student at Cambridge, the liberal progressive "proprietary stakeholder theory" seemed to me a more robust and theoretically sound exposition of the conceptual foundations of property rights than the Marxist ideas underpinning African socialism. My doctoral project, published in my first book titled *Property in Work* (Ashgate, 2007) was based on the idea of "stakeholders as owners." As I wrote in the preface to that book, the title reflects jurisprudential debates about the property as a "bundle of rights" in which workers have proprietary claims as corporate stakeholders. The book considers John Locke's ideas only in passing, and that was about as far outside the socialist worldview as I ever strayed in those years.

My early career was spent teaching and writing about employment rights and labour relations at various law schools including Oxford, LSE, and Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. My publications from those years explore the themes of subordinate labour which dominate the academic analysis of the contract of employment. My work was motivated by an attempt, albeit tentative, to resolve the contradiction between my instinctive commitment to freedom of contract and my desire to remain within the parameters of orthodox discourse on labour market regulation. Colouring within the lines. I floundered in a sea of utilitarianism and the so-called "market correcting" function of legislation.

To this day I might still be mired in that futile and impotent endeavour had I not been rescued by my Queen's colleague, Bruce Parady. Bruce was kind enough not only to read my work but also to ask the crucial questions which exposed the progressive fallacies I had superficially assumed to be true simply by never troubling to question them. "Economic inequality is a problem," said I. "Why?" asked Bruce. It is not always easy to question principles regarded by most people as self-evident, but once questioned false principles melt away like freezies in the sun. Progressivist ideology does not withstand serious intellectual scrutiny.

At about that time, I started writing a blog exploring "thoughts on law and economic development." I was primarily interested in exploring ideas freely without the need to mollify peer reviewers or "progressivize" my opinions to make them palatable for an academic audience. I sought freedom from the strictures of what progressives call "reasonableness" which really just means "stick to the narrative or perish." This led in turn to the idea for my next book, *Economic Freedom and Social Justice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

While writing that book I stumbled upon Murray Rothbard's *Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature* (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2000). That was something of a road to Damascus moment. I was, of course, familiar with Friedrich Hayek's ideas on law and liberty which are widely influential in academic discourse, but was not familiar with Rothbard, or others in the Austrian school. It is impossible to overstate the impact Rothbard's *Egalitarianism* had on me, especially the realization that ideas I had assumed to be amorphous and peripheral to my inquiry (*Atlas Shrugged* is just fiction, right?) were in truth central to resolving the identity-politics debates of our time. I realized that it was not only possible but in fact deeply necessary and urgent, to question the ethical

foundations of egalitarianism. I was particularly struck by the force of Rothbard's unflinching words:

Since their methodology and their goals deny the very structure of humanity and of the universe, the egalitarians are profoundly antihuman; and, therefore, their ideology and their activities may be set down as profoundly evil as well. Egalitarians do not have ethics on their side unless one can maintain that the destruction of civilization, and even of the human race itself, may be crowned with the laurel wreath of a high and laudable morality. (*Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature*, p. 20)

In evaluating contemporary racial equality debates from that perspective, I drew heavily on David Gordon's three-volume *Austro-Libertarian Essays* (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2017) and particularly David's argument that a natural-rights libertarian need not concede the moral debate to Rawlsian liberals just because they dominate the academy; instead, we must continue to defend the basic principles of justice (life, liberty, and property) as best we can—an argument which runs like a golden thread through David's *Essays*.

I was delighted that David agreed to write a foreword for this second book of mine. He was also generous enough to read the book in draft and to offer suggestions that transformed it from a tentative set of gentle questions about equality legislation to a more penetrating theoretical and philosophical analysis. As countless others have said, David knows where all the good ideas are buried, and has a mind more powerful than a google search engine in navigating the paths to libertarian enlightenment and avoiding the many perils and pitfalls along the way.

David and I are now working on a study of self-ownership and property rights in the context of contemporary reparations debates. Reparations for slavery and colonialism are thought to be necessary for “restorative justice,” a conceptualization of justice which wrongly supposes that justice can be achieved by dismantling property rights. We draw upon post-colonial historical and economic developments to highlight the role of free markets in advancing liberty, prosperity, and global justice. I strongly feel that it is essential for libertarian perspectives to be heard in these debates.



Anarchy, Minimal State, and Job Utopia

Johan Norberg

Our anarchist party won the election!

Granted, it was just a school election. It was 1988, I was 15 years old and in the last year of mandatory schooling in Hässelby, a Western suburb of Stockholm, Sweden. But still, it was my one involvement in party politics—and we won! On a platform of abolishing the state—and the ban on bicycles in the schoolyard.

My earliest political views stemmed from some kind of aversion to authorities. I am sure a therapist would trace it to childhood issues with being forced to join groups and behave like others, which was awkward for a slightly introverted nerd. On the other hand, I took delight in the company of historical characters and adventure stories and found that the bad guys were always authoritarians, be it feudal lords, inquisitors, the Sheriff of Nottingham, or Darth Vader. Or fascists, national socialists, and communists.

I grew up in a fairly typical middle-class home in Hässelby, with a historian father and a teacher mother. They taught me the value of reading and

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learning, and that it was acceptable to think and discuss freely, as long as it was based on knowledge and facts.

This is probably why I felt safe taking some intellectual liberties and going my own way. Together with my brother Peter and my classmate Markus, then of similar beliefs, I deepened this basic presumption of freedom. We wanted to be clever and consistent and to clear out contradictions in our reasoning. I remember realizing that institutions I had taken for granted were contrary to my fundamental demand for individual autonomy, one by one, like compulsory schooling, taxes, the drug war, restricted immigration, and, yes, the government itself. If freedom is good, then complete freedom must be the very best. At some point, I had seen the anarchist-A painted on a wall, and someone told me in disgust it meant “no state.” Slowly but steadily I converted myself to that position.

I did not become an anarcho-capitalist (which I had yet to hear about). I was hostile to big business and modern technology and wanted to go back to nature. But neither was I an anarcho-socialist. I was an individualist anarchist who defended private property and found it difficult to say where the accumulation of property should stop and how.

Some read great thinkers to learn something. I am a little embarrassed to confess that my studies in intellectual history started in reverse. I read it primarily to find ideas similar to what I already believed, to prove to teachers and classmates (and myself) that they were wrong when telling me that “no one thinks like that.”

So I started reading anarchists only after I had become one myself. And they disappointed me. Some of them wanted us to live in small communities subjected to the majority opinion. Others were little more than re-branded socialists. I did enjoy Max Stirner, and for a while called myself an anarcho-nihilist, but, in the end, he seemed to be more in favor of freedom for himself than for others. Perhaps they were right, I thought, no one else thought like me.

Then I stumbled across “neoliberals” in the late 1980s. This was the odd Swedish word for classical liberals or libertarians, usually used as a derogatory term. This was before the internet, so I had to make do with references in newspapers and whatever I found in libraries. But I did find attacks on them in several books. Apparently, these people, in the tradition of Adam Smith and the Manchester School, hated the government and did not care enough for people to subject them to regulation and control. It was a caricature that was close to what people said about me. I considered Smith, Richard Cobden, and John Bright to be much too

moderate and too focused on economics, but at least they cared more about individual liberty than some of my old anarchist friends.

Then one day in 1990 my life changed when my mother called me from the living room: “Johan, come quickly, there is someone on television who thinks like you!” It was Christian Gergils, the young charismatic leader of the Freedom Front, a new libertarian organization started by him, Anders Varveus, and Mattias Bengtsson. Gergils said, in a friendly and incredibly convincing manner, that the only acceptable laws are the ones that protect life, liberty, and property. I knew instantly that these were my people. I searched them out and became an activist. The Freedom Front was a remarkable organization, with great minds who introduced me to modern libertarian thinkers, but also brave activists who hid refugees from the Balkan wars and sent pirate radio.

The Front was in favor of a night-watchman state, though, so my first, critical article in its magazine *Nyliberalen* (The Neo-liberal) was published with the headline “Are you content with reducing oppression just a bit?” I must be one of the few people who moderated their views after meeting the Freedom Front. At least by 1992, I defended a voluntarily financed minimal state. The next year, now 19 years old, I became editor-in-chief of *Nyliberalen*, started writing regularly, and slowly learned what people want (and do not want) to read.

By then, I was already a bartender at the Freedom Front speakeasy Tritnaha in central Stockholm. Tritnaha was a nightclub that protested against restrictive licensing laws, which prevented most bars from remaining open after midnight. We were open all night and, unlike other speakeasies, did not act in secret but talked loudly about our moral right to do this. It was an astonishing success with more than 10,000 members and a great source of revenue for activism. Every time the police raided the place, arrested those of us responsible and confiscated the booze, another group opened it up again and had the party going soon after. After, I think, 18 police raids, Stockholm politicians liberalized licensing laws and opened the city for all-night partying, because they couldn’t stop us in any other way. An even more significant victory than the school election.

Every morning, when I had closed the bar and cleaned up the mess, I went down into the basement, clad with bookshelves, and exchanged my earnings for books. I loved John-Henri Holmberg’s Swedish introduction to libertarian ideas and traced the lineage of such ideas to John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, and John Stuart Mill. I found Robert Nozick’s *Anarchy, State and Utopia* a delight, learned how to argue from Frédéric

Bastiat, and enjoyed the radicalism of Murray Rothbard. At last I recognized my own thoughts in important books. But two thinkers stood out because they also challenged me.

Even though I was at first resistant, I have come to realize that they had a profound effect on my way of looking at the world. Initially, I was so cocksure about everything and found Friedrich Hayek's humble, empirical case for liberty to be a bit decaffeinated. But the more I learned about economics and culture, the more bits and pieces fit into his theories of epistemic humility and spontaneous order.

The other thinker was Ayn Rand. I considered myself a pessimist, nihilist, and determinist, and I still had an emotionally negative view of science, technology, and growth. And here I met a writer who spoke of objective human values and free will and claimed that technology and industry were the most beautiful things man has ever created. I was appalled. And fascinated. Rand had an ability to get to the bottom of every question and challenge one's every belief. She did not leave me alone, so I kept debating her, sometimes with others but mostly in my own mind—and eventually I lost. Rand revealed that I often started from non-verbalized points of departure that I tried to deny intellectually—stolen concepts—such as the existence of an objective reality or reason as our tool of knowledge. Even the fact that I was alive thanks to an industrial revolution that I abhorred. Simultaneous study of history taught me that there were no good old days and that my ancestors battled hunger. I could no longer take modern civilization for granted and just complain.

Ironically, Rand's most important effect on me was emotional—my bright sense of life, my belief in man, in progress, and the future. She made me see that technology and innovation are romantic adventures, and under her influence I began to shift from fighting against what's bad to fighting for what's good—for progress and not just against oppression.

The Freedom Front soon broke down because of factional infighting. Some just wanted to party, others wanted to riot against the police, and others wanted to turn it into a boring, intellectual think tank (that would be me). We split ways. Some ended up with normal jobs, some at university, some in prison, and me, I ended up at Timbro, a free market think tank.

While I was active in the Front I had studied at the University of Stockholm (lots of subjects, but mostly the History of Ideas), but I only did the bare minimum and just read the textbooks on the subway commute. I wanted to read other books and write other papers. Back then Timbro had

approached me to write a book on the Swedish novelist Vilhelm Moberg and his world view, after I had written an essay about him in a newspaper. This 1997 book stirred a debate, and I got to write another one, on classical liberalism in Swedish history. In 1999, I started working at Timbro, writing about political philosophy and public policy and most of all about free trade, partly because it combined my love of free markets and cosmopolitanism, and partly because a storm was brewing.

The turn of the century was a time of simmering discontent with capitalism and free trade, and every meeting of the World Trade Organization was ambushed by thousands of protesters who called for protectionism, subsidies, and government intervention. I crashed their party, debated the activists in the media and at events, and in 2001, I collected my arguments against them in the book *In Defense of Global Capitalism*. It proved the old saying that it takes a decade to make an overnight success. It was a smash hit in Sweden, but also a global bestseller, eventually translated into more than 25 languages.

This was the book that gave me an international audience. It got rave reviews in newspapers like *Financial Times*, *The Times*, and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and I was awarded the Sir Antony Fisher International Memorial by the Atlas Foundation and the gold medal by the German Hayek Stiftung (that year, I shared it with Margaret Thatcher). Britain's Channel Four asked me to do a documentary about globalization.

Soon I was approached by David Boaz of the Cato Institute, which published the book in the US, and later I joined them as a Senior Fellow. Bob Chitester of Free to Choose (of Milton Friedman fame) persuaded me to start doing documentaries for US public television and video blogs like *Dead Wrong* and *New and Improved*. Combined with the books I continued to write and success on the lecture circuit, such networks made it possible for me to promote classical liberal ideas for a living, on a freelance basis. Recently, Cato's Peter Goettler invited me to make the institute the real base and spiritual home of my various activities, and I was delighted to accept since it is the think tank that I have come to respect the most, after having tried out several.

To get to fight to save the world *and* get paid to do it! To me, all this seems utopian. I always wanted to live and work like this—sit at home, read and write, and then go out on the road for missionary activities. I always considered it crucial, because the greatest challenge for libertarianism is outreach. We have superior principles, theories, research, and

reform proposals, but we don't have hearts and minds (or even ears). My books, lectures, and documentaries have always been attempts to reach new audiences and at least make the world a little bit safer for openness and progress.

Perhaps, a therapist would say, I want this lifestyle because a slightly introverted nerd finds it difficult to thrive in a normal job, in a normal office, and never to eat alone.



Russia, My Journey, and the Hayek Foundation

Yuri Petukhov

My life is an endless struggle against socialism and for the establishment of libertarian values in the Russian Federation. It is not possible for me to speak of myself without taking into account the history of Russia, on the one hand, and the establishment of the Hayek Foundation, on the other. Accordingly, my autobiography will begin with a brief reflection on my country's political vicissitudes and conclude with a description of the Hayekian-inspired foundation that I established two decades ago.

STRIVINGS FOR FREEDOM IN RUSSIA

In the history of Russia, the first known example of a rebellion against Soviet power was the “Professors’ Strike” in the winter of 1921, involving protests by dozens of Moscow professors who disagreed with restrictions on rights and freedoms at the universities. The teachers of the capital’s educational institutions subsequently refused en masse to work, opposing

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the proletarianization of their institutions and the ideological dictatorship of the Bolsheviks. The result of this rebellion was the expulsion from Russia of “disloyal” citizens, carried out at the behest of Vladimir Lenin. In historical accounts, this forced exodus is commonly referred to as the “Philosophical Steamer.” Writers Ivan Bunin and Alexander Kuprin, composers Sergei Prokofiev and Sergey Rachmaninov, poets Vyacheslav Ivanov and Marina Tsvetaeva, and other famous figures of science, culture, and the arts were exiled from their homeland. Ideological differences with (and ultimately rejection of) the Soviet government prompted many representatives of Russian culture to leave their homeland throughout the following decades.

One of the most impactful Russian émigrés is Ayn Rand, born in the Russian Empire in 1905 as Alisa Zinovievna Rosenbaum. Rand was well aware of the price of the promises of the Soviet state under the name “war communism.” In 1926, she moved to the United States where she flourished as a writer and philosopher, founding the philosophical school of Objectivism. In her best-selling novel *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), she imaginatively demonstrated the need for a rebellion of entrepreneurs against a socialist government in order to save the human race.

In 1991, the dissolution of the Soviet Union allowed for the establishment of the Russian Federation founded on democratic elections and market-oriented reforms. This democratic revolution made possible a move toward living in accordance with the practice of “reasonable selfishness” (Ayn Rand). Russians began to understand that freedom is not an abstract concept, but rather an immanent condition for a person’s own development in any society. For the Russian Federation, the concept of “libertarian political ideology” was a new phenomenon, but the principles of economic, political, and personal freedom have become new criteria for human life in Russia. There is greater recognition that governmental interference in an individual’s economic and personal development must be resisted.

In 1993, however, the Russian government attacked a large number of the country’s private banks, including my bank, transferring false payment requests (payment advices) to the banks for large amounts of money. This action fueled my determination to push against the abuses of political power and to work toward furthering economic activity under capitalism.

The Russian Federation embarked on a path of state regulation by forcibly changing the market value to the state (that is, declared and established by government decree) value, something that the government had

abandoned in 1991. Still new market relations, which we had dreamed of all our lives under the Soviet regime, thus received the first blow from the state. Many entrepreneurs, in fact, protested the government's socialist policies during the 1990s.

MY PROFESSIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY

I was born in the town of Sovgavan, in Khabarovsk Krai (USSR), in 1953. My higher education was in the field of military-political philosophy, and I studied the main currents of social and political thought in the world. I first heard about libertarian theory from my professor and supervisor of my Ph.D. dissertation, Kovalzon Matvey Yakovlevich (1913–1992). At that time, he was a professor at the Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov and was the informal leader of an alternative philosophical school in the USSR. I prepared my scientific work according to his methodology, which led to a non-conventional dissertation on the general theory of political revolution. I argued, for example, that a political revolution is possible in a socialist society and that rational human activity during periods of revolution is a means of personal (humanitarian) development for a person. Since my dissertation did not glorify the Soviet system or socialism, I was summoned to the prosecutor's office on the eve of my defense. Lomonosov Moscow University actually expelled me from the defense at the request of the prosecutor's office. Subsequently, I defended my dissertation at Kazan State University and received an academic degree in political philosophy. This occurred in 1988 near the beginning of the reign of Mikhail Gorbachev.

I have worked in the financial and political sectors throughout my career. In 1991, I founded the Russian Insurance Bank, of which I was president until 2000 when the bank was reorganized through the fault of the state. From 2000 to today, I have been the president of a private bank, Credit Yunival Corporation. In addition, I have taught courses in political science and philosophy and have been working on a book about state socialism.

As the head of a private bank, I was able to visit many countries in Western Europe and America. In these trips and in conversations with the leaders of the world's largest banks, my conviction was strengthened that only libertarian philosophy reflects the new economic interests of the Russian people in the transition to market relations. The concept of "state value" has no place in my new understanding of the world. My credo is

life has become the defense and promotion of the principles of capitalism based on private property, free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional democratic values, and a strong national defense.

My libertarian perspective has also required new organizational structures. This is why I worked to establish the Bourgeois-Conservative Party in 1999, the Hayek Foundation (Moscow) in 2002, the Hayek Institute in 2009, and the Charity Medical Foundation in 2018. In a way, each step led logically to the next. For the remainder of this autobiography, I would like to focus specifically on the Hayek Foundation. Of course, there have been many like-minded people around me, but I undertook all the practical, theoretical, financial, and organizational work, including the registration, myself.

THE HAYEK FOUNDATION (MOSCOW)

After the registration of the Bourgeois-Conservative Party in 1999, I became acquainted with the Moscow office of the Heritage Foundation whose representatives were advising members of the Russian government on many issues regarding domestic and foreign policy. My path to the Heritage Foundation was pointed to me by my longtime friend and partner, Dr. Andrea Brignone, a businessman from France and the president of Protexarms. The Hayek Foundation (Moscow) was established in 2002 with the moral support of the Heritage Foundation (USA), and the two foundations have been in partnership ever since. Among the several joint initiatives of the Hayek Foundation (Moscow) and the Russian office of the Heritage Foundation (USA) was a conference devoted to the 110th birthday anniversary of Friedrich von Hayek in 2009. The participants discussed, among other things, the role of regulation amidst the economic downturn, the peril of the government's protectionist policies, the timeliness of Hayek's theory of capital and money in circulation, and the aptness of the Austrian business cycle theory to understand and manage economic crises.

An international non-profit, privately funded organization, the Hayek Foundation (Moscow) is a non-governmental research, political, and financial center with its own neo-liberal and libertarian political principles. Its trustees recognized that we needed to take a closer look at the practical knowledge accumulated in the world at large, especially the liberal political knowledge in the classical sense provided by the distinguished scholar and humanist Friedrich von Hayek. We are dedicated to translating into

reality his vision in industrialized nations. The Foundation aims to restore the democratic vector of Russia's development after its creeping slide to National Socialism since 2000. We consider our activities as a bulwark of democracy and economic freedom in our country.

The Foundation's mission is to assist Russia's accelerated industrial development, securing capitalist economic relations based on the principles of private property, free enterprise, competitive markets, individual freedom, limited government, and traditional moral values. The Foundation was set up to foster capitalist processes in Russia through financial, political, analytical, theoretical, methodological, and informational assistance, and to fund research in the theory and practice of these neo-liberal policies. The Foundation encourages and rewards outstanding academic research in neo-liberal economic policies and libertarian political theory. More recently, the Foundation has also begun to invest money in a shelter for orphans with non-communicable lung diseases. Investments arrive from across the globe for which we are very grateful. In addition, we aim to translate Hayek's complete works into Russian in the belief that the legacy of this "courtly Austrian aristocrat and one of the most influential intellectuals of the twentieth century" (Edwin Feulner) offers solutions to Russia's domestic and international problems.

We began our political activity focusing on the fatal errors of socialism as elucidated in the writings of Mises, Hayek, and Ayn Rand. In 1991 the "capitalist" revolution supposedly won in Russia, turning the country toward democracy and economic liberalization. But in the last 20 years, Russia has been turning toward socialism before the eyes of the whole world. And almost everyone has turned a blind eye. The leftist ideology won in Russia and became an ideological preparation for a military attack on Ukraine. Therefore, theoretical analyses of the nature of socialism, in conjunction with the practical struggle against National Socialism, are of paramount importance.

Also worthy of mention is my long correspondence with libertarians from Australia on the preparation and celebration of International Capitalism Day on the first Sunday of June each year. There have been CAPITALISM DAY™ events in over 250 cities across 43 countries. Conferences were held in Moscow on the occasion of this new holiday for Russia (<http://capitalismxxl.ru/>). Currently, however, political repression does not provide an opportunity to openly conduct events related to this holiday.

By our estimates, the governments of many countries have become increasingly interventionist. Universal liberal values such as economic freedom, personal freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and equal freedom according to the law are called into question. The difficult international conditions that have developed are also the result of continuous and widespread revisionism and distortion of the fundamental principles of capitalism (private property, free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom) carried out by socialist parties and leftist movements with increasing power.

Many have pointed out that the word “war” is synonymous with the word “socialism.” Where socialism or communism is promoted, there remains the threat of war. In Russia, some of us understand this issue acutely because we have experienced threats and continue to experience threats from the left socialist government against us personally. We have long been talking about the expediency of creating an International Center for the study of the vices and crimes of socialism around the world utilizing the organizational structure of the Heritage Foundation. We constantly are confronted with the criticism that this is not important. Yet there will be no peace and prosperity in the world without a broad understanding that the philosophy of socialism is a philosophy of war.

Russia is currently divided into “reds” and “whites.” There is an undeclared civil war, an ongoing revolt of capitalists against the remnants of the socialist system in our beloved country. Socialism fights capitalism and vice versa. And we are all involved in this struggle. All too many people are afraid to utter the word “capitalism,” but everyone wants to live in palaces, especially the bureaucrats in the government. It is difficult to work in such a situation, but we do everything we can. We intend to prevail.



An Unconventional Odyssey

Roger Pilon

As I contemplate reducing my nearly 80 years to fewer than 2000 words, as requested for this volume, I'm humbled to be doing so on this Memorial Day 2022, and grateful for the sacrifices of so many who've enabled me to live those years in relative peace and freedom. America truly is unique in human history. Understanding that, countless millions have long left their homelands to begin life anew under its promise. Yet increasingly we see so many among us who deeply misunderstand the great principles that constitute us as a nation. Today, objectivity, due process, free speech, and even the rule of law itself are under assault in our institutions—even in our educational institutions.

I cannot say precisely when all of that became clear to me. It occurred over time, but it has animated my life, directed my moral, intellectual, and professional evolution, and culminated in the magnum opus that now consumes my attention, presently titled “The Moral Case for America: Rights, Powers, and the Constitution.” The fruition, at last, of my 1979 University of Chicago doctoral dissertation on the theory of rights, the book's aim, against moral skeptics and moral dogmatists alike, is to

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develop the epistemological foundations of the “self-evident truths” that inspired America’s birth and to locate those principles in the Constitution and trace their history to the present.

But to my story. My odyssey has been unconventional. Born in rural northern Vermont during World War II’s early days, I was the first of three children. My father was a tool and die maker, the fourth of 14 French Canadian children. My mother, adopted as an infant by a postman’s family, graduated from a two-year normal school before teaching eighth grades in a one-room school. When I was almost five we moved to upstate New York, in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains, where I grew up. Distant from urban and suburban America in the 1940s and ’50s, rural life encouraged independence, self-reliance, and individual responsibility, which doubtless helped shape my later views. But other forces were at play too. I did well in the first five one-room schools I attended before the central school was built, then did well there too, with multiple activities: sports, scouts, starting the school’s first rock-‘n’-roll band, and more.¹

A separate force also deserves notice. In second grade I learned that Catholic students could be excused for weekly one-hour religious instruction from nuns visiting from a nearby town. When I asked my mother what religion I was, she said my father was Catholic, by birth, so I signed up, only to discover that I’d never been baptized. I then arranged for my siblings and my baptism, took my instruction seriously thereafter, and became an altar boy until I was 17. Alas, it was not to continue as I soon started to question my faith. There followed a transition to agnosticism, or Deism at best. Still, the Christian idea that we’re each responsible for our eternal salvation must have been formative, even when translated into self-respect and the Aristotelian virtues.

My freshman year at Syracuse University marked a move from being a big fish in a small rural pond to the reverse. I began as an engineering major but soon realized I didn’t really want to be an engineer, so I switched to my love, music. But at year’s end, I still didn’t know what I wanted “to be”—basically, I had a trade school understanding of college—so I decided to drop out for a year or two. It turned out

¹ For a fuller account of the personal history sketched here and below, see this long interview: Lindenberg, David Meyer. (2017) Cross: Roger Pilon, Defending Liberty At Cato. *Mimesis Law*; <https://web.archive.org/web/20210902193232/http://mimesislaw.com/fault-lines/cross-roger-pilon-defending-liberty-cato/16364>.

to be seven years of intense personal and intellectual growth, some of it reflecting the frivolity of an arrested adolescence, but there was serious work too, mostly as a successful insurance salesman. Paying taxes for the first time, as an independent contractor, was another formative experience.

And so we come at last to libertarianism. Clearly, during my childhood and adolescence I had developed many libertarian values, but my understanding of my political identity came only later, slowly. At 17, still a Catholic, I was attracted to John Kennedy during the 1960 election cycle, but I had also liked Ike, and my first vote, at 21, was for Barry Goldwater. What changed? I had. Between Kennedy and Goldwater I had begun reading, voraciously: Bill Buckley's "National Review," Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and more. A girlfriend gave me Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, which I devoured; like Goldwater for politics, Rand put together an even bigger picture. Soon enough, though, as I read beyond, I came to see the limits of her vision. Yet it impressed upon me the importance of philosophy, which I read into further as my understanding grew.

Meanwhile, as the '60s wore on, the world was going to hell, or so it seemed. The civil rights movement came not a moment too soon, but not the riots, the drug scene, the campus takeovers, or, most important for the nation's long-term institutional integrity, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. By the early spring of 1968, living now in Manhattan, far from my rural roots, and now seeing myself as something of a libertarian conservative, I decided at last what I wanted "to be"—a philosopher. So I walked on to the Columbia University campus, which later that day would explode, took the entrance examination for the School of General Studies—average student age, 24—arranged for transmitting my Syracuse transcript and was soon admitted. Supporting myself by driving a taxi nights and weekends, I received my A.B. in philosophy, with honors, three years later. I was off then to the University of Chicago for my M.A. and Ph.D.

At Chicago, I met my future wife, Juliana, also a philosopher who at 14 had emigrated with her family from communist Romania. Needing no instruction on the virtues of freedom, she found my unorthodox views a breath of fresh air—yes, even at Chicago, ideological corruption was abundant. But practical problems loomed, for the academic job market had flipped. In the '60s, facing baby-boom enrollments, universities had hired ABDs who were now tenured. By the mid- to late '70s,

the ratio of job applicants to faculty openings reached as high as 600 to 1. We were fortunate, though, to have supplemented our intellectual lives with occasional forays into the political world, for that would eventually be our salvation. Thus, in 1972 we were Republican election judges in Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago. And in 1976, we were alternate delegates to the Republican National Convention, pledged to Ronald Reagan. When Reagan was elected in 1980—after we'd knocked about academia for four years, including four cross-country moves—the political contacts we'd made would lead, in April 1981, to an invitation to join the new administration.

But back to the evolution of my thinking. At Columbia, I focused mainly on the history of philosophy. I arrived at Chicago as a moral consequentialist, but Prof. Alan Donagan would soon ease me toward deontology. In that vein, Prof. Alan Gewirth would then acquaint me with his own work in moral rationality, which opened great vistas for me. Within days of our first meeting that year, so sure was I of the direction of my thinking that I told Gewirth that I would be writing my dissertation on the theory of rights. He took my notice in stride. He and Donagan would become the first and second members of my dissertation committee. And such was Chicago's interdisciplinary latitude that the third would be Milton Friedman, who agreed with alacrity, perhaps intrigued by the dissertation's subtitle, "Toward Limited Government." On that score, I profited also from lengthy discussions about the common law with Prof. Richard Epstein after he arrived at the law school. In fact, before leaving Chicago I would review his four essays on strict liability and the law of torts for the Institute for Humane Studies' "Law & Liberty."

But well before that, on the political side of things, I had grown increasingly troubled by conservative attacks on the Supreme Court's "rights revolution." After all, hadn't America been founded on the idea that we're all endowed with unalienable natural rights? Thus, even as I was focusing on the epistemological foundations of classical liberalism's theory of rights, I was thinking also about the role of judges in securing those rights under our Constitution. And it struck me that neither constitutionally untethered liberal judicial activism nor conservative judicial restraint amounting to judicial abdication was morally or constitutionally proper. Fortunately, it was around 1975 that IHS's Leonard Liggio and Davis Keeler discovered Juliana and me asking questions at the Philadelphia Society's annual meetings in Chicago. They soon put me on their speaking and conference schedules, and over the latter half of the '70s

my thinking would expand to include those constitutional elements, especially after I secured a visiting appointment at the Emory University Law School and after I met my co-conspirator against both Left and Right, Prof. Bernie Siegan at the University of San Diego Law School. Thus the origins, in part, of the modern libertarian legal movement.²

Alas, reality imposed a partial pause on that effort. Following our dismal four-year peripatetic search for regular employment in an overcrowded, ideologically hostile academic world, we found opportunities beyond academia in Washington, as noted, and the move was not without compensating benefits, besides compensation. Over nearly eight years, as a senior official at OPM, State, and Justice, I gained valuable practical insights about the workings of government. And I was able to earn a law degree at night, just up the street at George Washington University, while continuing to speak and write, albeit at a reduced pace.

But as the Reagan administration was concluding, I was anxious to get back in the game with my critique of both liberal judicial activism and conservative judicial restraint, the latter the now ascendant view. In 1983, I had urged Cato Institute President Ed Crane to hold a conference on “Economic Liberties and the Judiciary,” and I drew up a program for it. Cato did so in 1984, which included several of us in the inchoate judicial engagement school. Thus, in September 1988, appreciating that only institutional arrangements could further my project, I called Ed again. By mid-October I was on board at Cato, preparing the ground for Cato’s Center for Constitutional Studies, which we unveiled in January 1989.

For the next 30 years, I directed the Center, handing the reins over to my chosen successor, Ilya Shapiro, on January 1, 2019. During that time I wrote hundreds of articles, op-eds, and blog posts on a wide range of moral, political, legal, and economic subjects; gave over a thousand speeches and debates at every major law school in the country, mostly through the Federalist Society, and spoke often abroad as well; ran conferences and forums featuring prominent experts in several fields; testified often before Congress; did TV and radio; created Cato’s amicus brief program, our annual *Cato Supreme Court Review*, and our annual Constitution Day Symposium; edited numerous books and studies by outside and inside scholars; mentored interns and young legal associates; and,

² See Roger Pilon, *On the Origins of the Modern Libertarian Legal Movement*, 16 Chap. L. Rev. 255 (2013), available at: <https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1284&context=chapman-law-review>.

not least, hosted Supreme Court justices for luncheons with my Cato staff—all with an eye toward changing the way we understand the Constitution and the role of judges under it. As I wrote in the preface to the Cato Pocket Declaration and Constitution, which relates the two documents through their underlying principles, the Constitution creates a government of delegated, enumerated, and thus limited powers, the purpose of which is to secure the libertarian promise of the Declaration of Independence. To date, we've distributed over seven million copies.

In sum, if we're to move toward that promise—we've a ways to go, as earlier noted, against entrenched institutions that are pulling us in the opposite direction—we will need a better understanding of its virtues than too many Americans now have. As history demonstrates, the struggle to secure liberty is never finished. I press on.



Dazzled by Murray N. Rothbard

Guglielmo Piombini

I was born in Bologna, Italy, in 1968. My father was a culture enthusiast with conservative views, who had a huge library of books at home, including the works of leading classical liberal thinkers such as Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Luigi Einaudi. I read them when I was young and found them compelling. Until I was 20, I considered myself a classical liberal, or rather an anti-communist conservative. The political figures I admired most were Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. At school I used to have long discussions with my peers, the vast majority of whom were socialists or leftists. I often had the better of them, but there were some aspects of the political positions I defended that did not quite convince me. Exactly what, however, I could not explain.

Then, in the early 1990s, my father brought home a book by the French classical liberal journalist Guy Sorman: *I veri pensatori del nostro tempo* (or, in English translation, *Freedom on Bail: The Real Thinkers of the Twentieth Century*). The author interviewed a number of great thinkers, including Hayek, Karl Popper, and Isaiah Berlin, as well as a “libertarian”

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thinker who was unknown to me: Murray N. Rothbard. That wonderful interview, titled “The State is Theft!,” overwhelmed me. The anarcho-capitalist theory expounded by Rothbard made me dizzy. I had never read or thought of anything like it. His 100% pro-free-market position, even in typically state-run sectors such as protection, justice, money, or roads, left me speechless. His definition of the State as a “vast criminal organization” shocked me. After reading Rothbard’s interview in its entirety, I said to myself, “Here, these are my ideas. I feel that way, too. I, too, am a libertarian!” My political doubts had vanished: I had become, overnight, a true libertarian believer, and have remained so to this day.

I wanted to learn more about libertarian thought, and ordered through a bookstore two books, *For a New Liberty* by Murray N. Rothbard and *The Machinery of Freedom* by David D. Friedman. At that time ordering books abroad was a complex affair, and they took two or three months to arrive from the United States. When they arrived I read them with enthusiasm. In the meantime, I had met a handful of friends with libertarian ideas, great scholars: Carlo Lottieri, Luigi Marco Bassani, Alessandro Vitale, and Nicola Iannello, who in later years were joined by others, such as Alberto Mingardi and Leonardo Facco. Together, we decided to spread libertarian and anarcho-capitalist thought in Italy, which in the mid-1990s was still virtually unknown.

We did a lot of work, publishing for many years a monthly magazine (*Enclave. Rivista Libertaria*, Leonardo Facco Editore), editing books, writing articles, organizing conferences. Carlo Lottieri and I wrote in 1996 the first book ever published in Italy on free market environmentalism, *Privatizziamo il chiaro di luna! Le ragioni dell’ecologia di mercato* (Let’s Privatize Moonlight! The Reasons for Market Ecology). Aldo Canovari’s Liberilibri publishing house also began to publish Italian translations of works by the major exponents of libertarian thought: Murray N. Rothbard, Walter Block, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, Ayn Rand, Albert Jay Nock, and others. Our friend Leonardo Facco’s publishing house also published texts by Rothbard, Hoppe, Rand, and Frédéric Bastiat. In the following years, also thanks to our pioneering work, the number of Italian libertarians increased significantly.

I have written and published several books, including *Il Medioevo delle libertà* (The Middle Ages of Liberty) on the libertarian aspects of the Middle Ages, *L’epopea libertaria del Far West* (The Libertarian Epic of the Far West) on the Old American West as an example of anarcho-capitalism, and *50 Classici del pensiero liberale e libertario* (50 Classics of Classical

Liberal and Libertarian Thought), a 400+ page volume summarizing the contents of 50 important works of classical liberalism and libertarianism. My most recent book is *La Croce contro il Leviatano. Perché il Cristianesimo può salvarci dallo Stato onnipotente* (The Cross against Leviathan. Why Christianity Can Save Us from the Omnipotent State).

Libertarian thought changed my life because, to this day, I am still dedicated to its dissemination as an essayist, book author, publisher (Tramedoro Edizioni), and bookseller. Without this passion for libertarianism perhaps I would have pursued another profession, for example, as a lawyer, since I do have a law degree. Instead, for almost 30 years I have happily run a bookstore (www.libriadielponte.com) that has a section specializing in classical liberal and libertarian thought.



Building a Libertarian Think Tank

Robert W. Poole

I grew up in a small tract house in a suburb of Miami, Florida. My parents were moderate Republicans, but generally not interested in politics. I trace my earliest libertarian leanings to Robert Heinlein’s “juvenile/young-adult” science fiction novels, which I began reading in elementary school. He led me to question authority, to admire strong individualists, and to imagine a future greatly improved by technology.

In high school, my Advanced Math teacher, Darryl Johnson, was also the debate coach. Once a month he taught us political economy, from a classical liberal perspective. From that influence, I read Barry Goldwater’s *Conscience of a Conservative*, and decided that I was a free-market, limited-government conservative.

A required freshman course at MIT was Modern Western Ideas and Values, which introduced me to the ideas of John Locke, Adam Smith, David Hume, Voltaire, and other Enlightenment thinkers. And that experience prepared me for reading Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*, which shifted my identity from conservative to libertarian.

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Most of the members of the MIT chapter of Young Americas for Freedom (which I joined) were libertarian/Objectivist rather than conservative. And when my friend David Nolan decided to start MIT Students for Goldwater, I volunteered to be its literature director. My friend Jim Weigl and I sold the canned soft drink “Gold Water” on campus for a year and a half during Goldwater’s presidential campaign. Jim and I were also poll watchers in Back Bay, across the river from MIT.

After Goldwater’s defeat, Ayn Rand wrote that this showed that it was too early for politics to bring about meaningful change toward limited government and free markets. We first needed to wage and win the battle of ideas, to create the preconditions for political change. But how and where could we do that, I wondered?

In my first post-MIT job, as an engineer at Sikorsky Aircraft in Connecticut, I felt intellectually cut off, but somehow discovered a mimeographed start-up magazine called *Reason*, launched by an Objectivist Boston University student, Lanny Friedlander. I subscribed, and let Lanny talk me into writing an article for *Reason*. Having grown up in an aviation family (my dad worked for Eastern Airlines, and we flew on company passes), I researched and wrote an article making the case for airline deregulation.

When the September 1969 issue arrived, I was amazed to see that it was now typeset and offset-printed—and that my article, “Fly the Frenzied Skies,” was the cover story. Several months later, when *The Freeman*, a much larger magazine, reprinted it, I got letters from people knowledgeable about aviation. This made a serious impression, and after I moved to a new job at a think tank in Santa Barbara, California (1970), I wrote several more articles for Lanny.

REASON ENTERPRISES

Thanks to Lanny, I met a grad student in philosophy at UC Santa Barbara, Tibor Machan, a young Objectivist whose family had smuggled him out of communist Hungary at an early age. Tibor and I became friends, and as *Reason* began to come out only sporadically (and Lanny pestered us both for money), Tibor and I brainstormed the idea of acquiring the magazine and making it into a libertarian counterpart of *National Review* (on the right) and *The New Republic* (on the left).

To do this, we needed to learn about magazine publishing and direct-mail marketing, some of which we learned from a USC student

libertarian, Leon Kaspersky, who was publishing a libertarian newsletter on campus. Tibor and I wrote a business plan based on a direct-mail marketing plan (which involved renting mailing lists with free-market orientations to sell subscriptions) to build serious circulation from Lanny's meager 400. Tibor recruited a young libertarian attorney in Los Angeles, Manny Klausner, and I recruited my former MIT roommate, Jim Weigl. Together with my then-wife and Tibor's, we six people created a general partnership, Reason Enterprises, to buy the magazine from Lanny (i.e., taking on its subscription liability and the asset of its mailing list).

The key to starting our direct-mail marketing effort was the mailing list compiled by Nathaniel Branden from his years of marketing Objectivism. Tibor knew Branden, and we convinced him that we were serious people ("not anarchists"). That enabled us to rent a 5000-name sample of his 65,000-name list. We put all the meager funds we'd assembled into (1) a direct-mail subscription mailing and (2) the first Reason Enterprises issue of *Reason* (January 1971). Had that mailing failed, we would almost certainly have been out of business. Fortunately, it did well enough to make plans to mail to the rest of the list.

For the follow-up mailing, we arranged the first-ever interview with Branden following his well-known break with Ayn Rand in 1968. We published the interview as the cover story in the October 1971 issue, and the mailing did very well. Finding other mailing lists became an ongoing challenge to building circulation. We were aided by the folding of *The Individualist* magazine in 1973, for which we agreed to take on its subscribers. By the end of that year, *Reason* was up to 4500—unheard of for a libertarian periodical.

Also in 1971, my MIT friend Dave Nolan launched the Libertarian Party. At its first convention, in 1972, the LP nominated USC philosophy professor John Hospers as its 1972 presidential candidate. Reason Enterprises made a deal with the publisher of Hospers' hardcover book, *Libertarianism*, to bring out a paperback edition. This was a joint venture between us and the fledgling California LP. In subsequent years, state and national LP mailing lists became new sources for direct-mail subscription marketing. We had some notable direct-mail fiascos, but enough successes that by 1978 paid circulation had reached 10,000.

In 1978, we published a 10th-anniversary issue of the magazine, with articles by such notables as Milton Friedman, Robert Nozick, Dave Nolan, Roger MacBride, Karl Hess, and Murray Rothbard. We also held

a small anniversary dinner in LA for key supporters. Nathaniel Branden was our guest of honor.

REASON FOUNDATION

Despite *Reason's* impressive growth in circulation, toward the end of 1977 we faced a very difficult situation. We still had no paid staff except an office manager; we paid only a pittance for articles; and we lacked the funds to build circulation much beyond the 10,000 we'd achieved by that point.

Even more troubling, we'd learned that Charles Koch was planning to fund a new libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute, and that this project would include launching two new magazines: *Libertarian Review* (aimed at existing libertarians) and *Inquiry* (aimed at converting left/liberals to libertarian views). They would have paid professional staff and large marketing budgets.

We three remaining partners (Tibor, Manny, and I) brainstormed about our situation, first toying with the idea of creating a for-profit company and seeking investors. But some research on other think magazines revealed that none were profitable and that some were actually set up as nonprofit, tax-exempt entities. That seemed a more viable approach (and we also learned that nonprofits got less-costly postage rates for sending out publications). *Inquiry* would be based on that model, as part of the nonprofit, tax-exempt Cato Institute.

With that decided, Manny drew up incorporation papers and applications for California and federal tax-exempt status. Tibor and I searched for one or more angel investors. Our *Reason* investment columnist, Mark Tier, introduced us to a prospective angel: LA publisher Clyde Packer. Clyde was not fabulously wealthy, though his brother Kerry Packer was a multi-millionaire media mogul in Australia. By early January 1978, we had reached an agreement on Clyde joining us as a board member and making an initial investment of \$50,000 over two years (it seemed like a lot of money to us!) and giving us a suite of office furniture.

Clyde's funding enabled us to rent a small office in downtown Santa Barbara and commit to a paid staff of three: me as president and publisher, Marty Zupan (who had been *Reason's* very part-time copy editor) as editor, and the office manager. We opened our doors there on July 1, 1978. The new budget enabled us to resume direct-mail marketing. It

also permitted somewhat larger payments to authors, enabling us to cultivate promising writers like John Blundell, Glenn Garvin, Tom Hazlett, Alan Reynolds, and Peter Samuel.

We also aimed to gain national visibility for *Reason* magazine by venturing into investigative journalism. Our first three serious investigative efforts, each making national news, were exposés on the misuse of federal funds by Cesar Chavez’s United Farmworkers Union (NBC’s *Prime Time Saturday*), the FDA’s refusal to allow doctors and hospitals to use “human body glue” that had saved many soldiers’ lives in Viet Nam (print and radio), and the origins of the famous Love Canal chemical contamination (ABC *Nightline*). These media coups led to a succession of foundation grants for *Reason*’s new Investigative Journalism Fund.

Reason Foundation was more than just the home of *Reason* magazine. With this nonprofit entity becoming fairly well-funded, my original vision of doing world-changing policy research at a think tank like RAND Corporation became possible as part of the Foundation’s overall work. Our first public policy focus was the privatization of state and local public services, building on work that I had done in the 1970s as part of a mini-think tank that my friend Mark Frazier had set up, the Local Government Center (LGC). That led to my writing the first book on that subject, *Cutting Back City Hall*, which was released by Universe Books in 1980. As we could gradually afford more staff, we merged LGC into Reason Foundation and hired a director, Phil Fixler.

In the early 1980s, when both *Inquiry* and *Libertarian Review* folded, we arranged with their publishers to fulfill their subscription obligations, giving *Reason* further boosts in circulation. By 1985, we were proud to report to our donors that *Reason* circulation had reached 38,000. And the next year, we relocated Reason Foundation to Los Angeles.

HOW TO CHANGE PUBLIC POLICY

One of the most influential books on my thinking about policy change was Anne Freemantle’s *This Little Band of Prophets* (Mentor Books, 1960), a history of the Fabian Society in Great Britain. By writing articles, research papers, and books—and also getting their people into various organizations that could influence public policy—the group was remarkably successful in gradually bringing about major changes in British public policy, culminating in the post-World War II welfare state.

This idea of taking a problem-solving approach to specific subjects, rather than trying to persuade large numbers of people to become libertarians all at once, appealed to my evidence-based, engineering approach. It was reinforced as I discovered the Chicago School economists and their *Journal of Law & Economics* in the 1970s. It was further reinforced as I discovered, via Thomas Sowell's *Knowledge and Decisions*, the Public Choice "economics of politics" thinkers.

In the early 1970s, two other influential books had helped shape my initial foray into public policy. Peter Drucker's *The Age of Discontinuity* introduced me to the idea that state-owned enterprises could and should be "privatized." *Uncle Sam, The Monopoly Man*, by William C. Wooldridge, discussed numerous examples of public services that, in various places at various times, had been or were being performed by private companies (including the Pony Express delivering the mail out west). The more I looked into the idea of replacing municipal monopolies with companies that competed for contracts to perform services, the more intrigued I became. I discovered a few academic researchers at Columbia and UCLA who were also doing research on this subject.

Mark Frazier, on the board of the National Taxpayers Union, challenged me to explain how a typical city or county government could save money by contracting out many of its public services. I researched and wrote a 46-page booklet on the subject for NTU, which then paid me to write a monthly column on the subject, distributed to local newspapers around the country. Mark incorporated the nonprofit Local Government Center as the distributor of these columns. This led to a book contract with Universe Books to write *Cutting Back City Hall* (1980), based on far more extensive research.

Partly to increase Reason Foundation's visibility among libertarians, I accepted many invitations to speak on this subject at state Libertarian Party conventions. My idea was that for the LP to become a real political party, it needed to start electing local officials, and they needed to offer an agenda of reduced taxes with better public services, thanks to contracting with private companies. This approach did not go over well with some libertarians, who caricatured it as "garbage can libertarianism" and "gradualism." The latter term was used most often by anarcho-capitalist libertarians, who argued that the only legitimate position was to advocate abolishing everything government does. Even people at the decidedly non-anarchist Cato Institute took that position in its early

years, before Cato moved from San Francisco to Washington, DC, and discovered how difficult it is to change public policy by rhetoric alone.

One of my inspirations for writing *Cutting Back City Hall* was getting to know Rural Metro Corporation, which provided excellent, low-cost municipal fire protection for fast-growing Scottsdale, Arizona. On a consulting project in 1975, I spent several days with the company, and in addition to my consulting report, I wrote a *Reason* cover story called “Fighting Fires for Profit” (May 1976). The next year a producer for CBS’s *60 Minutes* interviewed me about that article, and they ended up filming a story about the company’s innovations and success, which aired in November 1978, just after California voters had passed tax-cutting Proposition 13. This was *Reason*’s first exposure on national television, predating by several years our Investigative Journalism Fund.

GROWING A NATIONAL PRESENCE

The move to Los Angeles from our initial offices in Santa Barbara turned out to be a very wise decision. For the first time ever, the *Los Angeles Times* acknowledged our existence, with a feature story on our relocation. Our research director, Lynn Scarlett, organized a monthly luncheon event in downtown LA called Reason Forum, featuring interesting thinkers from California, nationwide, and overseas. Attendees included media people, business leaders, donors, and *Reason* subscribers. We also began holding annual banquets, as both visibility enhancers and fund-raisers. Milton Friedman headlined our first banquet in autumn 1986, and the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* did an illustrated feature story about it. In later years, banquet speakers included Steve Forbes, Michael Milken, and Lady Margaret Thatcher.

In 1988, when Marty Zupan stepped down as editor to accept a position at the Institute for Humane Studies back east, I promoted Virginia Postrel to Editor in Chief. She was the first editor of *Reason* with a background in journalism, including *Inc.* magazine and the *Wall Street Journal*. She revamped the editorial staff and started writing op-eds in national media and getting on television talk shows. In 1989, our media citations were four times as many as the previous year, with articles and columns in media such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*. This increased visibility improved our direct-mail responses, and by 1991 circulation had reached 50,000.

Reason Foundation's policy research expanded significantly in the 1990s. In addition to the original privatization focus, new programs on infrastructure, education reform/school choice, environment, and urban policy were added as resources permitted, building up a policy research staff of the kind I'd dreamed of many years before. These efforts involved Reason Foundation in issues such as airport privatization, school vouchers, and charter schools, alternative ways of dealing with motor vehicle emissions, express toll lanes, and many others. Our researchers were increasingly invited to serve on task forces or advisory commissions and to testify before legislative bodies and committees of Congress.

During the 1990s, in addition to serving as CEO, I did hands-on public policy research in infrastructure and transportation. One of my biggest successes was inventing the idea of adding variably priced express toll lanes to congested freeways. My paper on this led directly to a California pilot program in which private investors developed the world's first such priced lanes, on a congested freeway in Orange County. By doing continued research, writing, and speaking on this idea, I helped the U.S. Department of Transportation and a number of state DOTs accept and implement such lanes; as I write this in 2021, there are more than 60 express toll lane facilities in operation nationwide.

Also in the 1990s, Reason Foundation policy researchers were sought out by two innovative new mayors, Steve Goldsmith in Indianapolis and Richard Riordan in Los Angeles. We advised them both, and Goldsmith implemented competitive contracting of city services very widely. The political climate in LA was much less favorable, so few of the ideas Riordan asked us to assist with (including privatizing Los Angeles International Airport) went anywhere, despite extensive publicity.

By the late 1990s, I was feeling burned out on fund-raising and managing a staff by then approaching 60. I told our board that Reason needed a full-time CEO who could spend 100% of his time on growing and managing the organization. And with that change, I could focus full-time on what had become my passion, transportation policy.

That was a very wise decision. David Nott, formerly CEO of the Institute for Humane Studies, took over as CEO in September 2001. He has grown the Foundation tremendously, from \$5 million to \$15 million per year, added a Washington, DC office, bought (and paid for) a small LA office building, and launched Reason TV with assistance from TV personality Drew Carey.

For the past two decades, I have done the best public policy work of my career. I researched and wrote a book on de-politicizing U.S. highways (*Rethinking America's Highways*, University of Chicago Press, 2018). My policy change work has included helping then-Governor Mitch Daniels privatize the Indiana Toll Road, writing the Florida DOT's conceptual plan for an express toll lanes network in south Florida, and in particular organizing a large coalition (including airlines, the air traffic controllers union, the Business Roundtable, an array of think tanks, and the chair of the House Transportation Committee) which came close—after 10 years' work—to converting the bureaucratic air traffic control system into a nonprofit corporation funded by the equivalent of aircraft tolls. In my book, *A Think Tank for Liberty* (2018), I discuss the kinds of detailed work involved in actually changing public policy, which is especially difficult at the federal level.

It is gratifying to me that we now have at least one free-market think tank in each of the 50 states, applying this kind of practical, problem-solving approach to issues in each of their states. Cato Institute, too, has adopted this kind of “gradualist” approach and has become a respected think tank in Washington, DC.

I have yet to consider “retiring,” since there is still so much to do, and I'm still capable of doing good research and writing. And best of all, Reason Foundation is happy to keep paying me to do it.



From Leftism to Liberty, a Personal Journey

Michael Rectenwald

In the fall of 2016, I began to have deviationist thoughts. That's how my thoughts might have been labeled in the Soviet Union anyway—that is, had I lived through the Red Terror, the Stalinist purges, or the Great Terror. In fact, I might have been characterized as a “right deviationist.” Although I wasn't living in the Soviet Union, a cultural revolution had been getting underway at home, and I was about to step right into the whirlwind.

I had been a professor of Liberal Studies and Global Liberal Studies at New York University, teaching courses in cultural studies, social and intellectual history, and academic writing. My research had been in nineteenth-century British science and culture, and I had been a scholar of nineteenth-century British Secularism. I had taught at NYU since 2008. I had also been a Marxist for nearly 15 years.

In September 2016, I started a new, anonymous Twitter account, the Deplorable NYU Prof—replete with the @AntiPCNYUprof handle and a

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Friedrich Nietzsche avatar as my profile picture—and began satirizing the Left, identity politics, and recent trends in academia at large. Here’s a small sample of my tweets from the period:

- September 12: “Yes, contemporary identity politics on campuses today is integration in reverse!” (Linked to an article entitled, “California State Offers Segregated Housing for Black Students.”)
- September 16: “I’m a NYU prof who’s seen academe become a sham bc of identity pol & liberal totalitarianism. I’ll tell all soon.”
- September 29: “Liberalism coopts the discourse and techniques of radicalism and turns them into devices of mass manipulation.”
- September 30: “I’ll go Halloweening there as Nietzsche, who’s been trigger-warned out of the curriculum, so no one will get it. What’s yr costume idea?” (Linked to article entitled, “Penn State to costume-shame students with poster campaign.”)
- October 11: “The identity politics left: they need a safe space that is at once a hall of mirrors and a rubber room.” (Referring to displays of narcissism by SJWs as well as to their demands for protection from “discursive violence.”)

Within 48 hours of my Twitter escapades making the news, NYU administrators coerced me into a leave of absence and my colleagues on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group dubbed me a thought criminal, literally declaring me “guilty for the content and structure of [my] thinking.” By the end of the academic year, I was treated by several colleagues to a barrage of bilious and defamatory emails on an official NYU listserv. They called me racist, sexist, misogynist, alt-right, fascist, Nazi, short-pants white devil, and Satan, among other choice epithets. My exile included having my office moved to the Russian Department. My new outpost was spartan, with empty metal shelves (the university refused to move my books), no telephone, no name on the door, and the Russian Department faculty apparently instructed to avoid me at all costs. I was shunned by my Liberal Studies colleagues and treated like a pariah on campus. In short, I had been sent to my own personal gulag.

After my run-in with the social justice warriors at NYU, the members of Insurgent Notes, a “left communist” group with which I was loosely affiliated, effectively subjected me to a cyber-show trial. They accused me of any number of infractions, not the least of which was appearing

on conservative talk shows and sounding remotely like a member of a rival political clan. Before they could excommunicate me from the group, I told them not to bother; I quit. Thousands of Facebook friends unfriended and blocked me. Altogether, it seemed, the Left had completely “un-personned” me.

In the spring of 2018, I sued NYU and five colleagues for libel and defamation, but my attorneys could not overcome the motion to dismiss by NYU’s army of attorneys. So, I invited Milo Yiannopolous to speak in my classroom for a special talk on the politics of Halloween. The pandemonium was incredible—all over a scheduled classroom appearance in which Milo was to speak to 14 of my students about how people can change their genders by the day, but others couldn’t wear a Halloween costume for a single night. Student groups wrote me and said I was putting them in danger. Antifa NYC put a target on my back, threatening to kill me. NYU administrators sent emails to the entire university population apologizing but saying that they couldn’t stop the talk because of “academic freedom.” Finally, the mayor of New York, then Bill de Blasio, called NYU and canceled the event for “security reasons.” This was all quite stressful for me, but it brought NYU back to the negotiating table and they offered me a settlement if I surrendered my position.

At the time, I thought that I was merely voicing criticisms of the excesses and insanity of a Left that had become utterly alien to me, seemingly overnight. Little did I know that I was on the brink of a complete philosophical, political, and spiritual transformation.

But I had now described the inherent authoritarianism of Marxism and leftism in general. I recognized, contrary to Marx’s animadversions of utopian socialism, that all socialism is utopian, and that utopianism is just totalitarianism in waiting. There’s no way to establish some people’s idea of utopia without squelching if not obliterating other people’s rights. I saw the same characteristics in the Left in general and became a civil libertarian, advocating for individual rights above all else.

I then began to study the history of communism with a critical eye, starting with the Bolshevik Revolution and continuing with the exportation of Bolshevik variants to Eastern Europe and Asia. In attempting to research leftist political criminality, I was both amazed and enraged at how the academy had buried much of the history. For example, searches in academic research databases for the practices of “struggle sessions” and “autocritique,” which were so prevalent during the Cultural Revolution in China, and which have seen a resurgence in the West, yielded

next to nothing. These and related topics were either not treated or else simply disappeared. I suspected that a vast coverup had been undertaken. I needed to turn to other sources.

My defection from Marxism and embrace of libertarianism began with the criticism of political totalitarianism, but it soon included the economic debunking of socialism. It was in early 2017 that someone recommended that I read Ludwig von Mises. This was the first time I'd ever heard of Mises, despite all my time in higher education, or likely because of it.

I began with *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis*.¹ I found Mises's trenchant analysis of Marxist rhetorical tactics—his exposure of the polylogism of Marxism, his demonstration that Marx evaded the scientific analysis of socialism by means of ad hominem attacks on critics as “bourgeois”—right on the mark. Mises's analysis of ownership—in particular, his argument that consumers hold the power of economic disposal and in effect are the owners of the means of production under capitalism—was thoroughly convincing. Of course, Mises's treatment of the calculation problem proved devastating to socialism.

Further, Mises showed that the inevitability that Marxism claims for socialism is metaphysical and religious in character. It draws on and immanentizes millennialist Christianity and is by no means “scientific”:

Now as a theory of progress, going beyond experience and what can be experienced, the materialist conception of history is not science but metaphysics...These theories are based generally on the assumption of a paradisiac origin, a Golden Age, from which man is moving farther and farther away, only to return finally to an equally good, or, if possible, even better, age of perfection. This generally includes the idea of Salvation. The return of the Golden Age will save men from the ills which have befallen them in an age of evil. Thus the whole doctrine is a message of earthly salvation...

In so far as “scientific” Socialism is metaphysics, a chiliastic promise of salvation, it would be vain and superfluous to argue scientifically against it. It serves no useful purpose to fight mystical dogmas with reason. There is no teaching fanatics. They must break their heads against the wall.²

¹ Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis*, trans. J. Kahane (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1951).

² Mises, *Socialism*, pp. 283, 288.

Thankfully, by the time I read this passage, I had already broken my head against the wall. The blinders of Marxism and leftism had fallen away, and I'd felt the liberation quite viscerally. I could now think, write, and speak freely, without concern that I might be in violation of a crusty, erroneous, and oppressive doctrine—or the dictates of an academic tribunal for that matter. Marxists are not allowed to think. They merely learn the “correct” positions on any number of issues and become versed in rehashing these points, ad nauseam. Those days were over—for me at least.

While I relinquished my academic career, I have since established myself as a public intellectual of sorts; I am a special contributor to the Mises Institute Wire, am invited to give talks on conservative college campuses and elsewhere, give media interviews regularly, and continue to author books—four since 2018. I'm now working on another book, my twelfth, this one a libertarian analysis of the Great Reset project.

Most if not all my former academic friends have turned against me, including my dissertation director, who was a friend but now will not answer my emails. He once called me his “best student.” I lost my love interest of 13 years to the social justice crowd and third-wave feminism. I had some difficult times with my daughter, who chastised me for my ribald criticisms of the Left, while my two sons have followed me on the libertarian path. I have gained a whole new cadre of friends, people capable of understanding the difference between right libertarianism and fascism, for example. The libertarian community has been most welcoming, making me wonder how and why I ever spent so much time as a Marxist. My libertarian reading diet has widened to include Murray Rothbard and Hans-Hermann Hoppe, among others, although I remain skeptical of full-on anarcho-capitalism.

I have, however, become what I call a “hip Hoppean”—a countercultural, pro-liberty voice in the lineage of Mises, Rothbard, and Hoppe. I believe, with Hoppe, that libertarianism is most compatible with cultural conservatism.³ Property rights accord with the structures of a stable social order based on the household, and vice versa. The protection of property both reinforces and is reinforced by a society based on the natural order. All forms of Leftism involve attempts to uproot and destroy this

³ Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *Democracy the God That Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), pp. 187–220.

natural order. But it is essential for ensuring personal liberty and human flourishing.

In closing, I would like to say that I didn't leave the Left. The Left left me. Or, rather, the Left righted me. By this, I don't mean to suggest that leftists had turned me into a right-winger. They didn't have that power. I mean that they opened my eyes and allowed me to see rightly. In trying to correct me, they did indeed correct me—but not as they'd hoped. They corrected my vision by forcibly dislodging the scales of their ideology from my eyes.



The Culinary Libertarian: Combining My Passion for Food and Liberty

Dann Reid

My stepfather paid attention to politics. His philosophy was that the government that governs least, governs best. Since he was in the real estate business, he was also concerned about the lending rate. As we watched the evening news together, I thought that the Republicans were going to save the real estate business. I was in high school when Ronald Reagan ran for President. His debate with Mondale was memorable. Reagan appeared to embody the limited government philosophy that seemed appealing to any alternative.

After graduating from high school in Central Lake, MI, in 1983, however, I ignored politics for many years. Work was more pressing and mattered more from day to day. Kitchen work, that is, working toward becoming a chef, kept me focused on prepping and getting ready for service. Prep the food, cook the food, plate the food, and send out the food. Do it again and again. Besides, as administration after the administration came and went, it almost seemed that the same guy occupied

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the Oval Office but with a different face. The US government continued killing people overseas and writing more and more rules for us at home.

WHAT A RUSH

I found Rush Limbaugh on the radio. How, exactly, isn't clear. At first, he was compelling. He made it seem that every problem could be fixed simply by voting for the right guy. Republicans were the good guys and those darned Democrats were the reason nothing was going right. Somehow the problem was always the fault of a person but never the fault of the system. Yet I began to wonder: couldn't it be that the government itself was the issue? Being fed up with the system didn't mean I was yet a libertarian. It just meant I was paying attention.

I transitioned into becoming the assistant manager at a grocery store bakery. The manager, Fred Kinch, happened to comment that he was outside of the divisiveness of Obama politics since he was a libertarian. A what? I had to look that up.

ECONOMICS AND THE NON-AGGRESSION PRINCIPLE

YouTube was the entry point with a little fellow on Phil Donahue discussing how everyone was greedy. Greed is good, said Milton Friedman. Friedman's videos led to more videos and podcasts. I left aside conservative radio talk show hosts, such as Sean Hannity and Mark Levin, in favor of more libertarian hosts, Tom Woods, Glenn Beck, and Brion McClanahan.

Tom Woods made listening exciting. I found compelling his interviews with Ian Anderson from Jethro Tull and the legendary wrestler Kane, aka Glenn Jacobs, now libertarian mayor of Knox County, TN, along with discussions about how economics works. Thinking like a libertarian was a challenge and required something of me. In my previous Republican experience, toeing the line was all that was required. Thinking like a libertarian required effort, gaining insights from reading, listening, and thinking through ideas.

NOW WHAT?

The journey into thinking like a libertarian has changed me from being blithely tolerant of a seemingly benign government to skeptical that anything the government does is for the good of the people. Perhaps what is most impressive to me about libertarianism is the attention to past ideas and thinkers and the commitment to making today's world more prosperous and peaceful. Where Republicans and Democrats seem to move to the next new big idea—almost always including legislation—libertarians stay back, arguing for no offensive wars, far less or no taxation, and advocating for liberty, prosperity, and individuality.

I was proud of my new affiliation and started a podcast to promote it. The show, called the Culinary Libertarian, covers food—a subject I know well—and liberty. Often the two topics intersect. For example, Mark McAfee of the Raw Milk Institute was a guest on the podcast to discuss the benefits of raw milk. Regrettably, 20 states, including Florida, do not allow the sale of raw milk for human consumption, while some other states impose herd size restrictions, label requirements, and/or prohibitions on retail sales. Pete Kennedy, former president of the Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, spoke with me about the problems created by the Wholesome Meat Act of 1967, which has made a veritable monopoly of the beef industry.

I sometimes invite guests to discuss topics related to either food or libertarianism. Regarding the latter, I've spoken with Walter Block about how the state is less efficient at recycling than private enterprise would be if the state allowed that. I've also covered economics with Jeffrey Herbener, profit with Antony Davies, and the Federal Reserve with Mike Maharrey. Hopefully, such discussions will help others to recognize that so many things we see at an organized national or international scale have government forces behind them. I have also brought relevant publications into the show, such as Robert Higgs's *Against Leviathan*, which explains how the FDA is just part of the revolving door between Big Pharma and Congress, and Murray Rothbard's *Anatomy of the State*.

I enjoy delving into the political aspects of what at first glance may be viewed as strictly personal food choices. This applies, for instance, to veganism, which has an ethical veneer, i.e., not to hurt animals. Yet veganism also has an unpleasant underside: it involves an organized central planning machine determined to put an end to animal agriculture

with the support of the United Nations and the World Health Organization. I have done several shows on veganism, including a rebuttal to a vegan activist e-book and a discussion of the Great Food Transformation, which is part of the Great Reset.

An issue that is of particular importance to me is food sovereignty, which entails the right of the people who grow, sell, and consume the food and the decision-making opportunity about how that all happens. I've written a series of blog posts about it in order to show that the government can interfere even in your own choice of what to consume. I am especially interested in Amish farmer Amos Miller's ongoing legal battle with the FDA and the USDA over what he is allowed to butcher and sell. In short, I believe that the state should not prevent me from such activities as drinking raw milk or butchering my own cows for food. Yet in these and countless other ways, the government is either dictating the choices for us or at least making our choices more difficult and limited.

Although food sovereignty on the international and state level is a huge and complex issue, one aspect that I have greater control over is what I do locally. (This goes for politics as well since city councils and county commissioners can only do limited harm and it is easier to vote with your feet against them.) I'm fortunate to be able to buy meat, store-made hotdogs, jerky from a real butcher shop, and eggs from a lady in the community who raises her own chickens. Local can also mean starting a garden in your backyard to grow tomatoes and cucumbers. Yet even in this aspect, the state seeks to interfere. For me, the challenge to eating local was made plain in 2011 when WI Judge Patrick Fiedler ruled against the Farm To Consumer Legal Defense Fund, stating, "no, Plaintiffs do not have a fundamental right to produce and consume the foods of their choice." It seems unconscionable that the government can tell us what we may or may not do with the food we grow.

Despite the rewarding aspects of being a culinary libertarian, my libertarian views have also lost my friends both in person and online. When I dared to share the fact that Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* is fiction, my mushroom-hunting companion looked aghast as though I had punched him. "No it's not!" he replied, and off he went. My brother-in-law unfriended me twice on social media for expressing an unconventional view.

In the end, my stepdad's philosophy of the government that governs least, governs best, still applies. Now, however, I understand why that is necessarily the case. I may not change the world, but I can have fun promoting good food and freedom.



And I Will Finally Know What Freedom Is

David Chávez Salazar

This title is inspired by the last chorus of the song Libre (Free!) by the Spanish singer Nino Bravo. In the original language it reads: Y sabré lo que es al fin la libertad.

I was born in 1996, in Bogotá, Colombia, and grew up in a quiet middle-class neighborhood north of the city in a family of Galician origins, linked to academia, art, and business. My parents worked, I went to school, and we traveled regularly. We also had a summer house one hour from Bogotá. The road to it was very safe; however, that was not the general situation in the country. On many highways travelers commonly risked falling victim to the practice known as *pescas milagrosas* (literally, miraculous catches of fish), which were illegal checkpoints set up by the guerrillas to kidnap people who might have enough money to pay the ransom, usually merchants and white-collar professionals, like my parents. In those days, it was difficult to travel by land in Colombia.

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I can say that almost since I can remember I have been interested in social and political issues. Likewise, from an early age, I lived experiences that contributed to forging my skepticism towards the government. I learned of its uselessness when I listened to my parents talk about paying taxes for services that we were never going to use since most of the misnamed “public goods” that we consumed, such as healthcare and education, were private.

I also knew about the perversity of the state. My parents—to whom, without wanting to sound cheesy, I owe everything in life—had a very prosperous liquor and grocery business, which also made them an easy target for police extortion. Fortunately, they always spoke clearly to me regarding what was happening, and for that reason, I knew very well what a police officer was going for every time I saw one. There was one who frequented our business a lot. On one occasion, I found strength where I didn’t have it, knocked over his motorcycle and yelled at him not to bother us anymore. Curiously, he tried to calm me down and left, never to return.

Between the ages of 10 and 14, I began to shape my first political and religious ideas. For instance, at age 11, I left the Catholic Church and embraced a mixture of Christianity and Buddhism. Regarding political ideas, at age 13, due to the influence of the school system and the media, I became interested in socialism and decided to read Eduard Bernstein (the father of Marxist revisionism). After that, I turned into a social democrat. While I believed in private property, I also cleverly thought that the government should make a high fiscal expenditure to ensure social welfare. In those days my ideological model was Barack Obama and his Democratic Party.

In 2011, during my senior year of high school, I began to be drawn to communism. Although I knew that it was a criminal ideology because of my readings, the influence of my parents who have always been ardent anti-communists, and the very situation of my country, I nevertheless felt an adolescent rebellion that made me question whether it was really as bad as it was made out to be. I even contacted a representative of the Colombian Communist Party to talk about it. However, I never kept the appointment because my father found out about it.

I then decided to satisfy my curiosity by reading *The Soviet Ideology*, an old propaganda handbook from the 1960s. After intense reading that lasted months, I became... anti-communist! Marxism, with its historical materialism, dialectical materialism, labor theory of value, and class

struggle seemed to be complete nonsense. I therefore continued as a social democrat. Later, I became interested in green politics, incorporating environmental ideas into my political thinking.

A few months before my sixteenth birthday, I entered Universidad de La Salle to study economics. In one of my first classes, a professor showed a documentary comparing the ideas of two economists. I already knew one of them, J.M. Keynes, but I had never heard of the other... a certain Hayek. At the end of the documentary, the professor asked: Who identifies with Keynes? All my classmates raised their hands. Then: Who identifies with Hayek? Strangely, I raised my hand, albeit hesitantly. Something about Hayek struck me, even though at the time I didn't know exactly what.

Despite this exposure to Hayek, my conversion to the ideas of freedom was not immediate due to the indoctrination I received in the classroom. My university, private and Catholic, followed "Liberation Theology," a communist branch of Catholic social thought. For that reason, the existence of leftist groups, including the guerrillas, was tolerated within the campus. My teachers reiterated to us that "neoliberalism" was a perverse system and that we should create a social order based on the redistribution of wealth. During my freshman year of college, I must confess that I became sympathetic to many of these ideas.

In 2012, I decided to embark on a political career, joining the local Green Party. That year the Colombian government began peace talks with FARC, the oldest and bloodiest guerrilla group on the continent. Initially, I was enthusiastic about this. However, as the negotiations progressed, there was talk of "forgiveness and oblivion" in which the guerrillas would not spend a single day in jail for their crimes and would even be given seats in Congress. Remembering the violence the country had experienced during my childhood, I slowly withdrew my support for that peace process and ended up becoming a staunch critic. This episode made me question my ideological identity, marking the beginning of my path towards the ideas of freedom.

I was a moderate leftist, as 90% of my fellow citizens are, but at that time I was not clear about anything. Luckily, in 2013, the book *The Conservative Ideas* by Jorge Ospina Sardi came into my hands. With that reading, I exorcised my socialist demons and finally had clarity! That author made me understand that there is nothing wrong with defending capitalism, which is not the cruel system that its critics proclaim. On the contrary, it is the only system that has raised humanity's standards

of living. I also learned that regulations make things worse. In this way, I became a free-market advocate, abandoning my social democratic positions forever.

Then I read Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, which convinced me even more of free-market ideas. On one occasion, I met an activist from Students for Liberty who invited me to a seminar on Austrian economics. There I met figures like George Selgin, Larry White, and María Blanco. It was already very clear to me who I was: a classical liberal, like Adam Smith, Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman. Years later, I would understand that Friedman was more of a socialist, but that's another story.

As a classical liberal, I engaged in university activism, which led me to confrontations with numerous socialist groups, including the guerrillas, who even threatened me on several occasions. Even so, I continued to defend my ideas. Around that time, I joined the Democratic Center, a political party established by former president Álvaro Uribe who had a strong reception among classical liberals.

When I turned 18, I had another deviation along the way. Although I believed in the free market, I began to practice National Catholicism, an ultra-conservative ideology that opposes both communism and capitalism. Therefore, I can say that my path towards the idea of freedom has not been linear but has been full of stops along the way and even occasional reversals.

A few months later, however, I realized that my place was not among those fanatics who dreamed of a clerical state, which is why I abandoned National Catholicism and years later the Catholic Church itself. I had two periods of Catholicism in my life, from my baptism until age 11 and later from age 18 to 22. I have been an agnostic ever since and owe it in part to Ludwig von Mises, who in *The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science* makes very convincing arguments against the concept of God.

After leaving National Catholicism, I resumed my study of the ideas of freedom. Then I discovered the Mises Institute. This is how at the end of 2014 I identified myself for the first time in my life as a libertarian and sympathizer of the Austrian School of Economics. My intellectual curiosity led me to delve deeper into the topics, resolve doubts, and encounter more authors, such as Jesús Huerta de Soto, Martín Krause, Mark Skousen, and Israel Kirzner. A book that greatly influenced my thinking was *Studies in Political Economy* by Huerta de Soto. As a result of these readings, I became a minarchist, holding the view that the

government should only exist to provide security and justice and nothing more.

I began to feel uncomfortable inside the Democratic Center as I realized that it is not a free-market party as everyone believed but, on the contrary, a socialist party that advocates for more taxes, regulations, prohibitions, price controls, and even expropriations. At the end of 2015, I retired not only from this party but from politics all together. Instead, I dedicated myself to increasingly explore my new passions: libertarianism and the Austrian School. I first read Murray Rothbard and some of his heirs, such as Lew Rockwell, Tom Woods, and Hans-Hermann Hoppe.

In January 2016, a few months before my twentieth birthday, I encountered the writings of Walter Block. As I read more of his work, I thought: Wow, I agree with 99% of what he says! There is a saying that goes, “If at age 20 you are not communist, then you have no heart.” If that is true, I am proud of not having had a heart because at the age of 20, I was a convinced anarcho-capitalist, a position I maintain to this day. That year, I also met another of the great influencers of my thinking: Larry Sechrest. Unfortunately, he had already passed away in 2008, so I contacted his widow Molly who very kindly shared stories and documents with me.

Subsequently, I linked as a Blogger to Students for Liberty and began exchanging correspondence with Walter Block. The following year, at Mises University 2017, I was able to meet many libertarian figures in person, including him. There I also met other young Austro-libertarians who are doing incredible work for freedom and who have been my greatest friends ever since, such as Rafael Acevedo (Venezuela), Luis Cirocco (Venezuela), Bernardo Ferrero (Italy), Gerardo Garibay (Mexico), James Durdan (USA), Agnieszka Plonka (Poland), and Fernando Monteiro (Brazil). Later, through my work at AIER, I met Andrés Cusme Franco, a great friend and libertarian from Ecuador. I am convinced that we, along with many other young intellectuals, are the seventh generation of the Austrian School.

That same year, I was invited to give a lecture at the Juan de Mariana Institute, where I met Juan Ramón Rallo and Jesús Huerta de Soto. I wrote papers and attended various events related to Austro-libertarianism in different parts of the world, both as an attendee and a speaker, and I also graduated from La Salle. In 2018, I worked at the Austrian Economics Center, in Vienna, under the direction of Barbara Kolm. There I met great proponents of freedom like Kai Weiss

and Federico Fernández. I also founded *Estudios Libertarios*, the only Austro-libertarian journal in Colombia, which is now in its fifth issue.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, I made Chile my second home. There, together with my good friend, the economist Carolina Cornejo, who has been one of the most important people in my life, I founded *Libertas Phyle*, a think-tank inspired by the idea that we reach our maximum potential when we live in absolute freedom, with no limits other than respect for the dignity of others. That year I also assumed the direction of the Bastiat Society of Bogotá, and from both institutions, we have carried out economic literacy events with eminent scholars such as Vernon L. Smith (Nobel Prize in Economics 2002).

To earn a living, I have dedicated myself to teaching and have held positions in different financial consulting companies. I have also cultivated a passion for business—I guess it runs in my veins—and pursued post-graduate studies in Industrial Design. In fact, I have proposed the term “Designomics” to refer to the interaction between Design and Austrian Economics. My libertarian formation continued through the reading of other authors such as Doug Casey, Samuel Konkin, and Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein, with whom I have exchanged correspondence on free-market issues. In recent years, I have also participated in different academic contests. In 2021, I won second place in the annual essay contest organized by the Ayn Rand Institute, becoming the first Hispanic to achieve such a position in almost 35 years of the contest’s existence.

In conclusion, I have to say that I owe my greatest personal and professional satisfaction to libertarianism and the Austrian School. Thanks to them I was able to wake up from the statist illusion, as well as travel the world and meet wonderful people. On the other hand, I believe that the greatest challenge facing libertarianism today is to understand that most people are afraid of freedom and therefore take refuge in what they see as the protective mantle of the government. We libertarians must be empathic in the face of this situation and remember this as we convey our message. Likewise, we libertarians must strive to make people understand that our philosophy, in addition to defending economic freedoms, also defends social ones.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to my dear mentor Walter Block, who has always given me his support and advice in all the projects I have undertaken, in addition to being a friend who has listened to me in hard times. I will defend the ideas of freedom until the last day of my life and in the following decades, my purpose is to water the seed of libertarianism.



A Scottish Lefty Becomes a Libertarian

Antony Sammeroff

If you're for capitalism, then you must be for war and the surveillance state, right? At least that's the impression I got growing up in Scotland. In fact, it seemed to me that anyone who passionately cared about anything justice-related considered themselves on the left side of politics. They were "the good guys."

Now I was never an outright socialist. I believed in a market economy. I just thought lots of regulations and government programmes were necessary in order to help the poor get a leg up. I wasn't a particular fan of government, either, and I didn't think we should have a swelling public sector—I just thought that the government might be used to make sure the private sector operated honourably and justly. I probably wanted something approximating what Denmark had, although I wouldn't have known to say this at the time. I wanted what a communist friend of mine labelled "cleaned-up capitalism."

As I grew up and I started reading the publications of people such as Michael Moore and Noam Chomsky, I became clearer about what exactly the problem was. I would have debates on capitalism with my dad who

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was a businessman, but because he wasn't exactly Milton Friedman when it came to arguing the case but more of an instinctive conservative, I would just come out more certain that I was right because I was better read. Like most people, my parents had the all too common feature of being incapable of changing their minds once refuted—especially by their kids—and this gave me the impression that conservative positions were largely based on dogma and a lack of willingness to adapt opinions to reason or evidence.

I have always noticed myself being relatively open to arguments and keen to correct my errors. For example—even when I considered myself a left-liberal, I came across two radio adverts regarding gun control. One made the case that criminals didn't follow laws and that therefore banning guns would only disarm law-abiding citizens, leaving them defenseless. The other stated that a huge number of crimes were stopped by law-abiding citizens every year who happened to be carrying a gun. I was converted!

I would get frustrated coming up against a world that was not open to argument as I somehow presumed that if you just gave people the right arguments and data that they, too, would correct their errors and align their views with reality because they wouldn't want to hold on to a false position. It would be many years before I realized that a lot of what we call people's opinions are simply what they *prefer* to believe, and because of that, whatever argument or evidence you give them, they will likely find a rationalization for continuing to stick to their positions, regardless. It's just as well I didn't realize this too soon though, as engaging in "futile" arguments really helped me sharpen my mind and understand common objections, especially along my journey from left-liberal to libertarian.

It was around 2006 or 2007 that I decided to start a YouTube channel to summarize some of the important things I had learned about politics and economics and advocate for a better world. It was much easier to get a following on YouTube in those days because it had a lot of features to help support you. For example, you could send a video to all your contacts, post video responses to other people's work, and participate in ongoing conversations. They soon removed these features. In hindsight, I really wish I had taken advantage of them and posted way more videos, as many of my peers who were more consistent have massive followers today.

Soon Ron Paul landed on the political scene and I found him extremely compelling. Lo and behold, here was the first person I had ever encountered who was known as a conservative and yet was against the wars and the surveillance state, stuff like the Patriot Act! I had never seen anything like it. What's more, he was going on and on about the evils of the Fed. Once I came to understand the role that central banks played in the economy, it was extremely confusing and confounding to me that leftists *never seemed to talk about them*. It seemed obvious to me that the central banks were a tremendous drain on living standards, especially for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. For me, being a lefty was all about concern for those at the bottom and prosperity for all. I suppose that when I would talk to lefties about this, they would be curious enough about it and agree that it was a net negative, but they would inevitably go back to how capitalists exploit workers and how taxes should be higher for the rich.

Having caught my attention, Ron Paul began to educate me on economics and make me appreciate the value of markets more. I could readily understand how market competition put upward pressure on the quality of goods and a downward pressure on price and broadly had to reflect the preferences of consumers—at least, to the degree that consumers had money to spend. I could understand how markets create prosperity, but I wasn't convinced yet that completely free markets were the way to go. What about poor people who had no money with which to register demand? How would their needs be met? Didn't you need regulations to protect workers, the environment, and whatnot? I understood the *concept* of regulatory capture, of course, and realized that regulations were often used by the big boys to corner the market against the common good. Like most people, though, I didn't think this had to be the case and I assumed the alternative of “no regulation” would be far worse. In fact, I needed a lot of convincing. I wasn't one of these people who had a single “come to Jesus” moment when it came to libertarianism; rather, it was a gradual process. All my objections first needed to be satisfied.

YouTube was my window to the world and I would soon get more than I bargained for when it came to handling my objections. Little by little the libertarians started creeping onto my YouTube uploads to tell me sternly how wrong I was. I have to say, I welcomed the debate. It was good to be challenged for a change instead of feeling like I had the upper-hand. I was diverted to this video and that one. There were quite a lot of libertarians on YouTube at this time, at least relative to the size of

YouTube. There didn't seem to be many socialists or communists putting out the word there, which surprised me, but some young liberty-minded people clearly saw the platform as an opportunity to get the word out on arguments that were rarely, if ever, heard in the public sphere. Some of the youngsters were very good critical thinkers and put their arguments across very well. They were also interested in psychology, sociology, alternative approaches to education, anthropology, and history, as well as economics and political philosophy, which made them very interesting to listen to. I learned a lot from them, even when we disagreed—which was often, and they shared my passion for learning just about everything in an attempt to understand the world and make it comprehensible.

Bush was still in power, and Tony Blair in the UK, who mirrored many of the Republican policies, including pushing for long periods of detention without trial and all sorts of violations of civil liberties, as well as supporting “the war on terror.” Because libertarians were really strong on these issues, it was easier to see them as a lot more aligned with my views than conservatives and mainstream people, and definitely partial allies. I can see how today it might be a lot harder for people to migrate over from the left, as the political climate has changed a lot and libertarians seem a lot more aligned with the political right today. That was not clearly the case when I started to become a libertarian.

Around this time I started my degree in the humanities at Glasgow University, but a parallel education was taking place on YouTube as my politics became increasingly free-market orientated, and I got to test out my new ideas in my assignments for my political philosophy class. My tutor in the second year told me that he left my essay to mark last because he knew it was going to be a good read. I had recently decided I was an anarchist, you see. And my seminars had been the perfect battleground to measure my ideas against other minds. Facebook was really starting to take off in those days as well, so I had plenty of opportunities to announce my positions to the world and get feedback. When anyone had a question, point, or argument I had not heard before and didn't have a good answer to, I would get researching! This helped me plug the gaps in my knowledge.

I never really intended to become a professional libertarian or anything, but I've always liked writing, so I would write about some of the things I learned and post them as blogs. When I joined the Scottish Libertarian Party it was *purely* with the intention to socialize and meet like-minded people, I was not interested in engaging in politics. But every now and

then someone would ask me to make myself useful and write an article for the website, so I'd do that. Then eventually I started getting articles published at the Mises Institute and other libertarian-orientated websites. Then I pulled together some of my articles and research I had done for some presentations and combined that with new material in order to put together the book *Universal Basic Income—For and Against* (2019), and that attracted some attention. I really wrote it to demonstrate libertarian approaches to tackling poverty, which I felt were really underemphasized in the movement. I thought, and still think, that as long as free markets are associated with profiting the rich rather than emancipating the poor, we will have an uphill battle selling our ideas. In my book, I demonstrate that, if not for the government, the average person would be so rich that they wouldn't need much in the way of a UBI or welfare to get by. I meant to show how particular government policies make the average man on the street worse off. I think this shows my principles haven't changed much since I was a leftist—I just have a better understanding of how things work and that leads me to different conclusions regarding policy.

I did not fully embrace the term libertarian for quite a while. Even once I became an anarchist, I considered myself an eclectic. I was still partial to left-wing ideas on more egalitarian workplaces and humanitarian approaches to education. I decided that the state was the main impediment to bringing about a more humanistic vision of the world which social reformers I admired on the left wanted to bring about. What more could people do than recreate workplaces that reflected the top-down, authoritarian, hierarchical structure of the schools they were indoctrinated in and habituated to in their formative years? Besides, it sounded much cooler saying I was an anarchist to other students. If I'd said I was a libertarian—no one would have had a clue what I meant at the time!

It's a measure of the progress of our movement that when I first became a libertarian, barely anyone had heard the word, but nowadays we are roundly lambasted in the mainstream media. Given there are so few of us, it's quite amazing to read that both the left and the right blame us for just about every problem in the world. They must really think we have an undue influence on the general direction of the public discourse relative to our numbers! The comment sections are full of us, fighting on both fronts, providing a principled alternative to the big stats on both the left and the right. They can no longer pretend we don't exist or fail to contend with our arguments. Well, you know how the old saying goes, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."



A Survivor's Story

Li Schoolland

In 1987 I met the man who is now my husband, Ken Schoolland. On our first date, he gave me Ayn Rand's *Anthem* to read. I quickly finished the book and he asked me what I thought of it. I replied, "It was my life." The rest is history. Ken made me realize that I was a libertarian all my life, even though I didn't know the label.

I was born in 1958 in Tianjin, China, to an English professor and a medical doctor. My ancestors were in the top 1% of capitalist China at the beginning of the twentieth century. They were pioneers of modern Chinese history: bankers, industrialists, entrepreneurs, scholars, diplomats, politicians, and military leaders.

When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took control in 1949, my relatives lost everything due to nationalization of all private properties, including homes. Because our family had property and Western education, I grew up as a "black" kid, a "son-of-a-bitch" according to official labels in society, segregated from the "reds" and discriminated against in everything we could do without any rights or privileges under the CCP's slogan of "fairness and equality."

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At a very young age, my school was closed for two years and I was forced to survive on the street on my own, protecting my little brother from bullies, not only because my ancestors were “enemies of the people” but also because my father was a political prisoner. He spent a year in prison for telling a joke about Mao’s wife. I was forced to watch the Red Guards beat up my mother and ransack our home. They destroyed everything they claimed to be politically incorrect or bourgeois. These were so-called luxuries, which we shouldn’t be entitled to have, such as family photographs, Western style clothes, and nice shoes.

From 1969 to 1978 our family was exiled to the South of China, first to a remote village and later to a steel mill in a small city. The village was so primitive that there was no sign of modernization. The schooling during exile focused on hard, physical labor and Mao’s little red books. I learned the trade of being a farmer in the most primitive way, with bare hands and feet, and I worked in various ways in the steel mill.

At the time, I made a decision that lasted my lifetime. I would never follow or obey the authorities, because they are evil, against humanity, even though they covered themselves with beautiful slogans. I told myself that they could take away all our tangible possessions, forbid us from gaining knowledge or reading any books other than Communist ones, and punish us if we said anything that was not in line with the CCP, but they would never be the owner of my life and stop me from being who I want to be.

I decided to try my best in any way I could find to learn, to educate myself, to think, as long as I kept this inside myself, then no one could ever take this away from me or destroy it. I desperately read all the great classics of the West that I could get from people who broke into locked libraries and stole the books to pass underground. Most of my reading was done under the cover of my blanket with a flashlight in the middle of the night.

For example, when I was 11 years old, the only book I had access to for the whole year was Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. I read the book every day for a year and almost memorized it. I was determined to be smarter than any of the CCP officials who ruled over me. I learned to use Mao’s words, which we were forced to memorize, in order to fight with the Communist leaders in my school and workplace and as a weapon to ridicule their stupidities.

For example, the school ordered our high schoolers to jump into chemical waste, open sewage, to clean it. When I was the only one who

said “No!” to the Communist Party Secretary, I was called to his office to be condemned as an anti-communist and for disobeying his authority. As a 15-year-old I told the Party Secretary “Our dear leader, Chairman Mao, told us to always learn from the workers, peasants, and soldiers. So I will refuse to do anything where there are no workers, peasants, or soldiers doing work alongside us.” Knowing there would never be any workers who would jump into this chemical sewage, I told the school officials, “As soon as the workers from the factory are in the sewage, I will be happy to jump in by their side.” With that, the school officials were speechless and ended up canceling the project.

Even though I was living in a totally controlled, dictated life, I learned that Mao was a tyrant. I never stopped saying “no” whenever I could. For example, when I was assigned a job after graduating from university with Japanese language training to be part of a railroad construction group that was to build a railroad from Tanzania to Zambia, I asked the supervisor to clarify my duties. He said they needed a translator in Africa and the government would be sending me there since foreign languages are all the same. There was apparently no difference between an interpreter of Japanese, English, or French. This was a very typical practice under the planned Chinese economy. I was told by the officials in the workplace that I could just go to Africa and sit there for two years and do nothing, get paid, and come home with bragging points that I’d been to a foreign country.

I said “No.” I told them it is my life and I wouldn’t live the way they planned for me. The end of the story was that the leader of the workplace never heard of anything like this with someone saying “no,” so they wanted me to go away and find my own solution. I did. With many loopholes in this crazy planned society, I was able to get a job that was of some value: translating the Japanese transportation manuals that were used as the basis of Chinese roadbuilding in Beijing.

In 1984, I found an opportunity with the sponsorship of a kind American to leave China and attend graduate school in Minnesota. It was the first time I was entirely on my own to make choices about my own life and to choose my destiny and my own goals. America gave me this freedom and possibility. Even though I came to the US with only \$50 in my pocket and almost zero English ability, I was able to complete both Master’s in Japanese Literature and a Japan focused MBA degree in five years.

This brings us back to the beginning of the story. I met my husband in 1987 and received a label, “libertarian.” At that time I decided not to

care about the politics of any country, only to focus on making the best of the life I had chosen. However, the 1989 student movement and the June 4th massacre in Tiananmen Square reminded me that there are still many people who live without freedom and who are willing to use their lives and blood to fight for freedom.

At the same time, I heard some famous people praising North Korea and publicly saying that freedom causes problems in the US, calling on the government to take away some individual liberty in order to better govern people. I became furious and started to go into the public squares, telling my life story under dictatorship and life without freedom as a slave of dictators.

I ran for public office many times in Hawaii as a libertarian and was always glad to give talks at public rallies. When the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union collapsed, I was overjoyed because I thought I saw a light at the end of the tunnel and knew that Communism would not last forever. Evil cannot win!

From my background, I knew that the newly transformed democratic countries might not have a ready replacement for the Communist regimes. I therefore decided to go to Eastern Europe to teach and spread the ideas of free markets and the principles of individual liberty. From early 1990, my husband and I, along with some other libertarians and Austrian School economists, organized summer camps to teach the principles of freedom and liberty in almost all of the former communist countries of Eastern Europe and many Asian nations. We did this largely without the backing of any organization or much funding. We did so because I value freedom very highly and I don't want to see anybody live the life I had lived. After we witnessed the transformation of most Eastern European countries toward freedom and prosperity, I received a calling to go back to China to try and make a difference.

I once swore to myself that I would never go back to China to face those whose hands were covered with the blood of innocent people, who had built their luxurious lives by robbing individuals of freedom and liberty. But when the calling came, I decided to put away my personal grudge and do something for the people of China. After 2007, I started to visit China frequently, looking for opportunities to spread the ideas of freedom and free market economics. From then until 2019, I was able to organize two Austrian School Economic Summits in Shanghai with many renowned international speakers from around the world, with Chinese students and scholars in attendance. I also established summer Austrian

economic seminars with one famous Chinese University for ten years in a row. I was likewise able to lead my team of scholars from city to city on a speaking tour of China. In addition, I was able to get many libertarian and Austrian economics books translated and published in China.

No individual or institution has ever accomplished what I have been able to do. In this regard, I am very thankful for the 26 years of living in China, fighting and surviving my horrible life there. I knew how to deal with and outsmart the CCP. After 2020, unfortunately, most countries followed China's model in responding to the pandemic. This reminded me of how easily individuals can lose their freedom and sovereignty over their lives, in most part willingly, in the false promise of security from the government.

China has closed its borders to any foreigners since 2020, so I decided to do in Africa and South Asia what I was doing before in China. I used my personal stories to illustrate the evils of communism and the precious value of economic freedom and personal liberty.

For some period of time, because I was concerned about the personal safety of my relatives in China, I didn't want to be known on the internet as an anti-communist, anti-dictatorship fighter. But for the past ten years, I decided that I no longer want to stay in the closet. I truly believe that truth will prevail and the fight for liberty and freedom is borderless. I will go anywhere that I can reach to promote individual liberty and economic freedom.



Making Life Less Lonely for Canadian Libertarians

Karen Selick

My libertarian journey started in the tenth grade when suddenly the subject of history became interesting to me. That year's curriculum covered the twentieth century and included a course on civics: how laws were passed, how the government operated, and so on. At long last, history classes included something relevant and useful, rather than disconnected facts recited by bored teachers whose real interests lay in art, shop, or physical education.

My history teacher, Mr. McFadden, was in fact so passionate about his subject and so interesting to listen to, that a friend and I would often go in to see him after school and talk to him about the ideas he had stirred up earlier that day. I remember raising the perplexing problem that communism—which to my naive 14-year-old mind seemed fair and just in theory—never actually seemed to work out very well in practice. Then Mr. McFadden changed my life.

“You should read *Atlas Shrugged*,” he said.

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The school library theoretically had a copy, but it was perpetually missing from the shelf for the next two years. I think someone must have stolen it, possibly to prevent others from reading it. In February of 1971—I used to keep a list of books I had read, with the dates—I spotted *Atlas Shrugged* in the local municipal library. I read it—twice—and felt as though I’d been struck by lightning. Holy smokes, that woman made sense! I was seventeen.

Over the next two years, I devoured all of Ayn Rand’s books, several books by Nathaniel Branden, and John Hospers’ tome *Libertarianism: A Political Philosophy for Tomorrow*. I carried on with books by Henry Hazlitt, Murray Rothbard, David Friedman, and Friedrich Hayek. Harry Browne’s book *How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World* taught me to walk out of boring or stupid events I had already paid to attend: “I’ve already wasted my money on this, so I won’t also waste my time.” Browne’s other books also set me on a lifelong course of anticipating imminent government-created disasters: hyperinflation, food shortages, mob violence, etc. Fifty years later, I’m an old hand at prepping to deal with the horrors that Klaus Schwab and the World Economic Forum seem determined to inflict upon the world.

I was just finishing high school when I started writing letters to the editors of newspapers. My father subscribed to the *Toronto Star*, as most Toronto Jews did in that era. It was then, and is still, a left-wing rag that irritated the crap out of me. It gave me plenty of ammunition to write about. The *Star* finally published one of my letters after ignoring at least eight. The editor removed about three-quarters of my brilliant diatribe. However, I was immediately hooked on seeing my name in print. I soon learned how to ruthlessly edit my own letters, including only the most salient points in concise but vivid language. Pretty soon, almost all of my letters were getting printed. It was a great way to learn op-ed writing.

When I graduated at the top of my class from high school, *The Globe and Mail* (Canada’s only national newspaper at the time) sent a reporter to my house to interview me. That was my first lesson in how *not* to deal with the press (i.e., don’t mention Ayn Rand unless you can stand up to a lot of ridicule). But after the rather unflattering portrait of me was published, a stranger sent me a copy of Frederic Bastiat’s *The Law*, which opened my eyes to the long libertarian tradition that pre-dated Rand. I still recommend Bastiat’s *The Seen and the Unseen* to people who are just getting their feet wet.

In September 1971, I started to attend the University of Toronto. An advertisement appeared in the Personals section of the university newspaper saying something like: “Ayn Rand. Objectivism. Discussion group. Call Ian.” Naturally, I had to call Ian. I was soon introduced to other Toronto libertarians—notably Bruce Evoy and Vince Miller. Several of us traveled to Cleveland in 1973 for the US Libertarian Party convention, where we formed the Canadian Caucus. Upon our return to Canada, we established the Libertarian Party of Canada (LPC). I was then 20.

The first federal election after the LPC’s founding was in 1974. We were all stunned to find that the LPC had garnered only one to two percent of the popular vote in the ridings we ran in. We had naively expected to win some seats. Nevertheless, I allowed my name to stand as a candidate for the LPC in the next two federal elections, in 1979 and 1980. I chose a ride where I thought nobody would know me. I didn’t plan to do much except put my name on the ballot so that we’d have enough candidates to be recognized as an official party.

By that time, I had finished law school and had just started working as a lawyer for a large Canadian bank. Much to my surprise, the “obscure” riding I had chosen to run in turned out to be home to half the bank’s senior management. It also had several local newspapers that covered election news in detail and a population so imbued with a civic spirit that they loved to attend political meetings. I couldn’t pass up this opportunity to publicize libertarianism, so I ended up speaking at some twenty-odd public meetings. It was a crash course in speech writing and debate that eventually stood me in good stead. (However, I still didn’t get more than two percent of the popular vote.)

I went to another US Libertarian Party convention in Los Angeles in 1979. That’s where I met the love of my life, HC, who doesn’t want his full name to appear here. He was a self-made businessman in a small manufacturing company located in a tiny eastern Ontario town, about 200 kilometers from Toronto. He had no university education but had read *Atlas Shrugged* several years earlier and had even read Mises’ *Human Action*, which was one up on me. He was 18 years older than me, but we were perfect for each other. We are still together 43 years later—without ever having bothered to get the approval of church or state, incidentally.

For the first five years of our relationship, we went back and forth between Toronto and HC’s home on weekends. Finally, I got fed up with that and moved in to live with him in 1985. I went into private practice as a lawyer in a small firm where I remained for 24 years, doing primarily

family law. I hated that stressful field, but I was strangely good at it. I have a lot of empathy for people. Even now, many years after leaving that practice, I occasionally hear from former clients who are grateful for the help I gave them through their difficult times.

Meanwhile, I considered my really important work to be the public speaking and opinion writing I did on weekends.

I got back into public speaking in 1989 through the Fraser Institute, Canada's closest thing to a free-market think tank. In those days, the institute was conducting student seminars across Canada. I attended one in Toronto, even though I wasn't a student anymore. There I met Michael Walker and Walter Block. I had read Walter's supposedly controversial book *Defending the Undefendable*, but for me, it was just straightforward logic. Eventually, I was invited to speak at some of the institute's seminars. Walter and I became friends and remain so to this day.

Also in 1989, a Canadian legal trade publication then called *The Lawyers Weekly* posted an advertisement for a "right-wing columnist" to offset its existing left-wing columnist, a law professor at the University of Western Ontario. That guy had annoyed me so often that I just knew I had to apply. I got the job. That was the start of my career as a columnist.

About a year later, I moved to *Canadian Lawyer* magazine, where I continued writing until 2006. It was a tough gig, writing for lawyers. More than once, some ticked-off subscriber wrote to my editor strongly suggesting that I be fired. However, my editors always supported my right to express my opinion no matter how disagreeable it was to some readers. Many of my columns were reprinted in the Fraser Institute's magazine *Fraser Forum* (one of these annoyed Margaret Thatcher immensely, I was told) or in FEE's *The Freeman*, as well as in several major Canadian newspapers. I also became experienced at appearing on radio and TV talk shows.

The *National Post*, a Canadian newspaper founded in 1998 by a prominent conservative, initially loved my writing. They published dozens of my op-eds over about two decades. However, by 2019, my columns weren't welcome there anymore, or new editors would reply to my submissions requesting significant changes. By that time, I had retired from law, was studying biology and nutrition, and had started raising concerns about health issues I had become interested in—primarily toxic pesticides in our food supply (i.e., glyphosate) and toxic vaccinations. That apparently didn't suit the *National Post's* advertisers. I had to find new outlets for my writing.

Along the way, I had been able to free myself from the torture of practicing family law. From 2009 to 2015, I was the Litigation Director for the Canadian Constitution Foundation, a registered charity that took on pro bono cases helping individuals fight against the government. One of the bravest and most persistent people I've ever met was my client (and now friend) Michael Schmidt, a dairy farmer who fought for decades to legalize the sale of unpasteurized milk in Canada—unsuccessfully, I'm sorry to say. He documented his ordeal in his own book *Raw Milk and the Search for Human Kindness*, published in 2020.

In the legal sphere, I was influenced by Bruno Leoni's *Freedom and the Law*, as well as by Hayek's works *The Constitution of Liberty* and *Law, Legislation and Liberty*. For many years, I was a subscriber to *Reason* magazine and the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*.

In the 1990s, I had been privileged to attend a series of Liberty Fund colloquia. Those conferences allowed me to meet and interact with many libertarian luminaries I would not otherwise have had a chance to meet—people such as Robert Higgs and Joanne Rothbard. Then I was invited to become the vice president of the John Locke Institute of Canada, an organization formed with funding from the Institute for Humane Studies. We ran weekend seminars for students, inviting speakers such as Ralph Raico, Ronald Hamowy, Jan Narveson, Pierre Lemieux, and Walter Block to steep our students in history, philosophy, and economics. Once again, I had found a teacher who made history interesting: Ralph Raico. I never tired of listening to him. The alumni of those seminars have gone on to become important libertarian participants in Canadian law, politics, and journalism.

Although I still recommend *Atlas Shrugged* to people occasionally these days, two new paradigm-shifting books that I also recommend to people are *Dissolving Illusions: Disease, Vaccines and the Forgotten History* by Dr. Suzanne Humphries and *The Invisible Rainbow: A History of Electricity and Life* by Arthur Firstenberg.

I believe my strength as a thinker is that I can connect the dots and see patterns in current events much more easily than most people seem to do. My strength as a writer and public speaker is my ability to take complex ideas that I've gleaned from very smart people and discuss them so clearly and simply that even readers or listeners of much more limited ability can understand what I'm talking about.

When I first started writing, I sometimes worried about how people would react when I said the opposite of what almost everyone else seemed

to be saying. Now I know that my voice gives others the courage to use their own brains, judgment, and voices to stand up with me and oppose irrationality and tyranny. I like to think that I've made Canada a less lonely place for libertarians.



Challenging India's Socialist Mindset

Parth J. Shah

“28 people dead: Illicit liquor,” read a headline with a small photo in the local newspaper, *Gujarat Samachar*. I read similar stories on the back pages of the newspaper day after day. This was the first issue that opened my eyes to a world beyond academics and sports. Yes, I was a sporty nerd! Why are people dying almost every day from spurious liquor? I slowly connected this mystery to why I so proudly kept an empty can of beer in my hostel room.

During that summer break when I was 19 years old, a classmate gave me *The Fountainhead*. And luckily, he had Ayn Rand's full collection—fiction and non-fiction. It was a summer of non-stop reading. As I reflect back, Rand did three things that have had a profound influence on my life. First, she made philosophy, economics, and politics seem far more exciting than what I was doing in the college pharmacy lab dreaming about a new drug discovery. Second, she made it real that you could be right and the whole world could be wrong. Third, she showed that living by others' expectations could be worse for everyone, at least in some cases.

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I therefore decided to leave pharmacy. The Indian education system at the time didn't allow for changing disciplines and I found out that it was rather easy in the US. But a student visa was possible only to study further in your earlier degree. So I would have to study pharmacy for one more year in the US before switching disciplines. Soon after landing in Boston I made an overwhelming discovery: One could audit classes, even at Harvard, without paying a dime!! I was in love with America!! I worked in the pharmacy lab to earn money but spent my time at Harvard auditing philosophy, politics, economics, and journalism classes. Ultimately economics won!

After reading Mises, Hayek, and Friedman, I decided to pursue further study in Austrian Economics. I didn't have a single course in economics on my transcripts when I applied for graduate studies to New York University, the only place I knew taught Austrian Economics. They admitted me on the condition of doing one year of undergraduate courses first. Since the NYU undergraduate tuition was simply unfordable, I called the office of the director of the Austrian program at NYU for assistance. Professor Kirzner himself was on the phone! Although he couldn't help with the NYU admission, he generously offered to recommend me to a new Austrian program at Auburn University. Auburn offered admission to the master's program on the condition of passing intermediate micro and macro with a B+ average. The Mises Institute at the Auburn campus offered me a job and a tuition scholarship. Later I received support from the Earhart Foundation. Over the years, these institutions have helped so many wanderers to reach Austrian ground.

Under the leadership of Roger Koppl and with the help of Sven Thommesen, we graduate students designed seminars and studied whatever we found of interest. Professors Leland Yeager and Roger Garrison led those seminars with affection and inspiration. Professor Yeager generously agreed to be the chair of my dissertation committee. I have learned too many things from him to enumerate, but the two everlasting ones are my taste for wine and the intellectual approach to take what's best in every author and continue to weave your tapestry. The motto to focus more on the common ground has really served me well.

As any student of sound economics, I understood that India's poverty and my grandmother's lack of access to new medicines stemmed from the country's economic system. And that system must change. Just before graduation, a like-minded Indian friend and I returned to India to explore

the possibility of starting a think tank. We met with some of the top businessmen and discussed the need for an independent think tank working on policy reforms. Surprisingly, they all basically said that policy is government work and we better join the government. Some of them later funded a think tank—the India office of the Brookings Institution in 2013.

It became clear that to start a think tank in India, I would need to have my own money or support from the US. I took up an assistant professorship at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. I loved everything about being a professor. I also had the opportunity to work with the Mackinac Center and be part of the programs at the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation. The Atlas Foundation's think tank training programs were very helpful in understanding the nuts and bolts of running a think tank. As I got involved with the works of other think tanks in the US, the combination of academic rigor and social activism increasingly appealed to my heart. I had full clarity about what I wanted to do.

The life of an US academic, however, is very seductive. It offered all that I wanted—freedom to teach courses of choice, smart and energetic students, sufficient time to pursue academic research as well as other intellectual interests and a four-month summer break. I was able to come to India during the summer and continued to do work with Barun Mitra who had started the Liberty Institute. It seemed like the best of both worlds! I had every reason to continue to be an academic in the US. One reason that always won was that I should get all my academic work published before moving out of academia. The India think tank idea was slowly looking less urgent.

But my karma had something else planned. I was advised to undergo open-heart surgery. The night before the surgery, I asked myself what I would regret the most if something were to go wrong in the operating room. The answer was crystal clear. I promised myself that as soon as I recovered, I would pack my bags and move to India. When facing a life and death situation, priorities become clearer, decisions become so much easier, and life seems simpler, no contradictions or confusions. The surgery happened in January and I was in India with my bags by August.

My parents, family, and friends were opposed to the idea of my returning, particularly when I was likely to need high-standard medical care for the rest of my life. But remember, you could be right and the whole world could be wrong! To put my parents at ease, I also managed to get a sabbatical from the university. If things didn't work out, I could go back to my career in the US. As it turned out, they loved living with

me in Delhi and frankly they were the best support system I could have when the new venture began. They helped with a lot of logistics, particularly mailing letters and invitations for programs. They proudly came to many of the events, and my mother managed the registration desk at some of the panel discussions that we hosted. My move back to India ultimately turned out to be good for all of us—my parents, my family, and me! I found love in Delhi and have a sporty nerd as a son. As Rand would say, there are no conflicts among rational self-interests. Though I don't think she would have managed the transition as smoothly and amicably. Maybe that's why Objectivism didn't touch my heart as much as my head.

Again karma stepped in! The Earhart Foundation had given me a scholarship during my Ph.D. studies, and it was based in Ann Arbor where I lived. At a social gathering, David Kennedy, the president of the foundation, said he had heard that I was planning to go back to India. He offered \$10,000 per year for three years from the Foundation! With this generous grant and my savings, I now had no excuse.

The Centre for Civil Society started on August 15, 1997. It was the 50th anniversary of India's independence from the British. In the early years of CCS, one of the bylines was "From Independence to Freedom." India attained her political independence in 1947, but Indians still await their economic and social freedom. It was six years after the big-bang reforms of 1991, but most people were still rather socialist in their working and thinking. An editor of a business newspaper invited me to speak to his editorial team about the idea of CCS. The first question by a young lady after my presentation was whether the CIA was funding my think tank! I was really taken aback; this was a business newspaper that generally championed economic reforms. What could one say? "I wish they were; my parents wouldn't have to labor in the CCS office." I was nonetheless very fortunate to have the support of many people across all walks of life in the initial years. They made settling in far less daunting than I had imagined when moving to a city that I had only visited a couple of times.

My vision of CCS was that of an Indian version of the Cato Institute. But even among a billion people, there were very few who fully understood market liberal or libertarian ideas and even fewer who could apply those ideas to current issues in any convincing way. We had to develop our own intellectual soldiers. So like the Institute for Humane Studies, we began doing programs with college students. With the permission of IHS, these programs were actually called Liberty & Society Seminars.

We subsequently added a summer internship program called Researching Reality. Some of our first full-time staff members at CCS were graduates of these programs.

We saw an interest among politicians, elected representatives, and public officials to understand our approach and learn how it can help solve socio-economic problems. Similar to the Heritage Foundation, we began working with them by writing briefing papers, devising policy notes, and even designing programs. We ran regular policy roundtables over breakfast.

School choice was one of our key focus areas. We realized that many in the government liked the idea of school vouchers and they called us “voucher wallahs,” often affectionately. But there was no actual voucher program in India that could suggest how the idea would work in the local context. We raised funds to launch India’s first voucher program. The success of that pilot brought us even more support to run a second voucher program. So now we were also running research or proof-of-concept pilots, along with being the Cato Institute, IHS, and Heritage Foundation of India.

The success of the voucher pilots emboldened us to launch a School Choice Campaign to mobilize parents to demand vouchers from their elected representatives. Small voucher programs started in northern India and the Chief Ministers of two large states publicly announced voucher-type programs. The 2009 Right to Education Act adopted the idea and promised to pay for 25% of the seats in private schools for economically and socially disadvantaged students. In a typical governmental fashion, the Act made it mandatory to reserve 25% of the seats for poor students instead of giving schools a choice. In any case, this is probably the only part of the 2009 Act that is widely discussed every year at the time of admissions. India now has the world’s largest voucher program.

The Fraser Institute publishes the Economic Freedom of the World Report, and from its inception CCS has been a co-publisher of the Report in India. We quickly learned that when we talked about economic freedom at our student seminars, the picture that came to their mind was of people with economic means whose freedom we were discussing. However, the examples we were using to illustrate the power of economic freedom also included street vendors and cycle rickshaw pullers, people at the bottom of the pyramid. There was dissonance.

We had to innovate, find the right language for the context. We replaced economic freedom with livelihood freedom. Now the image that

comes up in students' mind is of a person struggling to make a living, not of a person with economic means. We built on this and ran a Jeevika (Hindi word for livelihood) Documentary Festival to capture the stories of struggle and Licence Raj (or Permit Raj) on film. Indians, as many have claimed, are a visual people. A Livelihood Freedom Campaign followed to free street vendors from harassment and extortion by police and municipal officers. These efforts led to a liberal Street Vendors' Act in 2014.

You can find the work that CCS has done since 1997 on its website (www.ccs.in). Let me share one more change that I think would be useful to think tanks outside of the US. We found over the years that phrases like "limited government" or "individual rights" have little salience in India. A limited government to you could seem very expansive to me; there is no cultural context for the idea. We came up with a different articulation to describe ourselves. We want a society where each individual can lead a life of choice and where every institution, public and private, is accountable. Individual choice and institutional accountability are our new power phrases.

To work further on institutional accountability, in 2018 Luis Miranda and I co-founded the Indian School of Public Policy that offers a one-year graduate course in public policy. Our first cohort graduated in the middle of the pandemic in July 2020. Let's see how that story unfolds.



Living the American Dream

Ilya Shapiro

I was born in Moscow, USSR, in 1977, on a stormy early-summer day. My due date was actually July 4, but I was impatient and came early.

My dad had long wanted to leave the Soviet Union, but my mom had been reluctant to leave her parents and everything else she knew. My arrival was the last straw, as she realized the need to give me a better life. I'll always be grateful to my parents for getting me out of Russia, so I wouldn't have to grow up under communism or live under Putinism.

We had a fairly typical Soviet immigration story, typical at least for the first wave of émigrés who left after the Jackson-Vanik amendments to U.S. trade law, which pressured Leonid Brezhnev to allow Jews to leave. Those who wanted to go to Israel went straight there after a Red Cross health inspection in Vienna, while those who wanted to go to the West went on to temporary refugee settlement blocks in Ladispoli, Italy, on the outskirts of Rome.

To apply for an exit visa, my parents had to quit their jobs as ceramic engineers, my mom focused on research, and my dad on operations. They lived off their savings and by selling the many books they had accumulated

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but which of course we wouldn't be taking with us. Not that the cost of living was very high; there was nothing to buy! We were among the large portion of Muscovites who lived in communal apartments, such that my parents and I lived in the living room while a nice old unrelated lady had the bedroom and we shared the bathroom and kitchen.

After waiting more than two years, we were cleared to leave. We spent four months in Italy—my parents called it their “Roman Holiday,” where I turned four and was nicknamed “pest of the immigrants”—before Canada agreed to take us. HIAS, which began as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society on Manhattan's Lower East Side, helped us get settled in Toronto, including classes in English and basic life skills for my parents.

My parents eventually both found jobs at a defense contractor—focusing on superconductors and piezoelectric ceramics—in the small town of Lindsay, Ontario. It was the county seat of a rural county filled with lakes that made it “cottage country” for folks from the big city. Think central Michigan or Minnesota. I had a typically Canadian childhood, filled with bike riding, Boy Scouts, pick-up hockey, and arcades. Although I was more bookish than most kids, being big for my age and athletic stopped me from being bullied. I ended up skipping first grade and read faster than my public school could order new stock.

The only thing my parents taught me about politics was that communism was bad. My paternal grandfather, a doctor who spoke multiple languages and had been educated in Poland and Germany, had been taken away by Stalin's secret police when my dad was six—being a cosmopolitan Jew was suspect—never to be seen again. My dad and grandmother were then exiled to Siberia, being allowed to return to Moscow only when Nikita Khrushchev came to power, at which point my grandfather was posthumously “rehabilitated.”

My mom had a less traumatic childhood, but grew up without running water or electricity, in what is now a Moscow suburb. The man she knew as her father—my maternal grandmother divorced when my mom was a toddler—had fought in the war and family lore suggests that he knew the Red Army soldier who in a famous photo shook hands with a G.I. across the River Elbe in spring 1945. My mom was a star student but was denied opportunities because of her “nationality”—the fifth line on Soviet internal passports that marked ethnic minorities, including Jews, for discriminatory treatment.

So there I was, reading history books and deciding that I preferred America's “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness” over Canada's “peace,

order, and good government.” In middle school, I pledged allegiance to the Star-Spangled Banner at my locker and cut out pictures of Ronald Reagan and George Bush from *Time* magazine. I was watching history unfold in real time: the Berlin Wall fell when I was 12 years old. When the Evil Empire itself dissolved, I had a letter published in *Time* arguing that the United States should use the opportunity to build a strong working relationship with Russia rather than gloating.

We moved to the big city when I was accepted into one of the most academically rigorous high schools in the country, the University of Toronto Schools. There I developed language skills and historical foundations that would fuel a lifelong interest in comparative legal institutions. I also began to acquire a burgeoning understanding of political philosophy. I’d thought I was simply a conservative without religion, but readings into Enlightenment thinkers, as well as the American Founding Fathers, led me to conclude that classical liberalism was a more accurate descriptor of my ideological proclivities.

The summer before my senior year, I discovered *Atlas Shrugged*—the book is perfectly pitched for 17-year-old boys—and later that year went through the rest of Ayn Rand’s canon. I never became an objectivist as such, but Rand’s individualism and intolerance of collectivist impulses stuck with me. And I’ll always remember my high school librarian’s slipping me P.J. O’Rourke’s *All the Trouble in the World*, practically in a brown paper bag, and with a wink, whispering, sotto voce, “I know you’re something of a free-thinker.” It would be my great good fortune to get to know P.J. two decades later and to serve as his counsel on several briefs.

In college at Princeton I was intellectually omnivorous, taking classes in more than a dozen academic departments and consuming guest lectures on a plethora of subjects. I had a column in the school paper and attended seminars hosted by the Institute for Humane Studies, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, and any other group that would give me free books. I studied abroad in Buenos Aires and wrote papers as part of policy task forces on free-market environmentalism and NATO expansion. With many countries emerging as democracies in the 1980s and early ‘90s, I decided to focus on transitions from authoritarian rule. My senior thesis in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs—since stripped of its namesake, but ripe for renaming after George Schultz (rumored to have had a tiger tattoo on his posterior)—compared constitutional development in Russia and Argentina.

After graduation, I interned at the United Nations in Vienna, working on transnational organized crime, before pursuing graduate studies at the London School of Economics. At the LSE, I largely studied rugby, theater, and beer (not necessarily in that order), as well as rounding out my education in British and American literature. My frequent European travels apparently sufficed to earn a degree in international relations, for which I wrote a thesis on the relationship between geopolitics and the Olympics. I spent part of the following summer on Victor Davis Hanson's farm in the San Joaquin Valley, as both research assistant and manual laborer.

Then I went to law school at the University of Chicago, learning from giants like Richard Epstein, Cass Sunstein, Bill Landes, and David Currie. I wanted a career with aspects in the private sector, public sector, teaching, and writing. Importantly, I joined the Edmund Burke Debating Society (motto: "what the mainstream media thinks the Federalist Society is, we actually are") and won the inaugural national law and economics moot court competition, hosted by George Mason University Law School. I worked summers at big firms in New York and Washington—being a Big Law summer associate is the easiest money you can make!—and was fortunate to secure a judicial clerkship for my first year out of law school.

And so, after spending my only summer in Chicago studying for the New York bar—which all out-of-staters have to take in Albany as a sop to the capital's hoteliers—I moved to Jackson, Mississippi, to work for the incomparable E. Grady Jolly of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Clerkships are in effect post-docs for lawyers, where you learn how the rubber of theory hits the road of practice. Everything I am professionally, from the way I look at the law, to how I manage my own associates, to knowing when to incorporate humor as a way to gain perspective, can be traced to the lessons I learned in Judge Jolly's chambers. He was also an incredible personal mentor, showing how a gentleman lawyer conducts himself.

From Dixie I moved to D.C., where I spent a few months on the Bush-Cheney reelection campaign—first on the policy team and then being farmed out to work as a lawyer on the novel early-voting regime in Broward County, Florida—before joining Cleary Gottlieb, the firm where I had spent my second law school summer. Cleary was and remains one of the premier international law firms, but it turns out that the practice of international law and antitrust was nowhere near as stimulating as the theory. So I quickly moved to another firm, Patton Boggs, while writing

op-eds and blogposts to replenish my soul in the wee hours, and attending think tank lectures and Capitol Hill cocktail parties to keep abreast of policy and politics.

It was at the wine-and-cheese reception after a lecture at the American Enterprise Institute that I got to talking with Roger Pilon of the Cato Institute, who had noticed a question I asked during the session. Roger invited me to lunch, during which I (1) ordered wine and (2) had a three-hour conversation about legal philosophy and jurisprudence. I hadn't realized it was a job interview, but Roger said I got the offer with my answer to his first question: was I libertarian or conservative? Classical liberal, I replied, and the rest was history—at least after I took three months to be a special assistant/adviser to the Multi-National Force in Iraq on rule-of-law issues, working for the head JAG and meeting with General David Petraeus weekly.

I spent nearly 15 years at Cato, ultimately succeeding Roger as vice president and director of constitutional studies. I'm proud of my tenure there, building the *amicus curiae* (“friend of the court”) brief program to be a national leader, creating an associates program that trains young lawyers to be legal-policy professionals, and stewarding the *Cato Supreme Court Review* into a new level of influence. I built my career at the intersection of the legal, political, academic, and media worlds, advancing classical liberal ideas in a host of venues. My central role in the litigation over Obamacare's individual mandate, culminating in an infamous Supreme Court ruling in June 2012, secured my reputation as a constitutional scholar, pundit, and advocate.

On June 20, 2014, I realized a lifelong dream in becoming a U.S. citizen. I'm proud to be an American. I care deeply about this country and believe it's man's last, best hope for freedom in this world. That means the rule-of-law, it means (classical) liberal values, and it means gratitude for the tremendous opportunities we enjoy here—and why so many people from all over the world still want to come and live the American dream. Like most immigrants, I do a job most native-born Americans won't: defending the Constitution.

In 2022, I accepted a new challenge, as executive director and senior lecturer at Georgetown's Center for the Constitution, under Professor Randy Barnett, whom the *New York Times* called the godfather of the Obamacare case and who really is the godfather of libertarian constitutional thought. But it was not to be, as a Twitter scandal led to an “investigation” that technically exonerated me but made clear that

anyone diverging from the prevailing progressive orthodoxy would not be welcome. Although I hadn't sought to be a poster boy for cancel culture, I tried to take advantage of the national platform I'd been given to shine a light on the rot in academia. It's not enough to adopt strong free-speech policies if administrators aren't willing to stand up to those who demand censorship. Proliferating Diversity–Equity–Inclusion offices enforce an orthodoxy that stifles intellectual diversity, undermines equal opportunity, and excludes dissenting voices.

And so I resigned, and moved to the Manhattan Institute, a wonderful organization that develops and disseminates new ideas that foster greater economic choice and individual responsibility. I also lecture regularly on behalf of the Federalist Society, am a member of the board of fellows of the Jewish Policy Center, and was an inaugural Washington Fellow at the National Review Institute. I'm also the chairman of the board of advisers of the Mississippi Justice Institute, a barrister in the Edward Coke Appellate Inn of Court, and recently completed a term on Virginia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

I live with my wife and four kids (including newborn twins) in Falls Church, Virginia, where in 2021 I ran for school board, pushing for responsiveness and accountability. All in all, I'm living the American Dream, hoping to leave the next generation a better legacy of liberty.



The Fall of Communism as Only the First Step Towards a Free Society

Josef Šíma

The fall of communism in 1989 was not only a crucial historical moment for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but it came at the right time for the formation of my attitude towards society and the role of the state in interpersonal relations. I was 17 years old, in my last year of high school, and considering which university to choose. We lived in the small town of Podborany in northwestern Czechoslovakia, my parents were members of the Communist Party, my father worked as an elementary school principal, and my mother was a post office manager. The Communist Party membership card was the ticket to their jobs. Until that time, I had been taught about the exploitation of workers under capitalism in school, while at home I would hear about the beauty of Soviet cities, above all Leningrad, which my parents had visited.

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And then came the Czechoslovak “Velvet Revolution” and suddenly—after many decades—books that did not glorify the Soviet Union and socialism appeared in bookstores. I began to read books by former dissidents explaining the danger of abuses of political power, among others by authors such as the leader of the revolution and the newly elected president, Vaclav Havel. I thus read for the first time the real history of the twentieth century and learned about the crimes of communism. I also watched on television politicians of the new government ceremoniously cutting the barbed wire at the border and thereby dismantling the “Iron Curtain,” and was horrified to learn how many people were shot trying to cross into the free world of the European West.

In contrast to Soviet-style political tyranny, with omnipresent spying on people and poverty caused by central planning and pervasive state dirigisme, the Western European welfare states seemed to offer unprecedented and infinite freedom. It took several years to figure out that de-nationalization, deregulation, privatization, the removal of barriers to free enterprise, and the building of a society based on private property are not processes that need to be applied exclusively in post-socialist countries, but that there is enormous room for them even in the “market economies” of Western Europe and the US.

In order to reach this understanding, I first needed to study economics at university. At that time, however, I had no idea what economics actually entails. I somehow suspected that it would be good to study economics at the time of the economic transition, but the economics major at my socialist high school had only offered the basics of business administration, which was mainly old-style typing on a mechanical typewriter (That was eventually not a bad skill I acquired, after all). I was good at math, so I chose the mathematical methods in economics program at the University of Economics in Prague and was accepted to study at the biggest economics school in the country.

Fortunately for me, the university was in a considerable state of decay and chaos. Economics (and all social science) programs under socialism were almost exclusively taught by professors who were members of the Communist Party, often also collaborators with the Communist secret police. After the revolution, many did not know what to teach. The old Marxist textbooks were of no use and there were no others available. Professors were quick to borrow from libraries—and subsequently destroy—their doctoral or professorial theses so that no one could easily locate the work that had earned them their academic credentials and

subsequent titles (The title of full professor was then, and still is, a permanent title, valid throughout the country, and is conferred on holders by the president of the country. Imagine if professors at MIT were appointed by, say, Trump or Biden!). So it was decided that the original programs that students—like me—had applied to would be canceled for the time being, and that all students would take a common introduction to their studies—from marketing, to math, to economic history or finance—during their first year. The students would make their decision on the degree program only after the first year. And by then it was already clear to me that I did not want to study mathematical methods in economics.

Milton Friedman, who gave a lecture at the University of Economics just before the start of the academic year, actually indirectly pushed me to this decision. My brother-in-law Jiri Schwarz, who taught at the university—at that time he founded the first free-market think-tank, Liberalni Institut, and later also became a member of the Mont Pelerin Society—sent me to this lecture so that I could hear Professor Friedman live. And there I saw for the first time, even though I didn't understand most of it (and perhaps my memory is influenced by my present knowledge), that good applied economics also contains discussions of freedom, of property rights, and of history. Thanks to Jiri Schwarz, the first books on economics and free society—Friedman's *Free to Choose* and *Capitalism and Freedom*, and Paul Heyne's textbook *The Economic Way of Thinking*—were translated into Czech (Samuelson's *Economics* appeared in translation only afterward). And Paul Heyne and Garry Walton even started coming regularly to Prague with their Foundation for Teaching Economics (FTE) to show teachers and high school students how to teach in a proper way the basics of economics and the free-market order. Those events were organized in cooperation with the Liberalni Institut, and I participated in these activities as an associate of the Institute.

The instruction at the university, which was mostly done by the same people who had previously taught Marx, was not very interesting. So I looked for ways to both improve my English and learn from real pro-market economists and political philosophers. In the pre-Internet era, one had to travel for this opportunity. Although I initially didn't have the money to travel, I could hitchhike within Europe. The Institute of Humane Studies (IHS) at that time held its standard week-long seminars under its European branch, and so one summer I went to Sweden during the holidays and there, among others, met the great Leonard Liggio (who

years later offered me financial help for the translations of Murray Rothbard's great works). The next year I went to the US to GMU and met James Buchanan at a summer seminar on Public Choice. And someone at that seminar mentioned the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). So the next summer I went to Irvington-on-Hudson and met Hans Sennholz, Israel Kirzner, and other followers of the Austrian School. And someone mentioned yet another group of free marketers who are based in Auburn, AL. So the next summer—sadly, the very first summer after Murray Rothbard's death—I traveled to the Mises Institute's summer school, which I have enjoyed returning to on occasion.

My intellectual transformation was thus complete. I understood that the struggle against state oppression and central planning did not end with the fall of communism. I learned from Robert Higgs why states tend to expand, and from the last pages of Mises's *Human Action* how crucial a role is played by economic education. That is why I said to myself that I would work to spread the ideas of freedom in my country. From each of my trips to the centers of free-market thought, I brought back books that interested me and began to translate them—sometimes alone, the larger ones (like Mises's *Human Action* or Rothbard's *Man, Economy, and State*) together with friends who were also attracted to the ideas of the Austrian School. As Director for Publications at the Liberalni Institut, I had a platform for publishing translations of books, and as a Ph.D. student and then a young assistant professor at the University of Economics and later head of one of its departments, I started teaching new courses based on translations of those books—like the course on Economics of State Interventionism based on Rothbard's *Power and Market*. In this way, hundreds and thousands of students were directly able to become familiar with the ideas right here at home—for which I had to travel overseas—as part of their regular curricula.

The advantage of the semi-empty market for professional books in the early years after the fall of communism was also that free-market books were widely available and visible in bookstores and libraries. For example, when a student of monetary theory was writing his thesis on the functioning of central banks, he found in the library, right next to a standard textbook, a translation of Friedrich Hayek's *Denationalization of Money* on one side of it and Rothbard's *What Has Government Done to Our Money* on the other. Those who were into antitrust simply came across a translation of Dominick Armentano's *Antitrust: The Case for Repeal* which we also made available in the Czech language. Law students could

easily read Bruno Leoni's excellent *Freedom and the Law*, and young students of economics could not avoid reading Henry Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*. This was literally true for several years at the Faculty of Economics, University of Economics, Prague, when some 700 fresh students each year had this book as required reading for an introductory course in their first semester of study. In a small country like the Czech Republic, these numbers of students, studying at the largest economics school in the country, represent a considerable potential for influencing the understanding of ideas of freedom of future journalists, businessmen, bankers, or government officials.

I kept inviting my favorite free-market authors to the university as visiting professors during the academic year and to teach in the annual summer schools. They not only gave entire courses to students, but their visits gave me the opportunity to spend a lot of time with them, to get to know them better, and indeed to discuss with them the ins and outs of economics and political philosophy. In this way, I became close to Peter Boettke, Robert Higgs, Hans Hermann Hoppe, Joseph Salerno, Guido Hulsmann, and Ken Schoolland, as well as to my peers, such as Edward Stringham and Benjamin Powell.

I took advantage of many of these close contacts after I changed jobs and for twelve years served as president of a small private university, the CEVRO Institute, which for that time became a place where first Czechs and Slovaks, but later students from all over the world, kept coming for unique free-market programs, in which great American liberty-minded professors such as Michael Munger from Duke University, Peter Boettke from GMU, David Schmidtz from the University of Arizona, and Mark LeBar from FSU were actively involved. In the framework of the Philosophy, Politics, Economics program (the first program of this kind in the Czech Republic), we were able to demonstrate what a university education focused on the study of the underlying principles of a free society looks like. Unfortunately, such comprehensive training in economics and the political philosophy of freedom is almost completely inaccessible to students in many countries of the world today. Indeed, statism, in its many forms, increasingly dominates the education of students in Western universities and, despite the temporary post-revolutionary free-market ethos, this is becoming the norm in post-socialist Central and Eastern European countries as well.

In my new position at the Metropolitan University Prague (MUP), the largest private university in the Czech Republic, to which I moved in

2022, I will continue my work following two principles I have learned from my intellectual mentors. Thanks to Paul Heyne and Peter Boettke, I know that it is crucial to awaken in students a love of economics and a passion for further education. It is not the last, most advanced economics class that is most important, but the first class where the spark must be ignited. Thanks to the great scholars of the Austrian School, I also know that we must constantly test the limits of our imagination and try to understand how a society of private property works or could harmoniously work if voluntary cooperation between people is not forcibly prevented.



From Social Democrat to Libertarian

Jo Ann Skousen

I did not grow up in a politically active family. I don't even know whether my parents voted Republican or Democrat. They subscribed to a daily newspaper, but they seldom watched the news on TV. As a child my politics were simple: "There oughtta be a law" and "government oughtta do." Why couldn't the government simply write a check to build a new library or fix the roads or pay for everyone's medical care?

And yet, by the time I left high school, I was instinctively becoming a libertarian. I worked and saved, learning self-reliance when I was young. I managed my parents' household budget, and provided meals for our family of four with just \$20 a week. And my mother made a deal with me: If I made my own clothes, she would provide the fabric. From this I learned the principle of capitalism, as my designs and labor were worthless without her sewing machine and raw materials.

During my senior year of high school, my parents divorced, my sister left home, and my mother lost her job. I was valedictorian of my graduating class and had a full scholarship to college, but little money for living expenses. That summer my math teacher, for whom I babysat regularly,

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asked me to babysit every day even though his wife was home most of the time. The Krantzes could have written me a check and patted themselves on the back for their good deeds instead of hiring me for the summer. But they knew I needed more than money for college; I needed dignity and self-respect. Years later I recognized this as the A&W principle (Accountability and Welfare). We should help others to the extent they need help (welfare), but we should not provide what they can do for themselves (accountability).

MARRIAGE AND A BOOK BUSINESS

I met Mark Skousen when we both worked in the publication office at Brigham Young University. On our first date, he began talking about the magic of the free market, and it all made sense to me. I knew that I was motivated more by money and reward than by duty or community, whether I was babysitting for 50 cents an hour or writing an essay for the A+ I hoped to receive. My social democrat leanings swiftly began to fade.

Mark was finishing his master's degree and I was a freshman when we met. When he accepted a position as an economic analyst for the CIA, I had a decision to make: What to do when the right guy comes along at the wrong time? I said goodbye to my full-ride scholarship and moved with him to Washington DC. Fifteen years and five children later, I completed my degree at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, once again as valedictorian and also winning the award for Outstanding Graduating Senior. I then earned a graduate degree from the University of Florida and began teaching English literature and composition, first at Rollins College in Florida, then at Mercy College and Sing Sing Correctional Facility in New York, and finally at Chapman University in southern California.

Meanwhile, during the early years of our marriage, Mark and I wrote financial books together and developed a highly successful book business from our home. Mark did the research and laid the groundwork for each book; I revised it and gave it its flair. When Howard Ruff once praised Mark for his "felicity of expression," I knew whom he was praising. The decade of the 70s was a time of high interest rates, high inflation, and non-traditional investments. Our books helped people navigate those treacherous times. Some of our titles include *High Finance on a Low Budget*, *The Banking and Credit Almanac*, *Mark Skousen's Complete Guide to Privacy*, and *Tax Free: All the Legal Ways To Be Exempt from*

Federal, State and Social Security Taxes. In 1983 we decided to follow our own advice and moved our family to the Bahamas, where we lived almost tax free for two years. We also wrote a popular pamphlet on libertarianism called “Persuasion vs Force,” which is still in print.

After three years at the CIA, Mark realized that the stultifying security of a government job was not for him. He became managing editor of Bob Kephart’s *Inflation Survival Letter*, later renamed *Personal Finance*. Bob hired me to maintain the index for the newsletter and I became immersed in the world of free-market finance. Those were heady times. We were writing books, speaking at investment conferences, and becoming close friends with leaders of the hard-money and libertarian movements, including Doug Casey, Harry Browne, Ron Paul, Jack Pugsley, Hans Sennholz, Howard Ruff, Andrea Rich, Jim and Jackie Blanchard, Karl Hess, Bill Bonner, Ken Gerbino, Bill Bradford, and many others.

I also began writing a financial newsletter called *Jo Ann Skousen’s Money Letter for Women*. I had noticed at investment conferences that women tended to be tentative about speaking up, but in my workshops they were very comfortable asking questions and discussing investment ideas. Several men subscribed as well, sometimes confessing that they wrapped a magazine around my pink newsletter for privacy when they were reading it! I used principles of Austrian economics to guide my investment advice. Eventually we merged my newsletter with Mark’s and I became associate editor of Mark Skousen’s *Forecasts & Strategies*.

THE ERIS SOCIETY

Doug Casey and Bob Kephart sponsored an annual event in Aspen, Colorado, called The Eris Society, named after the goddess of discord. We took turns running the event, selecting the speakers and activities, and handling the organizational details. Topics were often related to hobbies, esoteric interests, pet peeves, and the like. After my talk “Confessions of an English Major,” based on my experiences as a libertarian in illiberal academia, Bill Bradford and Karl Hess asked me to run for president on the Libertarian ticket.

Bill said, “We need to change the image of the libertarian as a single white male sitting in his basement sporting a beard and playing video games. You’re perfect: you’re a woman, you’re married, you’re a mother, you’re religious, you’re smart, and you’re philosophically grounded as a libertarian. You could change the face of the Libertarian Party.” They

called me several times during the 1991 convention, urging me to hop on a plane to Chicago. But the timing wasn't right. I was with my oldest daughter at her orientation for college that week, and I still had four young children at home. Campaigning would require flying around the country for a year. I was flattered by their confidence and tempted by their offer, but in the end, I said no. I have often wondered what kind of influence I might have had if I had campaigned that year. But I love being able to say, "I could have been president of the United States, but I had to take my daughter to school!"

WRITING MOVIE REVIEWS FOR *LIBERTY* MAGAZINE

Bill Bradford was founder and publisher of *Liberty* magazine, then available in many bookstores. He called one afternoon to talk enthusiastically about a review I had written about a civil war movie, *Gods and Generals*. He was interested in publishing it, but recommended that I remove the opening paragraph directed to my family. I was confused: I hadn't written a review of the film. Finally, we figured out the source—Mark was expecting to meet the producers of the film and had asked me to watch it and tell him what I thought. I sent my observations in an email to the family—and Mark forwarded my message to Bill. "If that's the way you write when you're just sending an email to the family," Bill told me, "I want you to be *Liberty's* movie reviewer!" That was the beginning of many longwinded late-night phone conversations with Bill Bradford. Curious, engaged, skeptical, and conversant in any topic, Bill had the right personality for a newsman. And the headlines he could write! I have written hundreds of movie reviews and reflections for *Liberty* in the ensuing twenty years, eventually becoming *Liberty's* entertainment editor under Bill's successor, Stephen Cox, a mentor and great friend.

MOVING TO NEW YORK

In August 2001 the Board of the Foundation for Economic Education invited Mark to become its new president. With just three weeks notice we packed up our house and moved to "the shanty" in Irvington, New York, a small three-bedroom cottage behind the nineteenth-century mansion that had housed FEE headquarters since 1946, when Leonard E. Read started the think tank. We immediately began planning spring break seminars to supplement the traditional summer seminars and organizing the

fall Board meeting and annual gala with Paul Gigot of the Wall Street Journal as our keynote speaker.

Then terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, and everything changed. Would anyone ever feel safe attending seminars in New York again? Was Paul Gigot even alive? (He was—and he gave an inspiring talk.) Students did return to New York, and we enjoyed a happy and exhausting summer of teaching weeklong economics courses to students and faculty. I was responsible for organizing the student seminars. With the able guidance of FEE veterans Greg Rehmke and Beth Hoffman, I designed the curriculum, selected the faculty, and even cooked all the meals. Using that experience as a template, I recently designed and organized a similar weeklong Economics of Life Summer Academy for rising first and second year college students on the Chapman University campus for the Ronald N. Simon Foundation.

That spring we decided to take FEE on the road to Las Vegas, where we teamed up with the Money Show to produce our first (and last) FEE National Convention, dubbed “FEE Fest” by one of our staffers. It was a huge success, with 850 attendees and 100 speakers gleaned from think tanks, authors, and investment organizations around the world. Then in 2007, having returned to the world of private enterprise, we resurrected FEE Fest as FreedomFest, “the world’s largest gathering of free minds,” regularly attracting nearly 2,500 attendees, 250 speakers, and 150 exhibitors in the “tradeshow for liberty.”

STARTING THE ANTHEM LIBERTARIAN FILM FESTIVAL

As entertainment editor for *Liberty*, I was disheartened by the anti-business, anti-liberty themes of most movies. So in 2011 I created the Anthem Libertarian Film Festival as a venue for libertarian filmmakers. I borrowed a hope and a promise from *Field of Dreams*—“if I build it, they will come.” And they have. We started in a banquet room on the 26th floor of Bally’s Hotel with a dozen mediocre films and a handful of outstanding ones. As filmmakers and think tanks caught the vision of what we were providing, they began to produce more films with libertarian themes. And because we were part of FreedomFest, we have access to top-quality speakers for our panels and top-quality viewers for our films.

Anthem celebrated its tenth anniversary at the impressive Elks Theatre in Rapid City, South Dakota, with nearly forty outstanding films and an audience that numbered in the hundreds at times. One filmmaker wrote,

“Jo Ann and her team supported our film when most other festivals were afraid to screen it for fear of offending left-leaning festival goers. Being in the company of such truly first-rate and thoughtful filmmakers was a thrill. Anthem may be the smartest, most interesting film fest out there.”

A LEGACY OF TEACHING

As I face the beginning of my seventieth year, there are many projects I want to complete. “Persuasion vs Force” is desperately in need of an update. So is *High Finance on a Low Budget*. In 2016 I wrote *Matriarchs of the Messiah: Valiant Women in the Lineage of Jesus Christ*, giving voice to the women who have often been overshadowed by the prophets of the Old Testament. Its running theme is choice and accountability.

The lasting legacy of a published book is always enticing, but my real joy comes from teaching college students to read analytically, think critically, and write clearly. I guide them to discover the dignity of the individual, the responsibility of choice, and the creativity of the market place—even when I’m teaching poetry.

During our time at FEE I began teaching at Mercy College, just down the aqueduct from the mansion. This led to my favorite experience of all, teaching college courses to the incarcerated men at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. I’m a featured teacher in the HBO documentary *Zero Percent* about the program (www.zeropercentfilm.com). The program was so successful that for the first dozen years the recidivism rate among graduates who were released into the community was zero—not a single man went back to prison for a new crime. Even now, twenty years later, the recidivism rate hovers around two percent. What set this program apart for all those years was that it was privately funded, and as a result the men approached it not as an entitlement but as a gift. One of the requirements for being admitted to the college program was having a job within the prison and paying a portion of their tuition from their earnings. Mark’s A&W principle came into practice, providing for them only what they could not provide for themselves. The men knew that private donors believed in them enough to invest in them, and they rose to the expectations.

Looking back on my first brushes with market motives, I realize that profit incentive is not limited to the dollar. For me, the reward of a mind changed, a life saved, and a job well done is just as satisfying as a paycheck. Working with these students was selfish indeed.



My Declaration of Independence

Mark Skousen

I grew up in a family where my parents had strong political views. My mother's parents were staunch Democrats from Pennsylvania. My grandfather, Papa McCarty, refused to allow anyone in the house if they criticized Franklin Delano Roosevelt. My father, Leroy B. Skousen, was nominally a Democrat, but voted Republican because, like Ronald Reagan, he felt the Democratic Party had abandoned sound principles in favor of socialism and were not anti-Communist enough.

My father and his older brother, W. Cleon Skousen, were special agents for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) under J. Edgar Hoover and heavily involved in the anti-Communist movement. My father spied on Gus Hall, the president of the Communist Party USA, in Cleveland. My Uncle Cleon wrote the bestseller *The Naked Communist* (1958) and gave lectures all around the country. As children growing up in Portland, Oregon, we had a healthy fear of the Communists and the Soviet Union.

The most traumatic event in my youth was the premature death of my father, who died at age 46 of lung cancer (though he never smoked in his life). He left behind his wife, Helen, age 39, and 10 children. We

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moved to Provo, Utah, in the summer of 1964, and soon I was a student at Brigham Young University. I decided to major in economics because it combined all my interests—politics, finance, journalism, and mathematics. I ended up getting a Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctorate in economics.

My first textbook was Paul Samuelson’s *Economics*. The MIT professor was an outspoken Keynesian: under the paradox of thrift savings could be counterproductive; the government was urged to run a deliberate deficit during recessions; the national debt was a blessing and never had to be paid off; and the welfare state was a built-in stabilizer in the economy. Having been raised as a Mormon, I found that Samuelson contradicted my deepest held values. Mormons traditionally saw thrift as a virtue, even during economic recessions; personal debt such as a mortgage was a liability that should be paid off. In the nineteenth century Mormons tried socialism under the “United Order,” but it failed; and during FDR’s New Deal, the Church created its own welfare plan, which helped Latter-day Saints get off the dole.¹ Fortunately, BYU had just hired a new Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, Larry Wimmer, who rejected Samuelson’s *Economics* and became my mentor. Wimmer encouraged me to read Milton Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), which I devoured.

After a two-year mission to Latin America, I returned to BYU and became an editor of the student newspaper. I took on several jobs to pay my way through college, and by 1972 I had saved enough money to have a fully paid off car, a Master’s degree in economics, and a job with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Under Wimmer’s direction, I became a devoted follower of Friedman and the Chicago school. I also met my wife Jo Ann Foster at BYU. She was the editor of the university yearbook. We were married in 1973 and over the next two decades had five children and seven grandchildren. Jo Ann has been my editor and co-author of my newsletter and books for nearly 50 years.

¹ I have remained an active Mormon throughout my life, and consider it consistent with libertarian values. My religious views are summarized in this article: Skousen, Mark. (2011). The Rise of Mormonism and the Birth of Modern Society. FAIR; <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/testimonies/scholars/mark-skousen>.

MY INTRODUCTION TO AUSTRIAN ECONOMICS

While I thought that Friedman’s economics moved in the right direction, I was not entirely satisfied. In the early 1970s, I discovered the writings of Murray Rothbard, especially his books *America’s Great Depression* and *Man, Economy and State*. His writings were far more cogent and understandable than Mises or Hayek. I also began my Ph.D. program at George Washington University, earning my advanced degree in 1977 in monetary economics. My dissertation was on the 100% gold standard, and was heavily influenced by Rothbard’s booklet, “What Has the Government Done to Our Money?”

FROM THE CIA TO WRITING A FINANCIAL NEWSLETTER

After nearly three years working for the bureaucratic CIA, I was hired as the managing editor of *The Inflation Survival Letter* in 1975 under the tutelage of *Human Events* publisher Robert D. Kephart, who introduced me to the “hard money” movement of Harry Browne, Jim Blanchard, and Howard Ruff. It was during the inflationary/crisis-prone Seventies that I became an applied financial economist, speaker, author, and world traveler.

In 1980, I struck out on my own as editor of *Forecasts & Strategies*, a monthly investment newsletter. The election of Ronald Reagan was a watershed year for me. My first newsletter promotion used the headline “The financial shock of 1981.” Inside, I predicted, “Reaganomics will work! Sell your gold and silver and buy stocks and bonds.” It turned out to be an accurate prediction, but it did not endear me to the hard-money movement. Once again, I proved my independence.² By the mid-1990s, I had over 70,000 subscribers. It was published by Tom Phillips, and was taken over by Eagle Publishing in 2004, and Salem Communications, a publicly traded media company, in 2011.

² For my background in the hard-money movement, see “The Turning Point in 1980,” in my book, *A Viennese Waltz Down Wall Street* (New York: LFB Books, 2013), pp. 53–54.

FROM THE BAHAMAS TO LONDON TO ORLANDO

After living a dozen years in the Washington DC area, Jo Ann and I, along with our four children, decided to move to the Bahamas in late 1983 in order to take a break from the rat race of the capital city. We lived in Nassau for two years, where we continued to write investment newsletters and give speeches. It was life in living color, and we became involved with the local community.³ We saved enough money in taxes to buy a 2-bedroom flat in St. Johns Wood in London, England, and spent many summers there in the 1980s and 1990s.

When we moved back to the States in 1986, we decided on Winter Park, Florida, just north of Orlando. I took a position as an adjunct professor at Rollins College, teaching courses in Austrian economics and personal finance. For the next 15 years, we raised our five children in Winter Park.

MY MAGNUM OPUS

It was in the mid-1980s when I began doing research and writing *The Structure of Production* (New York University Press, 1990). My purpose was to fill in the missing link between micro and macroeconomics, which were taught differently in the standard textbooks. I felt that Carl Menger and the Austrians had the best explanation with their “general theory of the good” and the stages-of-production model, especially the development of Hayek’s triangles in *Prices and Production* (1931). It was an 8-year project.

My biggest discovery was that national income accounting needed a “top line” that went beyond the traditional measure of gross domestic product (GDP). I proposed measuring spending at all stages of production, called gross output (GO), to complement the “bottom line” of GDP. After years of prodding the federal government to produce GO on a quarterly basis along with GDP, the US Commerce Department began publishing GO every quarter in April 2014. The federal government was measuring Hayek’s triangles!⁴ GO demonstrates that business spending is

³ See my essay, “Easy Living: My Two Years in the Bahamas,” at Easy Living: My Two Years In The Bahamas—Mskousen.com.

⁴ I issue a press release every quarter when GO is released. For more information, see www.grossoutput.com.

far bigger than consumption, and thus confirms Say's law and supply-side economics, that saving, capital investment, innovation, and technology are vital to economic growth.

“PERSUASION VS FORCE”

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, I expanded my involvement in the freedom movement, writing and speaking for *Reason* magazine, the Mises Institute, and the Cato Institute. Milton Friedman invited me to attend the Mont Pelerin Society meetings, and he sponsored me as a member in 2002.

In September 1991, *Liberty* magazine published the first version of “Persuasion vs Force,” that was later published by Eagle Publishing as a pamphlet, coauthored with my wife Jo Ann.⁵ In contrast to the Oliver Wendell Holmes dictum, “Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society,” we responded, “Taxation is the price we pay for failing to build a civilized society. The higher the tax, the greater the failure.” The pamphlet has had a growing influence, and several statements from it have become memes on social media, e.g., “The triumph of persuasion over force is the sign of a civilized society.”

TWO TEXTBOOKS IN FREE-MARKET ECONOMICS

Education of young people is the best way to influence public policy in the future, so I focused on writing college-level textbooks. My first project was a history of economic thought from Adam Smith to modern times. I wanted an alternative to *The Worldly Philosophers*, written by Robert Heilbroner, a socialist. In 1980, I commissioned Murray Rothbard to write a one-volume alternative, but he ended up writing a Schumpeterian tome, and even then completed only half the book when he died suddenly in 1995. At that point, I decided to write my own history, which culminated in *The Making of Modern Economics: The Life and Ideas of the Great Thinkers*, published by M. E. Sharpe in 2000 and now Routledge. It has gone through four editions and won several awards. It was the first history of economics that actually had a plot, with Adam Smith and his “system of natural liberty” as the hero. Economists were ranked either in favor

⁵ To read the entire pamphlet, go to Persuasion vs. Force—Mskousen.com.

of the Adam Smith model (Say, Menger, Marshall, Mises, Friedman) or against it (Marx, Keynes, Krugman).⁶

I also wrote a “no compromise” textbook called *Economic Logic*, now in its 5th edition and published by Capital Press. It offers an alternative approach to the standard textbook, starting with a profit-and-loss income statement and then integrating GO with GDP in the macroeconomics chapters. The book is dedicated to Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek.

FROM FEE TO FREEDOMFEST

Throughout my career, I’ve supported a variety of free-market think tanks and freedom organizations, both financially and as a speaker. I had met Leonard Read, founder of the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE), back in the 1970s, traveled with Lawrence Reed to Russia in the 1980s, was a frequent guest speaker at the invitation of Hans Sennholz, and was a columnist for *The Freeman* magazine in the 1990s. In 2001, I was appointed the president of FEE. Our family moved to Irvington-on-the-Hudson, New York, in September 2001, one week before the terrorist attacks. In an effort to revitalize the oldest free-market think tank, I decided to have a national convention in Las Vegas in July 2002 and invited all the other think tanks and freedom organizations. Ben Stein, Charles Murray, and Nathaniel Branden were our keynote speakers, and over 850 attendees showed up. However, my fundraising skills were not good enough, and I was replaced in 2003 by Richard Ebeling, an eminent economist at Hillsdale College. I went back to teaching and landed a position at Columbia Business School, and then taught with my wife Jo Ann at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in New York in a degree program for inmates through Mercy College.

After leaving FEE, the idea of a national convention stayed with me, and I changed the name of the conference from FEE Fest to FreedomFest. For a couple of years (2004–2005), it was sponsored by Young America’s Foundation. Then in 2007, my wife and I decided to go out on our own to create an annual FreedomFest in Las Vegas as a for-profit

⁶ For more information, see my Adam Smith Lecture at the University of Edinburgh on September 18, 2018 at Adam Smith and The Making of Modern Economics—Mskousen.com.

organization, dubbed by the *Washington Post* as “the greatest libertarian show on earth.”⁷

FreedomFest has been highly successful, attracting several thousand people from around the world every year to learn, strategize, network, and celebrate liberty. It has proven to be the “mandatory” conference for all liberty lovers, as George Gilder puts it. Steve Forbes and John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market, are our co-ambassadors. The exhibit hall, which Mackey calls “the trade show for liberty,” attracts over 200 freedom organizations and think tanks, including Reason, Cato, Heritage, FEE, and Students for Liberty.

TEACHING AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

I’ve continued my career as an economics professor. In 2014, I was appointed by Jim Doti, the president of Chapman University, as a presidential fellow. In 2018, Steve Forbes awarded me the Triple Crown in Economics for my work in theory, history, and education. In 2019, I was awarded “My Favorite Professor” Award by the students at Chapman. In 2022, I was appointed the Doti-Spogli Professor of Free Enterprise at Chapman University.

The battle for freedom is an uphill battle; but if we all do our part, not all is lost. I like to think I’ve played a small part by promoting economic liberty in my role as investment newsletter writer, speaker, professor, producer of FreedomFest, and author of several textbooks to influence the next generation. As Ben Franklin counseled, “It’s incredible the quantity of good that may be done in a country by a single man who will make a business out of it.”

⁷ See “The Story of FreedomFest,” by Mark and Jo Ann Skousen (2017). For more information, go to www.freedomfest.com.



Thinking Like an Austrian

Barry Smith

I was born in 1952 in the small town of Bury, near Manchester, England. My father Reginald was a bricklayer and trade union organizer, and I grew up with a never seriously questioned adherence to old-fashioned British Labour Party politics. As a working-class child who was good at passing tests, I won a local authority scholarship to attend what is now a public (which means in England: private) school. This gave me an excellent grounding, above all in mathematics and the German language.

From there I won a scholarship to Oxford, where in the first week I attended the introductory fair offered by the various Oxford student societies. Not at that time interested in lacrosse or punting, I drifted in the direction of the political corner and listened in for a while on conversations around the Marxist stall. From there, by a fortunate accident—since I was then entirely ignorant of libertarian politics—I drifted over to the libertarian stall, where the conversations seemed immediately to be much more interesting. And so I joined, in what was probably the first political act of my life, the Oxford Libertarian Society. A new world was opened

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up to me, and in a rush of enthusiasm, I read many books, including Ayn Rand, Carl Menger, Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek (a lot of Hayek), Murray Rothbard, and, somewhat later, Walter Block (whose *Defending the Undefendable* contributed powerfully to my subsequent contrarian leanings). I also came to know some of the leading lights in English libertarianism, including John Gray, Chris Tame (founder of the Libertarian Alliance), Jeremy Shearmur (research assistant of Karl Popper at the London School of Economics), and above all David Ramsay Steele, with whom I remain in close contact (Libertarianism in England is, it should be noted, different in many ways from its US counterpart. The Wikipedia page for “Libertarianism in the United Kingdom,” for example, contains as its centerpiece a large picture of Margaret Thatcher).

I was enrolled in Oxford in the newly established joint degree in Mathematics and Philosophy, where my studies were organized under what I believe is a most excellent system. On the philosophy side, I was required to write one essay per week, to be read out loud at a one-on-one session with my philosophy tutor. I thus learned how to write for a deadline and how to withstand criticism. In addition, I was required to attend occasional meetings with my mathematics tutor to ensure that things were going well with my studies on the side of mathematics and logic. Otherwise, I was required to attend no lectures at all. A system of this sort works well not least because of the two sets of written exams which all students were required to take at the end of the first and final (which means third) years, the latter consisting of some 24 hours spent writing down answers to difficult questions in a large hall with hundreds of other students all wearing academic gowns.

I was surrounded in Oxford by world-class philosophers. But my lecture-going activities were confined almost entirely to those given in the Mathematics Institute, especially the lectures given by Michael Dummett who was at that time Reader in the Philosophy of Mathematics. For the rest of the time I did a lot of reading under my own direction, gradually breaking away from the kind of analytic philosophy which was then (and is still today) dominant in Anglosaxophone countries, and searching instead for an alternative approach, which involved exploring the various philosophical traditions growing out of Continental Europe.

By my second year I had an idea that after graduation I would work on a PhD on the aesthetics of abstract entities (on why certain mathematical proofs, or certain chess games, or certain pieces of abstract music, are considered more beautiful than others), and my reading in philosophy

was guided by a search for ideas that might be useful to me in achieving this goal. This led me, again by lucky accident, to Roman Ingarden, a Polish philosopher well known for his work on aesthetics. But I landed specifically on a slim book by Ingarden entitled *Time and Modes of Being*, which is a translation of parts of his mammoth (four-volume) treatise on ontology entitled *Controversy over the Existence of the World*. It was Ingarden who inspired—both through his work on ontology and through what I slowly discovered about his place in the tradition of Continental philosophy—all of my subsequent work.

First, I discovered that Ingarden, although very much a Polish philosopher, wrote almost all of his writings in German. Importantly for our purposes here, Ingarden (like his friend Karol Wojtyła, the Polish Pope St. John Paul II) was born in a part of Poland that was at the time a part of Austria. Moreover, the Polish philosophical tradition of which he formed a part had its roots in another part of Austria, namely Lemberg (now commonly called “Lviv” and for the moment a part of the Ukraine). This Polish tradition was thus in its turn a part of a much larger *Austrian* philosophical tradition, with interesting connections with the Austrian school of economics (See my *Austrian Philosophy: The Legacy of Franz Brentano*, La Salle and Chicago: Open Court, 1994, and also Wolfgang Grassl and Barry Smith, eds., *Austrian Economics: Historical and Philosophical Background*, New York: New York University Press, London/Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986).

The former was rooted in the work of Franz Brentano in Vienna, and included philosophers based in Prague, such as Christian von Ehrenfels and Anton Marty. It included also Edmund Husserl, another philosopher born in Austria, but one who made his name in Germany, where his earliest followers—the founders in the early 1900s of what came to be known as the “phenomenological movement”—were based in Munich. The school they formed, after some of them moved to join Husserl in Göttingen, is nowadays referred to as the “Munich-Göttingen” or sometimes as the “realist” school of phenomenology.

The work of this school can be characterized as the attempt to apply a broadly aprioristic ontological method rooted in the *Logical Investigations* of Edmund Husserl to the study of topics such as law, language, the state, religion, and human action, all topics falling outside philosophy more narrowly conceived. The most important of these philosophers was almost certainly Adolf Reinach, whose monograph entitled *The A Priori*

Foundations of the Civil Law (written in 1913) anticipated later developments in what is now called the theory of speech acts. This monograph also contains an account of the foundations of law which, as documented by Jörg Guido Hülsmann, Stephan Kinsella, and others, has interesting parallels with the account of the foundations of economics advanced by Mises and others in the Austrian school of economics. Ingarden, too, was one of those realist philosophers who studied with Husserl in Göttingen. On returning to his native Poland he founded what we can think of as the Polish branch of this realist phenomenological school, in which Wojtyła, too, can be included as a member. It is an interesting feature of the wider realist phenomenological movement that two of its members—namely Wojtyła (St. John Paul II) and Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)—were canonized (Stein was the author of a big book on what we can think of as the a priori ontology of the state).

After graduating from Oxford in 1973, with Husserl and Ingarden in my knapsack, I moved to the University of Manchester to write a dissertation, not on aesthetics but rather on ontology. I chose Manchester, since it was at that time one of the few places in England which offered the opportunity to do research on philosophy outside the mainstream analytic tradition. Soon after arriving in Manchester I began a long-standing collaboration with Kevin Mulligan and Peter Simons, two other PhD students with strong realist inclinations and an interest in Austro-German philosophy.

Upon completing my PhD studies in 1976, I received a postdoctoral fellowship to continue my work on philosophy in Austria and Poland. At the same time, I founded with Mulligan and Simons the Seminar for Austro-German Philosophy, under whose auspices we together organized some 40 meetings at venues throughout Europe and the UK with the goal of reawakening interest in Austro-German themes. Topics of these meetings included “On Austrian methodology,” “Human action and the social sciences,” “The Austro-German/Scottish axis,” and “Austrian philosophy and Austrian politics,” the last of these in collaboration with the Carl Menger Society in London. Speakers included John Gray, Philip Pettit, Jeremy Shearmur, and David Steele, as well as philosophers notable for their work on the roots of analytic philosophy in Central European thought such as Roderick Chisholm, Dummett again, Rudolf Haller, J. C. Nyíri, and Jan Woleński (A full list of these meetings can be found at <http://ontology.buffalo.edu/sagp>).

In 1979 I moved back to the University of Manchester as a member of the faculty, and in 1980 I organized in Graz a Liberty-Fund-sponsored symposium on “Austrian economics and its philosophical and historical background” in which a central role was played by Israel Kirzner. One goal of the meeting was to explore some of the interactions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries between Austrian philosophy and Austrian economics, interactions especially in the area of value theory. The book resulting from this meeting (reviewed by Rothbard in the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*) included my first, heavily Kirzner inspired, publication on Austrian economics, which was followed by a series of essays on the ontology of economics and on the question of apriorism, in all of which I was attempting to work out a position on the foundations of economics and of the social sciences in general on the basis of a realist apriorism in the spirit of Reinach that would build upon the work of Menger and Mises. During this period I edited with the German philosopher Karl Schuhmann a 2-volume critical edition of Reinach’s works, which appeared in 1989.

In the same year I left Manchester, foreseeing problems for the Department of Philosophy (which was indeed closed down shortly after I left). I moved to the International Academy of Philosophy (IAP) in the Principality of Liechtenstein, where Hans-Hermann Hoppe’s ideas on the virtues of monarchy as a political system are being put into practice as we speak. The IAP had been established by friends of the philosophy of John Paul II, a philosophy derived in no small part from the work of the Munich-Göttingen realist phenomenologists.

In 1994 I accepted a position at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where I have remained ever since. I continue to work on topics related to Reinach and apriorism, but most of my activities in recent years have been in the field of applied ontology, where I have been involved in a series of research initiatives in fields such as biomedical informatics, defense and intelligence, and industrial manufacturing. I have also recently completed a book, co-authored with the German philosopher and AI entrepreneur Jobst Landgrebe, with the title *Why machines will never rule the world*, published by Routledge in August 2022. The book can be summarized in multiple ways, but one summary would read as follows: that the Misesian economic calculation argument is in fact just one instance of a much more general argument to the effect that any complex system (which means *inter alia* any system involving human beings as active elements) will be incapable of being modeled by a computable algorithm, and thus every such system will behave in a manner that is unpredictable by any sort of computer.



Beyond Philosophy: Libertarianism as a Way of Life

Jacek Spindel

I was only fifteen years old when started to ask myself an important question: what matters the most when it comes to the social order? The way I was raised plus my own teenage intuition gave me the answer: justice and freedom. I had no idea libertarianism even existed then, but I felt deep down that people must be free if justice shall prevail. I was always very concerned about justice as I felt that real life conditions are very far removed from it. In my view, letting people do what they want but without any government intrusion, assuming no rights violations, will put every individual in the place he/she truly deserves to be. Back in 2000 we had presidential elections in Poland and there was a candidate who had a quite similar set of ideas. His name was Janusz Korwin-Mikke and he is still an active politician, although his present views are far from the libertarian credo that he expounded over twenty years ago.

I learned about the ideas of freedom from that politician, but quite quickly I discovered that it is youth activism, the quest to change the

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minds of young people of a similar age, that drives me. Before turning 17, I started a local branch of the conservative-libertarian youth group KoLiber in my city of Katowice, Upper Silesia, Poland. At the beginning we were a dozen freedom-minded students from different high schools in Katowice and we were loud. We usually staged provocative events because we wanted to outrage socialists and promote a radical notion of freedom. For example, once we playfully pretended to be a radical labor union named Claimaints that publicly demanded new labor privileges, centrally planned salaries as high as in Norway, and drastically lower prices—all at the same time. Our demands were so ridiculous that average people were saying “you can’t do that!” which was a great outcome as it provoked them to think. In the end, we revealed that this was just a comedy—a *reductio ad absurdum*—and that in reality we were young libertarians who had a completely different mindset. That event, along with many others, such as outraging the European Union just before Poland’s accession, gave us a lot of fun and also media attention.

As I mentioned, I did not call myself a libertarian at the very beginning of my journey. Like my teenage friends, I rather called myself a “conservative liberal.” But that changed quite quickly thanks to some older colleagues, the true founders of Polish libertarianism. Those folks (Jacek Sierpiński, Stanisław Górka, and a few others) had started to call themselves libertarians in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Poland. Most of them were anarchocapitalists active in truly anarchist organizations such as the Anarchist Federation. Back in 2004, only one year after I started the Katowice branch of KoLiber, our older colleagues launched the Libertarian Club, which was supposed to be a mixture of KoLiber members and older (albeit still relatively young, since they were in their mid-30s) and wiser libertarians from the Upper Silesia region. The result was that our branch of KoLiber was nearly fully converted to libertarianism. We started reading and discussing the books of Murray Rothbard (in my own case, *The Libertarian Manifesto* played a crucial role), Robert Nozick, and other libertarian authors. The shift was so big that our branch distanced itself quite a lot from most of KoLiber (there were about 20 branches all around Poland). We were radically libertarian rather than conservative and we also supported autonomy for Upper Silesia. A few years later we left that organization since the climate of ideas in KoLiber was no longer suitable for libertarians.

My personal growth within the freedom movement was very much connected to the organizations I encountered along the way, and I have

an especially large personal debt with four of them: Liberty International (LI), Language of Liberty Institute (LLI), The Fund for American Studies (TFAS), and the Goldwater Institute (GI). I do not mention this first organization because I am its President, but rather because Liberty International (initially named the International Society for Individual Liberty [ISIL]) truly opened doors for me to the worldwide libertarian movement. I was awarded a scholarship to attend its 2006 World Conference in Prague. This event opened my eyes to how fascinating libertarianism could be not only regarding ideas but also regarding many phenomenal people and the organizations they represent. I returned to these World Conferences, but the first one was the game changer. Thanks to the 2006 World Conference I also heard about LLI's Liberty English Camp taking place a year later (2007) in Slovakia. I took a dozen KoLiber folks from Poland there and it was one of the best weeks of my life: I learned English while talking about ideas I truly love! I enjoyed that concept so much that together with LLI's Executive Director Glenn Cripe (my good friend now) I co-organized over a dozen Liberty Camps in Europe between 2008 and 2019. The Fund for American Studies offered me generous scholarships for two of their premiere programs: summer school in Prague (named AIPES) in 2008 and Capital Semester in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 2009. The educational experience I had with TFAS was momentous for me: I learned a lot from extraordinary professors (including the economists Bruce Yandle and Thomas Rustici), made life-changing contacts, and realized that I can aim to accomplish even more in the freedom environment. The Goldwater Institute, based in Phoenix, Arizona, also played a crucial role in my life. When I did a summer internship there back in 2011, GI had a dream-team with Clint Bolick, Nick Dranias, Steve Slivinski, and Darcy Olsen. They were winning cases in courts across the United States (including the Supreme Court) and thus expanding individual freedom right then and there. The Goldwater Institute not only inspired me to start my own organization (the Freedom and Entrepreneurship Foundation) in Poland, but also helped us tremendously in our first years.

I have done various things in my professional life: I ran a pizza business, introduced a cosmetic product, worked for a think-tank as a jack of all trades, pursued a PhD in the field of political philosophy, started my own libertarian organization in Poland, and took on the responsibilities of President of a US-based libertarian organization. I mention all of these roles because I was always partially or fully driven by ideas of liberty. My

PhD program at Jagiellonian University, under the supervision of the late extraordinary Professor Miłowit Kuniński (the foremost expert on F.A. Hayek in Poland), was filled with libertarian and classical liberal philosophy of the highest order. My businesses were for me the best schools of human action and I loved the idea of satisfying my customers.

My engagement with the freedom movement is basically a dream come true. I run the organizations I lead like a special kind of business, generating income from the programs we offer and making sure that the programs we charge people for are of the highest quality. This is true for my oldest program, the Polish-American Leadership Academy (started in 2012, we have over 1600 alumni to date), and includes a libertarian leadership program called Project Arizona (started in 2017) and a COVID-time released online program named Libertarian Solutions, among others. I combine my passion for freedom with a strictly business attitude, I invite positive-thinking people, and I aim for results. Currently, my main focus is to create projects that can influence individuals in the contemporary world by promoting liberty, peace, and prosperity. I greatly enjoy the intersection of libertarian principles and practical solutions to world problems.

Looking back on the role of libertarianism in my life, I can see that it evolved from the philosophy that supported my personal quest for justice and freedom into something much broader: libertarianism is my life, not just my professional life. It led me to fascinating faraway countries and it brought me great friends from around the globe—even my wife comes from that milieu. Am I sectarian? I don't think so. For me, libertarianism was always a big tent of ideas that put the individual with his inalienable rights at the very center.

Currently, I observe various threats to freedom, and contrarianism is one of them. As a permanent pariah of political discourse, we libertarians have developed a very skeptical relationship with the mainstream. On the one hand, this is a healthy situation, but on some occasions this can boomerang. The democratic welfare state is something we battle since libertarianism was born in the West. But such libertarians are not sufficiently cognizant of the other threat to liberty: the authoritarian anti-Western regimes that have very little to no respect for individual freedom. Is the enemy of my enemy my friend? I don't think so, certainly not necessarily so. But fellow libertarians differ on that, highlighting different aspects of the anti-liberty agenda in any given camp.

Another problem, especially in the United States, seems to be the libertarian reaction to cultural divisions: instead of distancing ourselves from what heats up collectivists of both the right and left, we seem to have developed our own camps fueled by emotions and a war-like attitude. The libertarian position has no view on what kind of life choices (in a large sense that includes culture, race, or religion-related choices) are good or bad for an individual or larger society. Therefore the “war on culture” that is at the center of the contemporary left vs. right battle is not our war. Nonetheless, I observe that we have developed our own cultural war within the libertarian camp. This can be seen, for example, in the US Libertarian Party where activists are currently divided more on cultural issues (conservative ones vs. progressive ones) than on the key question of the growth of the state and strategies to tame it. In Poland, libertarians who have 90% in common fight each other on the question of the relationship with the organized LGBT movement. As a result of that “civil war,” they join anti-liberty alliances on both the left and the right rather than joining forces and focusing on essential issues for human liberty.

Despite these problems and divisions, I remain optimistic about the future of libertarianism. Collectivists try hard to limit our options and make this world a worse place to live. But ultimately they cannot succeed, human nature is too fast and innovative to be limited in any such manner. Governments cannot keep up with free markets, and the dynamism of the latter will hopefully prevail. We—the people most concerned about liberty—shall focus not only on critiquing the worst that happens (wars, taxes, censorship, etc.) but also on promoting the philosophy of liberty among the maximum number of people possible. Because everybody, deep in his heart, knows that freedom tastes better.



From the Soviets to Classical Liberalism

Krassen Stanchev

My personal classical liberal views of the world and, later on, my political involvement in promoting libertarian values in my country of Bulgaria and elsewhere, came first from life rather than from reading and education. Three categories of experience proved of ultimate importance for this evolution: my teenage encounter with what became known as the Prague Spring, my impressions of how markets and liberties worked in spite of, underneath, and beyond Communist oppression in the former USSR, and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986. All three have been, and still are, very much with me, influencing in many ways my personal interests and commitments.

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PRAGUE SPRING

The suffocation of the longing for freedom through the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968 that I witnessed in Czechoslovakia was a shock for me, a thirteen-year-old fan of international company and rock music.

In 1967 and 1968, owing to my parents' personal connections, I had the opportunity to attend an international Boy Scouts summer camp in Western Czechoslovakia. We tasted freedom the first year as the train stopped in Belgrade, and my friend and I bought erotic journals at the station. The following year, however, the trip was via Bucharest: Bulgarians had been banned from traveling through Yugoslavia, already opened to the West. Communist authorities suspected that we might try to escape to Austria or Italy.

The 1968 "camp" was in private flats in the Western Czech town of Liberec; the landlady hated us speaking to her in Russian but was a perfect and caring host. We visited such places as Lidice (where children had been massacred by the Nazis as a reprisal for the assassination of a high-ranking SS official) and the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp. The teacher explained to us the meaning of "being stoned" (a method of punishment in the camp) and I suddenly got the sense of Bob Dylan's song *Everybody Must Get Stoned*. It was about envy and collective oppression, I thought.

I returned to Sofia at the end of July just in time for the opening of the IX International (Communist) Youth Festival. I immediately joined the Czechoslovak group, and for several days we roamed the streets shouting "Sofia Wake Up." The media reported only the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations that naturally dominated the event. I also corresponded on a daily basis with a beautiful Czech girl named Rada I had met while at camp, that is, until our communications were cut short on the day of the Warsaw Pact invasion.

In Eastern Europe, the 1968 rebellions were about liberation, not Mao, Marx, or Marcuse. A few students protested against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. They were arrested, tried, and detained for treason, as we learned 25 years later. Many decided to flee to the West, among them the writer Georgy Markov who, along with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Václav Havel, pioneered the rebellion against "living in lies" and was murdered for his talent on the Waterloo Bridge in 1978. Rethinking 1968 now, I am of the opinion that the generation that witnessed the events of that decade eventually toppled the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. I am proud to belong to that generation.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM IN COMMUNIST EUROPE

I chose to study in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, because its university had the reputation of being the best Eastern Studies program in Europe and I wanted to study Zen Buddhism—the interest came from J.D. Salinger, beatniks, and hippies hitchhiking to Nepal via Sofia. To join that faculty, however, a recommendation from local Communist Party authorities and/or a written commitment to become an informant for the Bulgarian analogue of the KGB was required. I refused my father's "help" on this and strategized to bypass the "system" by enrolling first in philosophy but then moving to Eastern studies. This did not work: because of a five-year plan, the group to visit Asia had already been selected, so I couldn't visit either China or India. The prospect was, at best, to learn how to read Chinese Communist newspapers. I stayed within the Philosophical Faculty, graduating in 1980.

My first impression of Leningrad was of a restaurant closed for "lunch break." The second one was more disturbing: in his welcome speech the Dean (a professor in "Scientific Communism") noted in passing that two professors had been recently fired for "Kantianism" and "Hegelianism." The third impression requires greater explanation.

Before my arrival, Finnish tourists were banned from exchanging Finnish *Markka* and from using it in hard currency shops in order to force them to buy expensive vodka in hotel bars. By helping Finns to sell Marks at a discount of 50–70%, one could buy blue jeans in currency shops outside the USSR for 7–14 US dollars apiece, and then sell them back in Leningrad at 120–130 dollars. Soon I realized that if one sold jeans in Tolyatti (a closed-to-foreigners mono-industrial town, producing LADAs), the price would be as high as 230–250 dollars a pair. A friend managed to arrange trips to Tolyatti, and for two years we were very rich.

The jeans episode, as I figured out later, had a systemic background: hard currency shops were opened in all European communist countries because their respective governments started to accumulate debts that needed to be paid. The public, due to shortages of valued goods, could get access to them in hard currency, thus guaranteeing authorities a cash inflow without the risks of opening opportunities to travel abroad for the population. Since the countries were closed, the hard currency shops necessitated a tacit tolerance of smuggling.

The so-called Helsinki Process in the mid-1970s, which allowed families from formerly closed countries to reunite or meet, gave me an

unexpected prospect to invest jeans profits in humanitarian adventures. I started buying Bulgarian typewriters, in Cyrillic but not registered in the USSR, so the KGB could not detect who wrote the applications to leave the country. I was bringing as many as I could to Leningrad and started filling out friends' applications to leave. From about a dozen applications that I completed, only one failed. (That friend was later "reunited" with a Jewish uncle and is now a successful businessman in Boston.) Two typing machines were used for SAMIZDAT.

SOVIET CLIMATE OF LIBERAL STUDIES

Far from Moscow, the Leningrad Faculty of Philosophy was a place of dissent. The faculty library was richer than the National Library of Bulgaria, and across the street there was the Library of the Academy of Sciences, then the third biggest library in the world. Foreigners were often allowed by careless librarians to read in the "Secret Section." I found there a 250 page Russian summary of Mises' *Socialism*, a limited edition for critics of capitalism who could not read English. A short preface on the presumed errors of Mises was followed by a perfectly correct extract. The same was the case for Weber's *Protestant Ethics* and Freud's works (in the 1920s they were perceived as Marxists and translated into Russian, but were then banned in the 1930s). Some of my Russian colleagues were also able to get access to all the books in the library by ingenuity: by becoming a worker in the central heating system or a cleaning lady, by faking a pass, and by renting for a small fee a pass from insiders who did not bother to read.

Even lectures on dubious subjects were fun to attend. The professor of History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union happened to be a former GULAG prisoner, blinded after 17 years in the camps. His lectures were basically as correct as Solzhenitsyn's account (of which I had some idea from reading excerpts and from Radio Free Europe). The professor of a course on the Political Economy of Socialism used me and other foreigners (albeit not those from the GDR) to spread messages he could not deliver himself. My final paper was on Why Bulgarian Representatives in ComEcon Board Blocked Using London Commodity Exchange Prices in Socialist Planning. The professor of the Political Economy of Capitalism was a free marketer who later immigrated to Israel and became a governor of the central bank there. My mathematical logic teacher was in the habit of organizing seminars at home on Occam's razor (participants

would apply it to political arguing). My Master's thesis mentor, Professor Boris Markov, was a firm believer in individual liberty; when censorship was lifted, he published an inspiring book on *Cafés and Drinking Houses as Institutions of Social Liberation* based on experience.

Dissent was tolerated only up to a certain point, however. A Russian co-student was arrested when lecturing at the Students' Scientific Club on Ditties and Jokes as Descriptions of Reality in 1977. His talk had used folklore from Stalin's period. The real reason for the arrest, as we later learned, was his dissemination of posters with the "criminal" proposal to redraft the just adopted new USSR Constitution.

MY POLITICAL CAREER

Chernobyl was a game changer. It proved to the majority that no further evidence of the regime's antihuman nature was needed.

I learned about the accident when lecturing at the Economic University (then called the Karl Marx Economic Institute) on resource scarcity and using examples from the energy sector. A student remonstrated and told the class I was talking "complete bullshit"; the BBC had reported on a terrifying accident at a Soviet nuclear plant. I ended the lecture and rushed to check the news by changing the radio-waves from East to West. Everywhere except for Bulgaria and the Soviet Union there was sufficient information for the public on what had happened and how to avoid risks of radiation.¹ My wife was pregnant at the time. I took the government's deliberate misinformation as a personal insult and decided to do everything I could to dismantle this antihuman system.

The period of my political dormancy had ended. Soon after I published a paper comparing the reaction of different political regimes to the Chernobyl and Three-mile-Island nuclear accidents, and I studied laws prescribing a government's action in such cases. I also joined anti-communist environmental organizations, supported human rights groups, submitted petitions to restore the rights of the Bulgarian Turks (their names had been forcibly changed in the winter of 1985 and protesters

¹ After realizing the level of the Bulgarian government's hypocrisy, I checked connections and found that top ranking Communist families had been informed of the disaster and had even been supplied clean products, vegetables, and water, while everybody else had been left to carry out "business as usual," that is, forced to go out unwarned and "celebrate" Labor Day on May 1.

were jailed or forced out of the country), and hosted meetings of opposition groups. The culmination of these activities came in October of 1989 when the OSCE Summit on the Environmental Protection took place in Sofia for two weeks. The authorities were obliged to allow environmental activism. We, the range of political, trade unionist, and human rights activists, pretended our protests were nothing but an environmental concern. On the day of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the regime in Sofia collapsed. Within a month we restored political parties banned since the 1940s, established new ones, and demanded rules for pluralism and elections.

As one of the few activists with knowledge of comparative environment law, I was invited to take part in the first post-Communist constitutional elections in June of 1990, to chair the environmental protection committee. I won in the largest electoral district, drafted the environmental law, and took part in legislating taxation, privatization, restitution of expropriated rights, and the liberalization of markets.

My focus was on guaranteeing clear-cut protection of private property rights and establishing a limited government. The constitutional formula of those rights turned out to be really straightforward and unquestionable. With government machinery, however, I failed: the government is still too large and intervening to my taste. But in comparison to the EU, Bulgaria has one of the smallest governments, government spending averaging 36% of GDP for the last 23 years, versus 48% for the EU. In seven years, Bulgaria was as good as Switzerland, having repaid its Communist era debts (after again defaulting in 1990).

My attempts to limit the government monopoly on natural resources and make constitutionally possible their privatization also failed. Yet the environmental law was a success: it excluded new owners from liability for past environmental damages, enforced government's duty to provide information, and limited its environmental policy functions to oversight over conflicting local decisions, standards setting, and EIA.

I can claim the above limited success because in early 1990 I had studied the US constructional process and environmental law (learning firsthand of the deficiency of the Clean Air Act), and had taken part in municipal and state (Iowa) elections. In my work at the Constituent Assembly, I was helped by P.J. Hill and R.W. Rahn, who arrived with a group to advise the outgoing communist government. We became friends for life.

Disagreeing with the full party-list electoral system, I left politics and became one of the founders, and then first director, of the Institute for Market Economics. IME's mission is to provide market-based solutions to problems faced by both individuals and countries and, whenever possible, to support likeminded individuals and institutions abroad. Perhaps the most successful undertakings in which I was involved, or have led teams to promote, were the restitution of property rights expropriated by the ancient regime (no other post-Communist country can claim such a comprehensive restoration of property rights as Bulgaria), independence of the central bank from the government by a peg to the Deutsche Mark and prohibition of financing the government and the banks, protection of creditors' rights, the 1998–2008 campaign for flat and low income taxes, and the simplification of indirect taxes. This tax system still works well.² These reforms have inspired similar endeavors in other countries. As part of IME or individually, I worked to establish free market networks in Europe and to design and implement market-based reforms in most of the Balkans, Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Central Europe.

² See Dessislava Nikolova and Petar Ganev (editors), *Flat Tax in Bulgaria: History, Introduction, Result* (Sofia: IME, 2016); <https://ime.bg/var/The-Flat-Tax-in-Bulgaria.pdf>.



Physics and Libertarian Philosophy

Frank J. Tipler

Like many libertarians, I started life as a liberal Democrat. More honestly, I adopted my family's politics, which were liberal democratic—this was in early 1960's rural Alabama, which means “liberal Democrat” is to be understood as “moderate Republican” in contemporary political language. In my junior year in high school, I gave a speech in favor of Lyndon Johnson in the school's 1964 mock election. I remember arguing that were Goldwater elected, he would commit US troops to Viet Nam. The Man of Peace Johnson would never do such a thing. Vote for Goldwater, I warned my fellow high school students, and the United States will go to war in Viet Nam!

My fellow Alabamians, alas, gave their electoral votes to Goldwater, and the Viet Nam War began. I entered MIT as a freshman the following year. I was able to avoid the war. It helped that my draft board's medical advisor was both a “liberal Democrat” and more importantly, my family doctor: I got a 4-F deferment. (A “4-F deferment” is terminology that is special to a military draft: it means that the person with the deferment is physically unfit for combat).

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In defense of my family doctor, I *did* have a medical condition that legitimately justified a 4-F deferment: I was diagnosed as having petit mal epilepsy. What this meant is that I fainted for no obvious reason. A cerebral angiography found nothing—except that I had an abnormally high number of blood vessels in my brain. The neurosurgeon joked that perhaps this explained my high intelligence! However that may be, the fainting spells ceased in my sophomore year at MIT, shortly after I got the 4-F deferment.

Perhaps I was just allergic to participating in pointless wars. A libertarian illness, for sure.

In the rural South, I had never heard of libertarianism, in spite of the fact that this political philosophy is natural to America; individualism is in the air we breathe. I never developed a libertarian political philosophy on my own, though I did invent a native American epistemology. When I attended a 1964 summer study at the University of Houston, sponsored by the NSF for promising young scientists, I told my philosophy instructor, “Professor, I think that ‘truth’ is just what is expedient to believe.” I was stunned when he replied, “Oh, a Pragmatist.” I had never heard of Pragmatism, and was astonished to discover, when I read William James’ *Essays in Pragmatism* (recommended by the Houston philosopher) that all I had done was re-invent the only philosophical system invented in the United States.

I encountered libertarian philosophy as a freshman at MIT. Many of the undergraduates were engineers *manqué* from New York City, a town where libertarian theory was definitely discussed, and it appears engineers find libertarian philosophy very attractive. So numerous were the New Yorkers at MIT that one New Yorker told me I was a geographical affirmative action admission. He told me that had admission been on merit alone, the MIT freshman class would consist entirely of the Bronx High School of Science just graduated senior class.

The south Alabama hayseed was told he had to read *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. So I did. I enjoyed the former, appreciating the paean to individual creativity. Howard Roark was much like my childhood (and current) hero, Albert Einstein. Like Roark in architecture, Einstein had trouble getting a job as a physicist. When Einstein made his first great discoveries, he was working as a patent clerk.

I was less impressed with *Atlas Shrugged*. I found John Galt’s speech much too long, and I never finished reading it. Having recently re-read

some sections of the book, I now realize that my attitudes then (and now) were much closer to the book's than I ever imagined.

For example, at MIT I majored in physics with a minor in philosophy (of science). John Galt majored in physics and philosophy at Patrick Henry University. I have always thought, like John Galt, that the purpose of physics was to guide the development of technology that advanced human well-being. With me, this goes *way* back. I still remember swinging on a swing in kindergarten while imagining that, as an adult, I would design rockets which would take men to other planets. I even went to MIT because I was persuaded, after reading Robert Heinlein's juvenile science fiction novel *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*, that MIT was the best university for science and technology.

Inspired by Heinlein, MIT was my first choice. I also applied to Rice (where I was on the waiting list) and Georgia Tech. I doubt that I would have encountered at the other two universities either libertarian philosophy or the two physics ideas that I later integrated with libertarian philosophy, namely time travel and Many-Worlds quantum mechanics.

Time travel came first. While reading the second volume of *Albert Einstein: Philosopher Scientist*, which had been assigned in one of my MIT philosophy courses, I learned about the Gödel universe, which allowed time travel as a consequence of the universe's rotation. Einstein, in his comments on Gödel's model, wondered if time travel would indeed be possible in general relativity.

I was fascinated. Time travel would enormously increase our power over nature! I resolved to find out if time travel were possible. Upon graduating from MIT, I went to the University of Maryland where they had an outstanding group in general relativity. (And they were the only university to admit me into graduate school with financial support.) In 1974, I published my first paper, wherein I proved that a sufficiently large rotating cylinder (now known as the Tipler cylinder) would indeed allow time travel. I am now credited with the first paper ever published in a leading physics journal arguing that time travel might actually be possible. Alas, within two years, I had proven that any attempt to speed up a rotating cylinder to time travel power would rip a hole in space-time. This was the subject of my Ph.D. thesis. I mention this episode because my motivation for this work was the same as John Galt's when he developed his motor.

My interest in philosophy at this stage was purely epistemological; I had no interest in political or ethical philosophy. This was to change in

the late 1970s when the US dollar began its decrease in value. Since childhood, I had been a saver. For me, putting money in a piggy bank and later, a savings bank, was a pleasure in itself. But now the value of my savings was decreasing faster than I could add to the account. I knew no economics (though I had gotten an A in a Samuelson based economics course at MIT), so I wondered what was causing inflation. Having only the national media as a source of information, it seemed that only Milton Friedman had an explanation: “inflation is *always* a monetary phenomenon.” I wanted to know more.

Somehow I learned of a bookstore in New York, Laissez Faire Books, which sold Friedman’s books through the mail. I ordered several, but the catalogue held an abundance of riches. Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises—by reading the books of these men, I learned about Austrian economics, which seemed to me to be obviously true—David Friedman (*The Machinery of Freedom*), and, most importantly, the books by Murray Rothbard on anarcho-capitalism.

Rothbard convinced me that free market anarchy was the best society. I joined the Libertarian Party, and was even its candidate for the House of Representatives in 1982 for a district in Alabama. I received something like 6% of the vote, which pleased the Party, as it gave them automatic ballot access in the next election.

Reading Hayek on the Austrian Theory of capital convinced me that Many-Worlds was the correct theory of quantum mechanics. The Austrians viewed capital not as a single production stream, but rather as a lattice of alternative worlds in which the same machines are used in all possible ways. This was a purely classical picture of parallel universes. In 2014, I published a paper in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* where I proved mathematically that quantum mechanics arises as a classical Many-Worlds theory, just as Austrian capital theory had suggested. But the mathematical proof took quite a while to work out. In the late 1970s, I wrote “Some Thoughts on the Analogy between Quantum Mechanics and the Austrian Theory of Capital,” and sent a few Xeroxed copies to selected colleagues. (And to Hayek, who liked it.) The famous physicist Paul Davies passed around a copy at a meeting we both attended at Cambridge University in 1981, saying, “look at what Frank is pushing now.” I still remember the shocked look on Roger Penrose’s face when he saw the title. For Roger, physics and economics are disjoint sets! It took me decades to make the connection mathematically rigorous (see the PNAS paper mentioned above). I don’t know what Stephan Hawking

thought of that paper, or if he even saw it. The only thing Steve and I talked about at the conference was Many-Worlds quantum mechanics, which Hawking described as “trivially true.” Steve always had a knack for beautiful expressions. He was correct, of course.

In the meantime, I was working on the idea that science is to help mankind, more generally, our descendants. I asked, could science enable us to overcome whatever the universe could throw at us? In my book with John Barrow, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, I formulated this as the Final Anthropic Principle (FAP): in any universe, intelligent life *must* come into existence, and, once in existence, would never die out. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (most recent online version) has called FAP my most important original idea. Admittedly, in his review in the *New York Review of Books*, Martin Gardener wrote that FAP should have been labeled CRAP, for Completely Ridiculous Anthropic Principle. In 2005, I published a proof in *Reports on Progress in Physics* that FAP holds in our universe, given the known laws of physics. If the laws of physics be for us, who can be against us?

The proof of FAP also implies the existence of the Cosmological Singularity, which is a supernatural being that created the universe out of nothing. The Singularity is “supernatural” in the literal sense—“supernatural” literally means “outside of nature,” and the Singularity is outside of space and time, hence outside of nature. “Created the universe out of nothing” just means that outside of the Singularity and the universe, there is nothing, no space, no time, no nothing, and further, the Singularity determines everything that occurs in the universe. It is a remarkable fact that modern mathematical physics is capable, and has been for two centuries, of proving the existence of something outside of itself and outside of space and time (look up “Cauchy sequence” or “projective geometry” for examples of how this works).

The fact of determinism allows us to resolve the disagreement between John Galt and his physics professor Robert Stadler: Is technology or pure science the ultimate goal?

The real question is, why is it possible for humans, idiots that we obviously are, to develop science and technology? The answer is simple: the laws of physics are set up so that we idiots can figure them out with sufficient accuracy to develop the technology that will allow our descendants

to survive to the end of time. Ultimately, it is the Cosmological Singularity that arranged the laws of physics to ensure this. The proof of FAP also shows that in the end, free cooperation between our descendants will be required in the far future in order for them to survive, and the laws of physics require them to survive.

In the end, physics and libertarian philosophy are the same.



Law, Voluntarism, and Being Libertarian in Uninviting Africa

Martin van Staden

The libertarian and classical liberal community in South Africa is small but has been historically influential.¹ This influence was only possible because of an even smaller group of dedicated activists and intellectuals foregoing more lucrative employment or emigration in favor of working in the non-profit (and sometimes political) sector, where I find myself today.

In 2013, as a first-year law student in the University of Pretoria law library, I had some free time, and with my interest piqued in libertarianism by my American Facebook friend, Tyler Trent, I decided to read, in the words of Murray Rothbard's *The Ethics of Liberty*, what libertarianism was all about.

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¹ See Martin van Staden, "The Liberal Tradition in South Africa, 1910–2019," *Econ Journal Watch* 16(2) (September 2019): 258–341, <https://econjwatch.org/articles/the-liberal-tradition-in-south-africa-19102019>.

I entered the library as a “liberal” (in the American sense) “statist,” but less than two hours later, I was a libertarian—a true liberal—and I have not looked back since. Rothbard’s argument in favor of self-ownership was irresistible, and to this day I cannot understand how anyone could stop being libertarian after internalizing these insights.

Less than a year and much social media “activism” later, Olumayowa Okediran, the founder of African Students for Liberty (ASFL)—the affiliate of the Washington DC-based Students for Liberty in Africa—convinced me to apply to become the (only) local coordinator for ASFL in South Africa. This was no small step for a lifelong introvert.

The Institute of Race Relations (IRR, founded 1929)² and later the Free Market Foundation (FMF, founded 1975)³ discovered my social media activities. These were, and remain, the only two explicit representatives of classical liberalism in South Africa.

My involvement with the FMF in particular grew toward the end of 2014, culminating in a holiday internship arranged by Eustace Davie and his son, Terence, during 2016. I was excited about the fact that an actual libertarian organization wanted to work with me toward an intellectual goal, rather than expecting me to be an activist.

By 2015 I had realized that becoming a practicing lawyer was not something about which I felt especially passionate. To be sure, it was something I had planned on doing, but unlike other law students, I did not feel immersed in the positive law of South Africa. What interested me, besides libertarian philosophy specifically, was legal philosophy and constitutionalism—that legal doctrine that concerns itself with the limitation of political power. Practicing exclusively in constitutional law would not have been lucrative, but working in public policy—which necessarily has a constitutional dimension—at the FMF, then, was a perfect opportunity for me.

During that year, I co-founded the online libertarian magazine, the *Rational Standard* (RS),⁴ alongside Nicholas Woode-Smith and Christiaan van Huyssteen. RS continues to operate today, run primarily by Woode-Smith. Later that same year, Nathaniel Owen, an American,

² www.irr.org.za.

³ www.freemarketfoundation.com.

⁴ www.rationalstandard.com.

approached me to be the Editor in Chief of *Being Libertarian* (BL).⁵ I ran publications at BL until July 2021, when my workload demanded that I scale back on my extracurriculars.

I worked at the FMF during my holiday breaks throughout 2016, liaising mostly with Gail Day. During one of these breaks, Gail asked whether I would be interested in coming to work at the FMF full-time after I completed my LL.B. degree. January 4, 2017, was my first day at the FMF. It was nirvana. At no point for the first years at the FMF did the feeling dissipate that I was being paid for “working” on my hobby. Going to work was a pleasure. It was a labor of love.

During my time at the FMF I developed an interest in the interplay between libertarianism and jurisprudence. It occurred to me that constitutions and constitutionalism were specifically directed toward limiting the scope and power of political authorities. Law itself is about recognizing and protecting certain interests, and when one looks at these interests from a common-law perspective, one discovers that they more or less define the sphere of free action that characterizes self-ownership. In other words, law and constitutionalism are in themselves, to an extent, inherently libertarian, at least theoretically.

It therefore surprised me that libertarians focused most of their intellectual efforts on economic theory. To be sure, a libertarian jurist existed here and there—Frank van Dun, Stephan Kinsella, Randy Barnett, and Richard Epstein, to name a few—and the economists certainly had a lot to say about jurisprudence, but it was always quite barebones and necessarily from an economic perspective.

Libertarianism, in my view, is thus short on a coherent jurisprudential dimension, quite unlike socialism and (many instances of) conservatism. Virtually every instance of libertarian jurisprudence is by an economist, or based within the distinctively American context. What is lacking is a legal theory for libertarianism per se, which should not begin with economic analyses, but rather with juristic premises.

This is what my master’s thesis was a cursory attempt at doing, and remains a task with which I am now actively busying myself. Libertarianism today is quite unlike the natural rights theories of centuries past, with its own unique answers to old questions, which deserve proper recognition in the broader field of jurisprudence. Certainly, the insights by

⁵ www.beinglibertarian.com.

libertarian economists—the likes of Ludwig von Mises, Murray Rothbard, and Hans-Hermann Hoppe—will be crucial to the development of this theory, but the development itself must be a jurisprudential enterprise.

In 2018, I began pursuing a master’s degree in law at the University of Pretoria, with Professor Koos Malan as my study supervisor. The dissertation that I submitted was titled “*In favorem libertatis*: The prospect of liberty in the transformation(isation) of South African law.” The first three-quarters of the dissertation was a literature review of libertarian legal theory, from natural rights theory to generic consistency to argumentation ethics.

I obtained the LL.M. degree with distinction in 2020, shortly before my father, tragically, passed away due to an amyloidosis-induced heart attack. I owe my father for stimulating my intellectual curiosity during my formative years. He had a good general knowledge and was always ready to answer my random questions about the goings-on in South Africa and the world. When he did not have an answer, we would look it up together. While he did not have a law degree, he did work as a labor law consultant and guided me toward eventually opting to study law myself.

Internal strife in the FMF, starting in mid-to-late 2019, led me to bring my full-time involvement with the Foundation to an end in December 2020. I remained involved there however on a part-time basis until 1 June 2023, when I resumed a permanent staff position. Between October 2022 and the end of May 2023, I worked at the IRR, after spending a little under two years as a freelance policy consultant for various organizations, primarily the business community Sakeliga (*Business League*) and the FMF.

The last quarter of my LL.M. dissertation concerned the phenomenon of “Transformationism” in South Africa, effectively socialist legal theory infused with a dose of Critical Race Theory and superficially polite Western progressivism. It is a totalitarian conceptualization of law that envisages the wholesale “transformation” of South Africa into a socially engineered utopia of material equality. With Koos Malan as my study supervisor again, I began developing a doctoral (LL.D.) thesis in 2021 dedicated to critically and comprehensively studying this phenomenon which enjoyed only limited attention in my master’s dissertation.

Being a libertarian in South Africa comes with a unique set of challenges because of the country’s history and peculiar circumstances. The early democratic period, from 1994 to about 2007, was one of optimism and economic growth, but since then South Africa has been beset

by setback after setback. To the libertarian eye, the hand of government interference, primarily in the economy, is evident in each setback, including world-record unemployment, homicide and rape rates, a rapidly devaluing currency, intensifying yearly riots due to lackluster public service delivery, and a hopelessly corrupt and incompetent civil service.

This situation has proven to be a breeding ground for illiberal radicalism, in recent years finding expression in calls for the wholesale confiscation of property (starting with agricultural land owned by whites) for little to no compensation. There has been talk of using the Reserve Bank, certainly through quantitative easing, to try to address poverty directly, which will lead to the kind of monetary inflation that neighboring Zimbabwe experienced some years ago. Racist rhetoric from politicians, primarily aimed at the small white and Indian populations, has also increased, as scapegoats for three decades of government failure are sought. To top it off, the government has its eye on complete civilian disarmament, despite the fact that South Africans are compelled to defend themselves against ravaging violent crime, given that the corrupt and indifferent police service is usually absent when it should not be.

These are the stakes in South Africa, and it's often worse elsewhere in Africa. From an African perspective, then, defeatism among libertarians in the West can seem awfully silly. The stakes in Africa are significantly higher than elsewhere. Whereas sometimes the biggest political challenge in the United States is inflation or some controversy about gender ideology being taught in schools, in South Africa political battles tend to be matters of life and death. This is not to make light of problems in the West, but rather to reassure Western libertarians that what they find themselves enmeshed in is not nearly as bad as it could quickly get. There is much to be optimistic about in the West, even today.

In South Africa, the term "liberal" still retains a relatively strong connotation with the free market, limited government, and personal liberty, although the dominance of American popular culture has invariably meant that what passes for "liberal" in the United States has also found some purchase among South African "liberals." Nonetheless, as liberals in South Africa, libertarians come up against a historical context where, to socialists and Africanists, liberals are regarded as exploiters who seek only to racially subjugate the black majority to "white monopoly capital." Conservatives, on the other hand, see libertarians at best as misguided idealists and at worst as being responsible for the adoption

of a seemingly boundless racial majoritarianism during the 1990s. Libertarian activism here—indeed, as with virtually anything else—will never not have a racial connotation.

The South African Constitution, a product of compromise between Afrikaner nationalism and black nationalism during the 1990s, is a surprisingly classically liberal and non-racial instrument. However, because the courts are composed of judges appointed by and necessarily subject to the intellectual influence of the African National Congress, the Constitution has come to be interpreted as at best a racialist socially democratic and at worst a racialist socialist instrument, despite the liberal nature of the text.

Nonetheless, the voluntaryist scene in South Africa is flourishing. The Solidarity Movement,⁶ to my mind, is the world's greatest example of voluntaryism in action. Starting as a trade union, it has built two private universities, runs multiple charities, contains dozens of professional guilds, an online platform that supports homeschooling, and sets blueprints for private schooling, its own media institutions, a property development firm, and a financial brokerage firm, among other initiatives. AfriForum,⁷ part of the movement, hosts hundreds of neighborhood watches, a private security firm, fixes potholes on public roads, runs its own film studio and theater, and even has its own private (criminal) prosecution unit. Sakeliga,⁸ a friend of the movement, is developing a private arbitration system and is increasingly establishing links with foreign business chambers and even governments.

While none of these organizations would describe themselves as expressly classical liberal or libertarian, they exhibit all the important characteristics of libertarianism. They do not operate with State assistance—in fact, the State, as the primary agent of chaos in South Africa, is more often than not their opponent. This short description does not scratch the surface of all the things the Solidarity Movement and its independent partners succeed in doing for themselves and their communities. I can safely recommend to libertarians around the world who are interested in attaining practical independence from the State, at scale, to study what these organizations do and how they do it.

⁶ www.beweging.co.za/en/.

⁷ www.afriforum.co.za/en/.

⁸ www.sakeliga.co.za/en/.

Liberals and libertarians in South Africa have—and will always have—their work cut out for them. We lack the solid tradition of intellectual development of liberty that is evident in the West. But what we lack there, we make up for in opportunity. Nothing is certain in the developing world, and this holds as many opportunities as it does risks. One of these opportunities was the space created for South Africa's dynamic voluntaryist scene. There is much that is malleable, and this is as exciting as it is often terrifying. What is true is that the next while in South African history will not be uneventful, and I hope to make a positive contribution to the realization of freedom in this small, chaotic corner of the world.



Christian Libertarianism

Laurence M. Vance

As a libertarian, I believe that people should be free from individual, societal, or government interference to live their lives any way they desire, pursue their own happiness, accumulate wealth, assess their own risks, make their own choices, participate in any economic activity for their profit, engage in commerce with anyone who is willing to reciprocate, and spend the fruits of their labor as they see fit. As long as people don't violate the personal or property rights of others, and as long as their actions are peaceful, their associations are voluntary, and their interactions are consensual, they should be free to live their lives without license, regulation, interference, or molestation by the government. The actions of government—in whatever form it might exist—should be strictly limited to the protection of life, liberty, and property. The government should not tax us, redistribute our income, transfer our wealth, force us to be charitable, or punish us for doing things that are not aggression, force, coercion, threat, or violence.

I didn't always believe this, but this is because I had never considered it or even been exposed to such things. Until I discovered libertarianism, as

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I look back now, for as long as I can remember, I was a libertarian-leaning conservative who held his nose and voted Republican to keep those evil Democrats out of office. But let's begin at the beginning. Politics was never discussed in my home growing up. I never knew until years later that my father was a conservative Republican, although when he came to that opinion I have no idea. The first introduction I had to something political was in the eighth grade when we were given a ten-question survey about current issues. I don't remember exactly how the questions were supposed to be answered, but I remember my score (8 out of 10) and how the survey was scored (1–5 were degrees of liberalism and 6–10 were degrees of conservatism). I concluded from this, rather naively, that I must be a conservative. In the twelfth grade, I vaguely remember a required course called, I think, Comparative Political Systems. This was designed to *commend* the American capitalist system and *condemn* the Soviet communist system. The Cold War was in full force at that time. How these political and economic ideologies were related to Democrats and Republicans was something I did not discover until several years later.

As I became more politically astute in the late 1980s, I identified as a conservative and a Republican, but more of the former than the latter. By this time I was regularly reading publications such as *Human Events*, *National Review*, and the *Conservative Chronicle*, which reprinted the columns of two of my favorite conservative syndicated columnists—Sam Francis and Pat Buchanan. This was followed by my discovery of Rush Limbaugh as well as the publications *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* and the *New American*, the magazine of the John Birch Society, for which I have written since 2008 and of which I am an official contributor. The beginnings of the anti-war, noninterventionist foreign policy views for which I am known can be traced back to Buchanan's criticisms of the Persian Gulf War launched by George H. W. Bush and a long-forgotten article about how the United States had troops in over a hundred foreign countries, which I thought rather odd, unnecessary, and ridiculous. I don't believe I had yet been exposed to libertarianism, although I was certainly a libertarian-leaning conservative.

It was sometime around 1993 that I made the acquaintance of Lew Rockwell of the Ludwig von Mises Institute. I had stumbled across—where I have no idea—a reference to the Mises Institute publication called *The Free Market*. This was before LewRockwell.com and before the Mises Institute had a website. I remember calling and requesting back issues of *The Free Market*, which were graciously sent to me through the mail. I

went on to write for this publication, beginning in 1996, and then later for LewRockwell.com and the Mises Institute. It was through articles in *The Free Market* that I was introduced to Murray Rothbard. This led me to the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*, which I used to read at my mailbox the moment it arrived. These discoveries were not only my introduction to libertarianism, but responsible for the realization that I was in fact actually a libertarian and not a conservative. The discovery of the Mises Institute and Murray Rothbard was a life-changing experience.

Being a voracious reader, I devoured the works of Murray Rothbard, Ludwig von Mises, Frédéric Bastiat, and Henry Hazlitt, most of which I purchased from Laissez Faire Books. Unlike some libertarians, I was never attracted to Ayn Rand. Although I never met him, Murray Rothbard was without question the most influential libertarian I ever came across. His books in my library are some of the last books I would ever let go. I still remember the sad day in 1995 when I received a postcard in the mail announcing that he had died. After discovering libertarianism proper, I gradually became a faithful reader of publications like *The Freeman*, *The Independent Review*, *Liberty*, and *Freedom Daily* (now called *Future of Freedom*), and eventually wrote for all of these publications. It was through the Mises Institute that I met some of the great libertarian writers and thinkers of our day like Hans Hoppe, Tom Woods, David Gordon, Robert Higgs, Walter Block, Tom DiLorenzo, and the late Ralph Raico.

Before continuing on my libertarian journey, I had to face the question of whether libertarianism was compatible with my theologically conservative Christian faith. The answer was a resounding yes. I discovered two verses in the Bible that embody the essence of libertarianism:

Proverbs 3:30 – “Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.”

1 Peter 4:15 – “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.”

These verses reminded me of Murray Rothbard and his long-time friend and disciple Walter Block talking about the libertarian non-aggression principle:

The fundamental axiom of libertarian theory is that no one may threaten or commit violence (“aggress”) against another man’s person or property. Violence may be employed only against the man who commits such violence; that is, only defensively against the aggressive violence of another. In short, no violence may be employed against a non-aggressor. Here is the fundamental rule from which can be deduced the entire corpus of libertarian theory.¹

The non-aggression axiom is the lynchpin of the philosophy of libertarianism. It states, simply, that it shall be legal for anyone to do anything he wants, provided only that he not initiate (or threaten) violence against the person or legitimately owned property of another.²

Don’t kill anyone, don’t take what’s not yours, don’t do anyone wrong, don’t stick your nose in someone else’s business, and don’t bother anyone if he hasn’t bothered you. Other than that, do whatever you want—“anything that’s peaceful,” as Leonard Read says, for “ye have been called unto liberty,” as the Apostle Paul says. My conclusion was that not only is libertarianism compatible with the most strict, most theologically conservative, most biblically literal form of Christianity, it is demanded by it. My worldview and philosophy are distinctively Christian libertarianism.

I believe the great libertarian sticking point is the question of drug legalization. Liberals who otherwise share the libertarian commitment to freedom of speech, civil liberties, personal freedom, privacy, and the Fourth Amendment are generally averse to the legalization of drugs other than marijuana. Conservatives who otherwise share the libertarian commitment to the free market, limited government, free trade, property rights, and the Second Amendment are generally even more averse to the legalization of drugs, including marijuana. The drug war is the universal sticking point. Yet, this is one issue where there can be no compromise of libertarian principles. A libertarian society, that is, a free society, has to include the right of people to take risks, practice bad habits, partake of addictive conduct, engage in self-destructive behavior, exercise poor judgment, live an unhealthy lifestyle, participate in immoral activities, commit

¹ Murray Rothbard, *Myth and Truth about Libertarianism* (The Mises Institute, 2019); <https://archive.lewrockwell.com/rothbard/rothbard168.html>.

² Walter Block, “The Non-Aggression Axiom of Libertarianism,” *LewRockwell.com* (2003); <https://archive.lewrockwell.com/block/block26.html>.

vice, and undertake dangerous actions—including the use and abuse of drugs.

The greatest challenges to libertarianism are from within. Unlike liberalism and conservatism, libertarianism is a consistent philosophy. Yet, it is not monolithic. There is room in libertarianism for differences of opinion. But when those differences cease to be libertarian, then we have a problem.

Some libertarians define libertarianism in terms of issues that have nothing to do with liberty. They believe that libertarians should be committed to a slate of other views as well, such as “trans rights,” feminism, abortion on demand, and social justice. They add irrelevancies to libertarianism. They give the impression that libertarianism is a lifestyle. They believe that libertarians shouldn’t make value judgments. But libertarianism is concerned only with actions, or the threat of actions, of aggression, not ideology. One’s personal judgments about religion, morality, ethics, values, or sin are immaterial. One’s private opinions about sex, aesthetics, culture, tradition, or the meaning of life are irrelevant. One’s secret thoughts about any individual, group, class, nationality, or race are neither here nor there.

Others who call themselves libertarian support decidedly unlibertarian positions like universal basic income, school vouchers, anti-discrimination laws, and reforming the welfare state instead of abolishing it. Some libertarians supported the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan until these proved to be such debacles that they had to pretend that they didn’t. Someone coined the term *liberventionist* to describe them. And, more recently, some libertarians supported the federal and state governments’ draconian response to the “pandemic”—that is, before they didn’t. I call them *CDC libertarians*.

Although I write regularly on the virtues of libertarianism and the moral failings of conservatism, it is usually from a secular perspective. Yet, it is still Christian libertarianism that motivates me. For those interested in this perspective, I highly recommend the only distinctively Christian libertarian organization that I know, the Libertarian Christian Institute.



The Life of an Unlikely Libertarian

Richard Vedder

In many ways, I am a most unlikely libertarian. My maternal grandfather was the chair of the Democratic party in Michigan during the New Deal and was once its party's candidate for governor, and his brother served three terms as Michigan's elected Democratic treasurer. My first vote for president, I am rather ashamed to say, was for Lyndon Baines Johnson. Yet a series of events and intellectual awakenings led me unto an increasingly libertarian path.

In college (Northwestern University), one of my favorite professors was a somewhat eccentric but brilliant economist/lawyer, Meyer Burstein, who reflecting his own University of Chicago education, strongly endorsed conservative or libertarian positions on most issues, offsetting some more conventional leftist pronouncements of other admired professors. I went on to the University of Illinois for my Ph.D., and studied with Donald Kemmerer, who like his distinguished father at

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Princeton, admired and advocated for a gold standard and had a healthy contempt for then (and now) fashionable Keynesian notions that suggest that the printing of money and/or the running of huge budget deficits could stimulate aggregate demand and promote something resembling economic nirvana. Professor Kemmerer nudged me into becoming an economic historian, thereby putting me on a path to learn of the many pitfalls that governmental interventions over time brought to the lives of ordinary citizenry.

I received my Ph.D. in 1965, just as the Vietnam War blossomed into a super-debacle. I was highly vulnerable to being drafted, which helped stir up previously hidden libertarian thoughts. I thought that I, a physically inept man whose comparative advantage was not in physical altercations, should not risk my life chasing what seemed to me to be perfectly normal young Asian men running around jungles in what looked to me like pajamas. While not hysterical about it, I quickly and early adopted an antiwar position—and managed to avoid the draft on occupational grounds.

My early research as a newly minted professor at Ohio University moved me strongly in a libertarian direction. Working with my senior colleague Lowell Gallaway, we discovered that markets almost always worked in a salutary fashion. For example, people moved to improve themselves (e.g., see our 1971 “Mobility of Native Americans” in the *Journal of Economic History*), almost always enhancing the quality of lives, raising economic growth, and improving the global allocation of resources. Slavery was exploitive precisely because it did not allow people to move to better opportunities (see my 1975 “The Slave Exploitation [Expropriation] Rate” in *Explorations in Economic History*.) Bad things happen when labor markets are not allowed to work in an unconstrained fashion.

Perhaps ironically, a year working for the Joint Economic Committee of Congress (JEC) in the early 1980s enormously increased my respect for markets and my skepticism about governmental solutions to problems. My empirical research, for example, showed that areas with lower taxes had higher economic growth than high tax ones, and that people flee high tax and regulatory regimes, a perception reinforced first hand by several trips to Communist Eastern Europe including time on both sides of the Berlin Wall. A 1986 JEC monograph with Gallaway demonstrated the failure of the so-called “war on poverty,” outlining all the destructive economic behavioral effects of government assistance programs.

A particular and near transformative influence on my thinking came in the early 1980s when I accepted a Liberty Fund financed Institute for Humane Studies summer fellowship in Palo Alto, where a dozen or so scholars researched and talked about liberty and its manifestations. I made great friends like Gene Smiley from Marquette University and Dick Timberlake of the University of Georgia, fine scholars who had discovered the mischief imposed by various governmental interventions. Fortuitously, Murray Rothbard was spending the summer at Stanford, and Gallaway and I shared with him research we were doing showing that when labor markets were allowed to operate in an unfettered fashion, temporary dislocations and unemployment were relieved and, by contrast, when governments tried to manipulate wages or other key economic variables bad things happen. Rothbard loved our work and encouraged us, leading to an exceedingly long essay in the first issue of his new Austrian journal (*The Review of Austrian Economics*), the only paper Gallaway and I ever wrote where the editor insisted we *lengthen* the submitted paper enormously.

With Rothbard's and also Lew Rockwell's encouragement, that early association led to years of involvement with the Ludwig von Mises Institute, participation in the Mises University, but even more important, the completion, with Rothbard's encouragement, of the book with Gallaway, *Out of Work: Unemployment and Government in Twentieth-Century America* for the Independent Institute, which I regard as easily my most important scholarly contribution. And while Rothbard and Professor Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago and Stanford had significant academic disagreements, they both strongly praised and promoted Gallaway's and my *chef d'oeuvre*, a revised edition published in 1997 by the New York University Press.

Parallel with my scholarly work in many fields (e.g., economic history, public choice, public finance, education), I began to develop a broader public role, initiated by my year working in Washington with Congress. I started writing extensively in the public press, with, for example, multiple articles in the *Wall Street Journal* in every decade from the 1980s through the current one (2020s). I started speaking regularly to gatherings of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a group of state lawmakers in the Jeffersonian tradition (mostly conservative Republicans, but also a healthy smattering of genuine libertarians). I testified often before state legislatures and Congress. For example, I strongly disagreed with Keynesian titans Larry Summers, Robert Rubin, and Alan Blinder at

an important JEC hearing over the wisdom of Obama's \$800 billion stimulus package designed to get us out of the 2008 financial crisis without much unemployment (I was right: the unemployment rate exceeded 8% for 43 consecutive months).

This public intellectual role brought me into contact with numerous world leaders, for example, Russian President Vladimir Putin (desperately seeking market-based solutions to revive his economy when he took office), Margaret Thatcher, Benjamin Netanyahu, Czech President Vaclav Klaus, and others. I appeared on radio and television fairly frequently, including such NPR mainstays as *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, the PBS *News Hour*, some network television, Fox News, CSPAN, even a cameo appearance on the *Tonight Show* with Jay Leno!

In *Out of Work*, Gallaway and I argued that the market mechanism, specifically changing real wages adjusted for productivity change, was an effective way of dealing with apparent temporary market imbalances, and that efforts to manipulate labor markets through things like minimum wage laws, legislation favoring labor unions (e.g., prohibiting "right to work" laws), etc., were almost always counterproductive. The Great Depression was largely a consequence of wage-enhancing efforts by Herbert Hoover followed by such New Deal "reforms" as the National Industrial Recovery Act and the Wagner Act, compounded by other major policy miscues, such as raising tariffs and income taxes. Our skepticism of governmental solutions was also enhanced by our increasing appreciation of insights from public choice economics and recognition of the pernicious effects of rent-seeking, logrolling, and other political pathologies. I, usually with Professor Gallaway, wrote numerous papers for public policy oriented journals like *Public Choice* (e.g., "War Between the Rent-Seekers") and the *Journal of Labor Research* (e.g., "Spatial Variations in U.S. Unemployment"), as well as pieces with a distinct Austrian economics orientation (e.g., "Statistical Malfeasance in Interpreting Economic Phenomena" and "The Great Depression of 1946" in the *Review of Austrian Economics*).

Over the past couple of decades, I have concentrated on analyzing increasingly negative trends in American higher education, expressed in two books (*Going Broke By Degree*, AEI Press, 2004, and *Restoring the Promise: American Higher Education Today*, Independent Institute, 2019) as well as in literally scores of short articles and studies, many for my own Center for College Affordability and Productivity as well as in hundreds of blogs, the largest number of which appeared in *Forbes*. I

again mixed scholarly research with some public sector activism, serving on the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education, as well as the board of both the National Taxpayers Union (NTU) and the National Association of Scholars. I wrote occasionally on still other matters (e.g., a book on Wal-Mart) and even participated in a few public debates including well attended ones at New York University and at Lincoln Center, and did some speaking in such tony locations as the Council on Foreign Relations and London's Institute for Economic Affairs.

The general thrust of much of this twenty-first-century writing was that governmental efforts have raised the cost, lowered the quality, and compromised the intellectual quality of American universities. One example: federal government student loan programs induced colleges to raise tuition fees and also contributed to a decline in academic quality manifested in such modern phenomena as grade inflation and anti-meritorious efforts to make universities into leftish ideological enclaves suppressing free expression. I supplemented my written broadsides with numerous public lectures at American universities and occasionally elsewhere. Meanwhile, I continued to teach undergraduate students at Ohio University until the age of 80, even during the Covid pandemic.



My Non-Ideological Path to Becoming a Libertarian Thinker

Richard E. Wagner

While I have supported the freedom philosophy since around 1960, I came to embrace that philosophy more from disagreeable experiences in my life than through rational argument advanced by compelling teachers. My school days were unexceptionable. I graduated from high school with a GPA of around 3.5 despite rarely taking a book home. My attention at that time was absorbed by many of the sensual pursuits common to teenagers in my blue-collar peer group, though I never got into drugs. I spent gobs of time at the beach, cavorting in the mountains, golfing, day dreaming, and generally leading a leisurely life within the constraint of acceptable academic performance. I continued that pattern into my first year in college, though without allowing for the greater demands college placed on my efforts as evidenced by a 2.0 GPA after my first year. The Army had a program for high school graduates under 18½ whereby you could discharge your obligation with only six months active duty rather

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than two years, followed by two weeks each summer and one weekend a month. I enlisted in June 1959.

My experience in the Army changed dramatically the trajectory I had been creating for my life. It is easy enough to understand that Army life must entail a good deal of regimentation. All the same, I experienced intense internal rebellion over being told such things as how to fold my underwear, how to shine my boots, and where to place my toothbrush in my footlocker. Around the midpoint of my time in the Army, I decided I would transform myself into a serious student for my final three years as a university student. From that point forward, I no longer accepted the weekend passes that the Army offered. Instead, I read material from the Ft. Ord library, getting ready to wreak myself upon the civilian world come December, which I did by transforming my initial 2.0 college GPA into something close to a 4.0 for the remainder of my undergraduate years. One item I read at Ft. Ord was an article titled something like “The Joys of College Teaching.” The author explained that while college teaching wasn’t highly paid, it offered much leisure to use as one chose. This was the life for me, I thought.

During my final year at the University of Southern California, I faced the problem of picking a graduate school so I could embark on the career of a college teacher. I had accumulated a double major in economics and political science and was torn over what major I would choose. I liked the logical character of economics, but preferred the topics dealt with by political scientists. During my final year, I took a graduate-level course in mathematical economics offered by Richard Bilas, a new faculty member from the University of Virginia. During the semester, Bilas asked about my interest in graduate school. When I told him my quandary, he responded that I could study economics and political science together at Virginia and invited me to read James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock’s recent *The Calculus of Consent*. After reading that book, I realized Bilas was right, applied to Virginia, received a fellowship, and enrolled for the fall 1963 semester.

My classes during 1963–1964 were taught by such libertarian notables as James Buchanan, Ronald Coase, Warren Nutter, and Leland Yeager. Buchanan, however, was the only one to whom I was strongly attracted. The others used economic theory to explain how only markets and never states could promote good order within society. It was clear that Buchanan agreed with the other three, but his classroom focused on

logical problems within economics and avoided engagement with political opinion. Buchanan used his classes to look for new lines of theoretical formulation. He assumed that graduate students could extract meaning from whatever had been published and devoted his attention to looking to articulate new theoretical formulations.

I fully embraced Buchanan's scholarly attitude during my time in Charlottesville (1963–1966). While I have accepted the freedom philosophy since my time in the Army, I have never been attracted to advocacy on behalf of that philosophy. My scholarly interest has always centered on exploring the contrast between the marvelous social configurations people generate through their use of freedom and the monstrous perversions of human relationships that expansion of the political in society almost invariably generates.

During the 1964 Presidential election between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater, the economics faculty and students were vocal in their overwhelming support of Goldwater. While I also supported Goldwater, I was far more animated by questions of how to account for the strong disparity in support between the two candidates. I felt then and continue to feel today that the ways of the world have a rhyme and reason to them that render autonomous many of the activities and events that people often preach about through ideological exhortation; moreover, I have never aspired to be a preacher.

Throughout these many years, I have remained steadfast in my fascination with Shakespeare's character Jacques in *As You Like It*, in his soliloquy that begins "All the world's a stage, and the men and women on it merely players." From that play which I first encountered in one of my high school English classes, I have regarded individuals as participating in a cosmic drama that no one can see in its entirety. While the individuals in the drama have teleology, the drama itself unfolds through individual efforts to spread their particular teleologies within society, even though society itself lacks teleology. We are all players in this unscripted drama that is human society, and the place of the freedom philosophy within that cosmic drama is an emergent property of poorly understood social processes. I find the study of those emergent social processes more compelling than advocacy of the freedom philosophy, not because of a disinterest in human freedom but because my mind is far more attracted to the scholarly challenges associated with understanding the ever-changing orderliness of human societies. This is the same challenge that Adam Smith and the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment

embraced in the eighteenth century, for societies clearly entail orderliness of a turbulent character.

My embrace of the freedom philosophy, therefore, runs most strongly through recognition of how little we truly understand about the forces and processes through which our societal living together acquires its generally organized quality despite the fact that no person or office directs or imposes that organization. For the most part, I think economists stress excessively the place of trade and cooperation. These are surely significant forces in human organization. But so too are such features of our species as antagonism and envy. Not to be overlooked, moreover, is Frank Knight's frequent remark to the effect that humanity, grouped collectively, doesn't so much suffer from what it doesn't know as from what it knows that simply isn't true.

The thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment left us with two core ideas suitable for thinking about the patterns we humans create through our activities. One idea is simple, at least at the formal level, while the other idea leads into great complexity. The simple idea entails recognition that all humans seek to replace less desired states of living with more desired states. This idea, it must be stressed, is formal and not substantive. How people go about illustrating that idea in their lives is highly variable, depending on such things as imagination and opportunity. The complex idea is grounded in recognition that the social configurations inside of which we all live emerge through complex patterns of interaction among people. While it is a simple matter for a decent pool player to use a cue ball to place a single object ball wherever he or she wants, it is impossible to determine where all 15 pool balls will end up after a break. New techniques of social theorizing are starting to increase the tractability of thinking about complex situations that feature many parts moving simultaneously, enabling us to move away from the simplistic pretense that social life is stable save for an occasional disturbance caused by a single errant variable. The growth of such complexity-based thinking will surely render increasingly incoherent the orthodox claims on behalf of a political entity that professes to be necessary to save us from chaos. To the contrary, such complexity-based thinking will provide a cognitive-based understanding as to how it unavoidably happens that political action often worsens rather than improves the quality of our living together in close geographical proximity.

Since my days as a graduate student, moreover, I have been intrigued with Vilfredo Pareto. Entering adulthood as an engineer, Pareto became a

professor of economics who subsequently embarked on intense sociological studies, culminating in a four-volume *General Treatise on Sociology* (1915). Pareto shifted from economics to sociology because he was convinced that the freedom philosophy would be highly beneficial for Italian society and was perplexed as to why that philosophy found so little support. He recognized that you could observe what people do along with the reasons they give for what they do; however, he also recognized that people have an unlimited ability to rationalize their actions due to an unquenchable desire to feel good about themselves. This insight led Pareto to distinguish between logical and non-logical environments for human action. Logical environments were ordinary commercial environments resembling scientific laboratories: you invest in experiments and you bear the value consequences of the outcomes. With non-logical environments, however, mostly politics and religion, value consequences are not borne because consequences are diffused throughout the society as against being concentrated on the sponsors of action. Social action in non-logical environments are forms of a popularity contest where outcomes turn on the attractiveness of different images and their ability to enable people to feel good about themselves.

While I started graduate school thinking that a life in college teaching would give me the leisure I desired, my first year in graduate school led me to recognize how fully I liked to think and write about challenging topics. In a series of books I have written during the past 20 or so years, I have been pursuing an iceberg-style of theorizing, by which I mean that most analytical challenges cannot be apprehended by superficial observation. As noted above, this was also the presumption of such the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment as Adam Smith, David Hume, and Francis Hutcheson. Most theoretical exposition is superficial in that theorists try to connect concurrent observations, claiming that one thing causes the other. This is what so-called policy wonks seek to do. Such recent conceptual techniques as complexity theory, graph theory, and computational modeling, however, have the potential to shift our ideas about societal living together in a pro-freedom direction through illuminating the vital place of tacit knowledge which cannot be reduced to a recipe in promoting comity within society, and, concomitantly, showing how policy wonkism denies the vitality of tacit knowledge by necessarily embracing the pretense that all relevant knowledge can be reduced to recipes.

In her *Systems of Survival*, Jane Jacobs explained crisply how the continued insertion of politics into society can promote the expansion of what she called “monstrous moral hybrids,” degrading the good order of society in the process. People know more than they can articulate, and that tacit knowledge enables people through free commerce to accomplish the beneficial features of social living together that political organizations with their dependence on power and explicit knowledge can only degrade, whatever those political sponsors might intend. In my judgment, the place of the freedom philosophy within society will expand in the coming years due to the ability of complexity-related ideas to recover the wisdom reflected in the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment. Ultimately, John Maynard Keynes was right in noting that we humans are ultimately governed by our ideas about ourselves and our common lives.



Why I Am a Big Government Skeptic and Small Government Advocate

Michael A. Walker

This piece is written in response to the suggestion from my old colleague and sometime mentor Walter Block that I record my thoughts on my own journey to the views I have come to have about the appropriate role of government in society. In much of the company I have been compelled to keep to advance my objective of trying to change the world, I would, by comparison with that company, describe myself as a libertarian. In the company of libertarians, I would describe myself as a small government advocate with much sympathy for libertarian thought. Now in my late seventies and looking back at my professional life and its manifestation in the Fraser Institute, I believe that the only practicable approach to achieving a world that would be relatively more attractive to libertarians is one that accepts that a liberal society is and will always be a “relativity” rather than a state of affairs or one group’s depiction of nirvana.

The reason is because stupid policy choices are as societally legitimate as smart choices. The libertarian cause is, therefore, to reduce the frequency of stupid choices regarding the organization of society and

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increase the frequency of smart, liberal choices. In other words, our task is striving for a nirvana that will never be reached and constantly aware of the tendency to back slide.

My own skepticism about the notion, “we are the government and we have come to help you” began early in life due to my family experience. My father, orphaned at an early age after the death of his mother and relatively wealthy father in quick succession, was compelled to take work in a coal mine. He was rendered insecure for life by this childhood experience and constantly sought to elevate his own circumstance and that of his fellow workers. He was an active trade unionist and rose to be the President of the Paper Makers Union and of the joint Mill Unions. He was admired by workers and management alike for his business acumen and conviction that cooperation, rather than confrontation, was the way forward for the Mill. When he was off shift in the mill, he set about acquiring small plots of land and building houses for rent on the land. Eventually, though still a mill worker, he acquired a very large plot of land the development of which was his dream—to recover the lost fortune of his father.

One day, the Newfoundland Government informed him that they were going to use their powers to expropriate his dream plot of land and that of other individuals like him because they were building a cement manufacturing plant on an adjacent plot and they might need his land for ancillary purposes. In fact, the land was needed to complete the conveyance of property that the government had committed to the private developer and friend of certain representatives of the government, who would build the cement plant.

We are the Government of Newfoundland and we are here to help you.....well, not all of you but, you know, the ones we want to help. And we cannot create a better future for all without dashing the odd dream along the way.

So my skepticism about the acts, instincts, and objectives of government grew in the soil of my father’s pain. I was also encouraged to study economics because of my father’s side business, and it was natural for me to lean toward a philosophy of *laissez faire*, *laissez passer*. Along the way to my doctorate in economics, I encountered people who, due to the experience they had with the nasty face of populism manifested in government and other societal institutions, reinforced and deepened my skepticism

about the likely benefits of dirigiste government waving the flag of “we the people.” My first two economics teachers were Toni Wintermans and Leonard Pluta. Both had fled their homes in Europe because of the activities of their governments—one communist and the other fascist. What fascinated me was that each of these governments in their turn had been regarded as “heroes to the rescue” of economies and societies. Nevertheless, it would take some time for me to link the technical features of the economic analysis I was taught to the machinations of the governments that would actually control them.

In graduate school, in addition to mathematical economics and econometrics, I was exposed to the monetary ideas of Milton Friedman and, as a consequence, adopted monetary economics as a component of my Masters Degree and a focus of my Ph.D. thesis. While that was formative, the most important encounter at Western University was with Csaba Hajdu, a Hungarian Freedom fighter who had come to Canada with the KGB at his heels. His stories of the failures and brutalities of communism gave me a different attitude toward the objectives and likely effects of the socialist political programs that were becoming more numerous in Canada. In effect, he connected me back to the concerns that my first economics teachers had warned me about.

On the other hand, the technical features of economics were really neat and I also had curiosity about the mechanics of government. I was therefore happy to accept an offer of employment at the Bank of Canada—Canada’s central bank—based on my Ph.D. thesis on econometric modeling of the Canadian economy. My stint in Ottawa, including a brief period when I was lured away from the Bank to the Department of Finance, lasted five years. The most memorable event was a conversation with a top level department head in which I expressed concern about the way in which many of the policies we followed were interfering with peoples’ lives—echoes of my father and his disastrous encounter with government. His response was life changing. “If you don’t believe in interfering with people’s lives, what in the fuck are you doing here in Ottawa?”

Why indeed was I working in Ottawa? I had gone there with the belief that my technical econometric skills would contribute to the better functioning of monetary policy. Econometric modeling by its very nature sanitizes and extracts the human element from economic thinking. I had in the process of providing the mathematical test beds for assessing different policy options lost sight of the fact that I became an economist

because of the possibility of improving the lives of those like the many impoverished people I encountered while growing up in Newfoundland. I realized that I needed to change my focus if I was really going to make a direct difference in changing the policies that would improve the lives of people.

Then one day Csaba Hajdu called to tell me that the province of British Columbia was being economically ravaged by the policies enacted by the newly elected (1972) socialist New Democratic Party (NDP) government of the well-meaning and personable David Barrett. Csaba and his colleague and superior, T. Patrick Boyle, wanted to mount an effort to explain to the people of British Columbia, and to Canadians in general, the devastating impact of these ideas. Would I be interested in building such an institute which would be modeled after the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, England? I agreed to his proposal and the rest of the wonderful story, from 1974 to 2022, of the Fraser Institute, is a matter of record.

The FI's motto "if it matters, measure it" is a direct reflection of my own belief, in accordance with my technical background, that facts are the first steps to persuasion. While I was privileged to work with and learn from some of the top libertarian thinkers because of Walter Block's stint at the FI, I never became a "faith" or deductive libertarian even though I readily credit Walter and other libertarian thinkers for having been my teachers. They helped me to understand why I was made uncomfortable by government "interfering with peoples' lives." However, the goal of the Fraser Institute has been to affect the policy making process so that governments interfere less. That goal is, has been, and must be a project of first making the strongest factual and statistical argument possible to avoid adopting liberty reducing policies. But when that fails, the second best is finding the least liberty cost policies that can accomplish the policy objectives that elected governments will pursue. Not as sexy as "give me liberty or give me death," but we are still around to try again the next time.

The invitation to write something about my own libertarian beliefs of course caused me to think about my role in creating and operating Fraser Institute for 36 years because, in some sense, it is the manifestation of my career as an economist. But in an important sense the evolution of the Fraser Institute also created me and my attitude toward ideas. Before I joined the effort to create the institute, I was a "numbers guy"—an econometrician trained by T. M. Brown, a former physicist, who was one

of the founders of the profession and the creator of the Simultaneous Least Squares systems estimator. While I knew ideas were important, I really felt that numbers were the important thing economists could bring to bear on public policy and I joined the Fraser Institute project with that intent.

In order to develop the public persona of the Fraser Institute and make its presence known to the broader community, I made a point of joining radio and television discussions whenever I could find an opportunity. Armed with my facts, I was a different sort of commentator and soon found myself engaged with protagonists from the socialist New Democratic Party (NDP) which was the government party in the province of British Columbia. These engagements were often heated, and both the Institute and I acquired a significant public profile. More importantly, the media, even though sympathetic to the Socialist message of the government, began to spread the facts reported by the Institute which challenged the prevailing socialist take.

I naively thought that at some moment there would be a day of reckoning when the facts of the Institute would be adopted by the leftists and we would go forward with the better world that our factual approach provided. My view changed the day our critics on the left sent a bomb up to our floor which blew out into our lobby and destroyed the elevator car. Fortunately, nobody was hurt. But the message was clear. And that message to me was that while facts are important, the people who placed the bomb were unlikely to be great numbers people. They were not afraid of my numbers but rather the ideas that they represented and encouraged.

At that moment I more fully understood John Maynard Keynes' observation to the effect that the world is primarily ruled by the ideas of economists and political philosophers. The bomb crystallized how important the Institute was and how important it was for us to continue and expand our work. The bombers had produced the exact opposite effect than the one they intended. And the work of the Institute expanded and gathered a wider audience as we doubled down on our efforts.

Some years later, I received a phone call from the RCMP, the federal police force in Canada. They were concerned for my safety and that of my family and at their option they would be placing a 24 hour surveillance on me and my family. Since they never let me know when that surveillance was lifted, I don't know how long it lasted. Judging by the "ghost cars" parked on our street, it was for a significant period.

So the process of building the Institute also built me into a different sort of person. I was much more engaged by the ideas component of our work even as we expanded the number of areas of government activity that we measured. The outreach program for university and college students and other programs we developed were designed around spreading the ideas and philosophy of freedom.

Through the 48 years of the Fraser Institute, it has been my great pleasure to meet and befriend some of the most profound thinkers in the modern annals of economic liberty. Most of them were economists, all of them were brilliant and dedicated to libertarian ideas. A majority of them were content to understand and to share their understanding with others. A minority, Milton and Rose Friedman and Friedrich Hayek for example, sought to change the world by changing the ideas by which the world is governed. They have been my heroes.



Building the Future Together

Nena Bartlett Whitfield

When I think back to the things that I used to believe, and have since changed my mind about, it humbles me. When I was 14 years old, for example, I remember asking my dad, Peter G. Bartlett, Jr.: “If people didn’t need to see a doctor to get a prescription drug, then what’s stopping people from abusing them?” All it took for me to change my mind, was for him to ask me, “What’s stopping YOU from abusing drugs?” Surely, the hurdle of visiting a doctor was not the only thing.

Could it be, that at the age of 14, I didn’t know everything? This may come as a shock to all teenagers, but there is so much to learn about yourself and the world around you throughout your whole life, and things are always changing. Over my lifetime I have become more open to new technology and changes in science.

I often reflect on that father–daughter conversation about prescription drugs, because I now find that the answer to that question has implications for so many philosophical and political issues. I assume that all

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libertarians reflect on similar episodes in their lives. My father is a libertarian but didn't push his ideas on me (at least not as strongly as I plan to push them on my own kids!).

When I was a teenager, I thought I wanted to be a teacher. I knew I wanted to help people and be a do-gooder, but I felt that I would not be making a big enough impact if I were confined to one classroom per year. Then I took an internship in Washington, DC, with the Fund for Peace, through which I learned about the social responsibility departments of international extraction companies (like gas and mining). Historically, these businesses had gone into the most underdeveloped parts of the world and taken whatever valuable natural resources they could find, then left the land and the people with nothing. The resulting bad press created an incentive for companies to do right by the people. I therefore studied international business as an undergraduate and planned to work in that field.

At some point I began to think that I could have an even greater impact on the world with the United Nations. I became obsessed with the idea of working for the UN. I had already studied Spanish because my first boyfriend was Mexican, so learning Portuguese as my third UN language was not that hard for me (to work at the UN you must speak three UN languages). Plus, I really wanted to go to Carnival in Rio! I even went for my Master's degree in Diplomacy and International Relations at Norwich University. The best part of my Master's Program was that I learned critical thinking skills. I'm embarrassed to admit that I was already 24 years old, but it is how I realized that even the most successful UN missions created neither peace nor prosperity. I subsequently grew skeptical of rules without any real means of enforcement.

Up until this point, I voted for the Libertarian Party candidates because I didn't feel that the Republicans or the Democrats were doing anything for peace. I wanted the U.S. to welcome immigrants and I wanted to end the war on drugs, and the main parties were doing nothing to promote any of these initiatives.

Upon finishing grad school, I had an internship with the Organization of American States (OAS), which is a wannabe UN but for the Americas—and is every bit as bureaucratic and pointless. At least I got to practice my Spanish and Portuguese.

When my internship ended, I was working with a temp service at different types of companies around Washington, DC (mostly data-entry work), serving in a restaurant (Fogo de Chao), and trying to figure out

what I wanted to do next. I signed up as a volunteer for the Ron Paul Presidential campaign of 2008, just to get him on the ballot in DC. The official campaign manager asked me to come work for them, and I initially said “no, thank you.” The recruiter, Deborah Hopper, suggested that I just come in for an interview, and so I did. The very next day I was off to Iowa, followed by many other states. And that is when I feel my career as a libertarian began. Even though Ron Paul did not win, he helped to launch a new Liberty Movement for so many young people like me.

I saw a glaring problem about this movement that I was now a part of: we had virtually no women. At least, it felt that way to me. I know that this is where I will lose half of the people reading this, who may think that I’m claiming to be a victim or that my next point will be overly woke, but please bear with me; that’s not at all my belief. I have benefited from this minority status in many ways. I don’t mind being the only woman in the room. It can be lonely, but it can also be fun, or at least a new experience.

However, when you consider the cause of this—that our ideas are not resonating with more women—THAT is a problem. I don’t care about having equal numbers, I care about overall numbers. We must ask ourselves: Why don’t more people, particularly females, support peace and prosperity?

Back in 2007, I didn’t know the answer to this question. After the campaign ended, I interned at the Committee for Justice, a conservative judicial policy thinktank run by Curt Levey. I left to work on a campaign for a congressional candidate in Virginia named Amit Singh. I went to other states and campaigned for ballot initiatives and other candidates. I made calls, canvassed neighborhoods and parking lots, asked for votes and for money. Because almost all libertarian campaigns lose, I was constantly looking for a new job.

In 2008, I landed at the Cato Institute, a sexy job for any libertarian. I loved my time there, even though I didn’t get to work on policy. I did remain an active volunteer in many different libertarian groups, and Cato sent me to the FreedomFest conference in Las Vegas in 2009. While there, a bunch of girls organized a get-together. It felt so good to be in a room with so many libertarian women, and we knew we had to keep meeting. So we decided to start an organization of our own and call it the Ladies of Liberty Alliance, or LOLA for short.

I was still working for Cato when Rand Paul ran for Senate in Kentucky. His campaign manager called my boss, Ed Crane, and asked if he could borrow me until Election Day. Ed told him no, but he told

me that he thought Rand was going to win, and that if I didn't go, I'd regret not being a part of it. And he said the campaign couldn't "borrow" me because when Rand won, I would probably go work for him in the Senate. And Ed was right.

I loved working for Rand Paul, but the Senate was controlled by the other political party and we hardly got anything good done in my time there. It was always about stopping them (other people from both parties) from doing anything worse. At some point while working in the Senate, the board of directors at LOLA asked me to take over as executive director, and I agreed. For months, I did both jobs. Then, in early 2013, my mother passed away and sometimes it takes a big life event like that to make a big change.¹

I had been saving money with the intent of leaving Rand Paul and the Senate and pouring my heart and soul into LOLA. I didn't save as much as I'd wanted to, but I had my then boyfriend, Dan Whitfield, to support me, financially and otherwise. I made the front room of our rowhouse in downtown DC a LOLA office. We organized activist training events, supported new chapters, and hosted a speakers' bureau full of well-spoken, liberty-minded women. I raised enough money to hire a small staff and grow new chapters, here but especially overseas. You see, there are women everywhere who, like the women who founded LOLA, feel a bit alone in their libertarian philosophy. Once they find out about LOLA, they are so excited.

LOLA has always had pushback from people who are offended by the idea of discrimination (against men, in this case). However, there are many reasons to find and foster the support of women in the Liberty Movement. The most compelling reason is because libertarian women are better at communicating our ideas to conservatives and liberals alike.

Here's why. Libertarians tend to be significantly less empathetic than liberals and conservatives. This finding is robust to many different research studies and polls related to elections and ideology. It may come as a surprise to those of us who know that liberty has the greatest power to lift people out of poverty and achieve their dreams, but the research shows that the root of most of our desire for liberty is liberty itself, and not compassion. Libertarians are shown to rate lower on almost all

¹ On July 18, 2022, while I was putting the final touches on this autobiography, my husband Dan died tragically and unexpectedly. We were married in 2014 and have three small children named Dagny, Magnolia, and Zora.

emotions, and higher on intelligence, rationality, and reason, than most people. Throughout my life I have been called cold and blunt. It's something I'm working on, because I feel very optimistic and think positive thoughts! And yet, overall, research from psychologist Jonathan Haidt from NYU and polling expert Emily Ekins of the Cato Institute reveals that libertarian women are much more empathetic than libertarian men.

This leads me to believe that although our movement has fewer women than men, it's these women who can bridge the gap and make our ideas more popular. There are countless issues of special interest to libertarians, and so many that I can think of where women would be the best ambassadors for our message. My favorite example is gun rights. A libertarian woman supporting the right to protect herself from a man on a college campus with a firearm is much more emotionally and in every other way compelling than a libertarian man who wants to protect his money bin full of gold coins.

Guns aren't really my issue, however, I don't own any. A big concern for me is the war on drugs. A mother advocating for the legal ability to try cannabis on her child who is on the autism spectrum is clearly a more compelling advocate than a guy who wants to supplement his drinking habit. Then there are random issues that come up in the news, such as the recent shortage of baby formula. A woman talking about the benefits of free trade when it comes to baby formula availability just makes more sense, conversion-wise, than a man. A woman receiving child support checks would be the perfect person to discuss the ill effects of inflation. Or perhaps an older woman who has outlived her husband and is on a fixed income. Women are so often the perfect people to discuss the problem of inflation while it's happening (i.e., when the government is printing trillions of dollars).

All of this to make my point that women can be the best ambassadors for our ideas to reach new audiences. LOLA's mission is to educate and empower female libertarians. We achieve this goal by first supporting local community chapters of women so that they feel less alone. As chapter members get more involved, they can take on leadership positions and attend our leadership retreats. And LOLA highlights true spokeswomen in our speakers' bureau so that it's easy for event planners and the media to find women to speak from the libertarian standpoint on the issues of the day.

In recent years, LOLA has truly gone global. We have reached 30 countries and in some of them, women are so disempowered that LOLA

is the only place they can even speak their minds. I have never felt this way. These women are only beginning their journey in liberty. And yet, in other countries there are LOLA chapter members who are running for office and actually winning. Me, I'm one of those radical people who believe that less government is always better, but I'm still participating in democracy. Maybe it is my eternal optimism.

I've never been one to believe that the world is ending. I also don't like to divide people into tiny camps and fight over which one is right. There's a future to build, one without the onerous overreach of government, one that all libertarians can help build. Women are crucial to that important mission, and I want to continue helping to showcase and empower them.



Opening the Taxpayer's Eyes

Hiroshi Yoshida

Ludwig von Mises had a beloved disciple in Japan named Toshio Murata (1923–2021) who later became my mentor. Professor Murata started out as an accounting officer in the Army. After World War II, he sought a way to ensure peace and prosperity so that the world would not face the horrors experienced during the war. He found *Human Action* and discovered the genius of Ludwig von Mises. In 1959 he went on to study at the New York University Graduate School directly under Mises. When I published my book *The Market and Accounting* (市場と会計) in 2019, Professor Murata wrote a forward titled “When East and West Meet” and named me a torchbearer for freedom.

The title of Professor Murata's forward is an allusion to Rudyard Kipling's poem “The Ballad of East and West.” I understood this as a message that we should enjoy both the similarities and differences between the East and the West. There are and have been many researchers in Japan who are determined to pursue Western-style research. When speaking abroad and domestically in Japan, I often make the point that although we should appreciate the peculiarities of the East and the West,

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we should also acknowledge the similarities between them. In particular, in introducing free market principles as a building block of Eastern civilization necessary for its survival and prosperity, I draw attention to Mencius (372–289 BC), a thinker in the East who put heavy emphasis on the market economy. Mencius preached, for example, the merits of the division of labor, the private property system, tax cuts, and deregulation.

Mises died on Professor Murata's 60th birthday in 1973. From that day forward, Professor Murata began to vigorously spread Mises' ideas in Japan. In 2010, I started helping Professor Murata spread Mises' ideas by organizing and leading study groups. I also received direct instruction and mentorship from Professor Murata at his home up until 2016. It was on my birthday in 2021 that Professor Murata passed away.

Since 2016 we have held a Mises Study Group Conference every September in Yokkaichi, Mie Prefecture, the location that helped the tax reform campaign succeed during the Meiji Era.

NEZDAYKA

I have been a free spirit and have had a tendency to question authority for as long as I can remember. Although I was not familiar with the term at the time, I was a libertarian even in elementary school. My so-called red-pill moment was when I read the children's book *Nezdayka* from the Soviet Union around the age of 10.¹ *Nezdayka* means "Know-Nothing, a child who doesn't know anything." In the story, *Nezdayka* tries to do a multitude of tasks but each time he tries to accomplish something, he fails. The author Nikolay Nosov (1908–1976) was likely indirectly criticizing the Soviet politicians at the time.

It was in elementary school that I first encountered and clashed with socialist ideology. My school was dominated by a socialist teacher's union. In Japan, each grade takes turns cleaning the common areas of the school. When it was my class's turn, I noticed the previous class had not given us the broom. I told that class's teacher that the broom was not in our classroom and asked where it was. To my surprise, he became furious, scolding me that "It is supposed to be in your classroom, therefore it must be!" He sounded like someone from George Orwell's *1984*. At the time I thought of *Nezdayka*. How could he know? He's not omniscient. After

¹ Nikolai Nosov, *Nezdayka*, translated by Kiyoka Matsutani (Boys and Girls World Masterpiece Literature, 37 Soviet edition) (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1967).

hearing about this, my teacher explained that the other class's teacher was a member of the union and that that's just how they think and act. Even at that young age I pondered, "if one socialist can't keep track of a broom, how are they supposed to run the economy?"

Marxian economics is widespread at universities in Japan. The first economics lecture I went to at Ibaraki University was no exception. It wasn't for me, so I dropped the class after the first lecture. However, when I was getting ready for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam I had no choice but to study economics. As guardians of the market, CPAs are expected to learn Keynesian and Monetarist economics. Although the latter are not fully Marxian, I could still see the problems with these interventionist economic paradigms. After all, politicians were know-nothings, certainly not omniscient.

After meeting Dr. Masao Sato, who later became my doctoral advisor at Ibaraki University, I began to think about how accounting should be applied to government. One principal assumption of accounting is that the management of a firm has a responsibility to shareholders to make money through conducting business. This is demonstrated by profit. It is the role of the CPA to verify the authenticity of this process. This is when I first thought that it was necessary to apply an analogous arrangement to the actions of the government and developed my public sector accounting methodology.

Lost Without an Accounting Mechanism

Universities all teach accounting based on the double-entry system which began in Venice, Italy. However, double-entry accounting fails to consider one of the important yet often overlooked purposes of accounting: finding the right person for the right job. The word *kaikei* (accounting) carries a deeper meaning: a tool for actualizing "the right person in the right place."

The Japanese government discloses how much money they spend in a way modeled after how mainstream accounting works. But what really matters is whether or not the taxpayer can say "*arigatō*" in response to what they received in return. Did the taxpayers benefit on net? The word *arigatō* in Japanese carries a deep meaning. It implies that the item or service you are receiving is scarce and something you would not be able to produce on your own. In 1994, I became a member of the Public Accounting Committee established by the Japanese Institute of Certified

Public Accountants and was in charge of the public accounting principles “Performance Report” published in 1997.²

In the case of a joint-stock company, the shareholders choose the management and determine whether or not the management has fulfilled their fiduciary duty to the shareholders to turn a profit based on the firm’s accounting statements. It was around 1940 when the accounting system that separates the capital entrusted to the management and the profit that the management provides to the shareholders began. Similarly, in the case of the government, voters need a performance report to evaluate their leaders and determine if they can continue to entrust them with authority. The performance report explains the results of the work that voters entrusted to the government and reveals the extent of the burden on taxpayers. Whereas traditional government accounting reports only how much money was spent, the performance report makes it clear whether there are any positive results on net or not.

I coined a saying in Japanese that translates something like this: If you entrust your tax dollars to incompetent people, those tax dollars will be misused. I promise it sounds catchier in Japanese. I have found this to be effective for messaging purposes as I usually post it with news related to government incompetence, waste, or misconduct.

Unsellable Public Goods

The accounting method that I advocate at the Institute of Public Sector Accounting (IPSA) tells leaders whether they are passing the tax burden onto future generations. One of the key points in my system of governmental accounting is the notion that public goods belong to the citizens, not the state. The system I advocate for shows the public’s assets and the state’s on two different balance sheets. Plans for future taxes show a transfer between the two separate balance sheets, which helps taxpayers evaluate their leaders. Unfortunately, both the United States and the International Financial Reporting Standards conflate the people’s property with the government’s property.

In 2000, Professor Hiroshi Kato (1926–2013), who led the privatization of state-owned enterprises in Japan, created a doctoral course at the Chiba University of Commerce. I was the first enrollee in this doctoral

² The Japanese Institute of Certified Public Accountants, *Accounting and Auditing of Local Governments* (Tokyo: Gyousei, 1998), pp. 104–7.

program, and I composed my book *Theory of Public Sector Accounting* during this time.³ Early in my enrollment, I had the opportunity to convey my claim that conventional government accounting methodologies were flawed. Dr. Kato instructed me to do three tasks: go abroad to confirm if my method is unique, publish a dissertation, and win an award for a published book. In 2003, when I accomplished these challenges, Dr. Kato signed my Ph.D. diploma.

Introducing my theory overseas was a good opportunity to expand my circle of fellow libertarians. When I introduced my public accounting as a way to oversee and limit taxes at the World Taxpayers Associations in 2010, Matthew Elliot offered me the opportunity to talk to Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013). I introduced myself as someone working to open the taxpayers' eyes. She encouraged me to fight on, saying, "Please do. It's an important job."

Never Shift Our Tax Burden onto Our Children

One way I have helped lead the liberty movement in Japan is through my role with the organization Japanese for Tax Reform (JTR). JTR was established in 1997 by Masaru "Mr. You" Uchiyama, who was inspired by Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform. I was the first person to collaborate with and support JTR and have continued to assist Mr. Uchiyama ever since. JTR asks elected officials and candidates to sign the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, a written commitment to oppose any and all tax increases. In this way, JTR seeks to ensure that lawmakers at both the local and national level will not shift their tax burden onto our children. Although the credit really goes to Mr. Uchiyama, I am proud to say that I am heavily involved with JTR's activism and efforts to affect policy.

Looting Destroys the Market

I have calculated what I call "Taxpayer's Day" which indicates how many days taxpayers have to work from New Year's Day to pay for all of the nation's taxes. In 2022, Taxpayer's Day was June 19th. June 30th marks half of the year. That means a Japanese taxpayer must work almost half

³ Hiroshi Yoshida, *Theory of Public Sector Accounting* (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Inc., 2003). This book received the Japanese Institute of Certified Public Accountants Academic Award in 2004.

of the year to pay taxes. Japan's economic growth has stopped and the problem is only becoming increasingly worse with time.

Some politicians and local governments have embraced my accounting method. Notably, the former mayors of Fukutsu City and Otawara City utilized my government performance report methodology. I was honored to be mentioned and have my work cited in a study published by Dr. Yuta Nakano on the usefulness of performance reports, "Study on Public Policy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries," in 2020.⁴ However, not all have received my message as well. There are times when I'm able to convince some politicians or government workers only to be shot down by higher-ups in government.

A short time after I received the Academic Award from the Institute of Certified Public Accountants, I received an offer from the government-run Board of Audit of Japan to be an advisor. I was ecstatic, thinking that they were on board with my government accounting principles and sought to reduce the deficit. To make sure, I reiterated that my stance is to "Never Shift Our Tax Burden onto Our Children." The bureaucrat said that that mindset would be permissible, just not during election season. I rejected the offer on the spot because I refused to compromise on my ideals.

Although there are fewer libertarians in Japan than in the West, we work hard to teach people about the benefits of free markets and small government. My work through the IPSA attempts to open taxpayers' eyes so that they can find people capable of entrusting their hard-earned tax dollars.

⁴ Yuta Nakano, *Study on Public Policy of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries* (NextPublishing Authors Press, 2020).

INDEX

0–9

- 1 Peter 4:15, [457](#)
- 9/11, [33](#), [62](#), [153](#), [154](#), [265](#), [293](#)
- 9th International Vernon Smith Prize for the Advancement of Austrian Economics, [142](#)
- 14th century, [129](#)
- 18th century, [470](#)
- 19th century, [285](#)
- 20th century, [172](#), [235](#), [269](#), [285](#), [290](#), [377](#), [402](#)
- 21st century, [209](#), [465](#)
- 50 Classici del pensiero liberale e libertario* (50 Classics of Classical Liberal and Libertarian Thought), [339](#)
- 372–289 BC, [486](#)
- 2007–09 Great Recession, [161](#)
- 2009 Right to Education Act, [393](#)

A

- ABC *Nightline*, [345](#)
- Academic Questions*, [236](#)
- Academy for Foreign Trade, [258](#)

- Accounting and Auditing of Local Governments*, [488](#)
- Acevedo, Rafael, [367](#)
- Achebe, Chinua, [316](#)
- Ácrata*, [303](#), [304](#)
- Acton Institute, [23](#)
- ADA, [91](#)
- Adam II, Prince Hans, [368](#)
- Adams, John, [161](#)
- Adelman, M.A., [172](#)
- Adirondack Mountains, [332](#)
- Advanced Instructional Program in Austrian Economics, [223](#)
- Advanced Metallurgical Group, [170](#)
- Afghanistan, [62](#), [91](#), [459](#)
- Africa, [9](#), [211–215](#), [217–220](#), [379](#), [381](#), [448](#), [451](#)
- African, [212](#), [214](#), [215](#), [217](#), [218](#)
- African Continental Free Trade Area, [215](#)
- Africanists, [451](#)
- African National Congress (ANC), [76](#), [78](#), [452](#)
- Africans, [213–215](#), [218](#), [219](#)

- African Students for Liberty (ASFL),
212, 448
- African Union, 214
- AfriForum, 452
- Afrikaner, 452
- Age of Discovery, 94
- AIER, 367
- Aix-en-Provence, France, 253, 308,
310
- Akerman, Johann, 102
- Akers, Becky, 5
Abducting Arnold, 5
- American Revolution, 5
Halestorm, 5
- Alabama, 254, 441, 442, 444
- Alabamians, 441
- Albany, New York, 398
- Albert Einstein: Philosopher Scientist*,
443
- Alchian, Armen, 172, 224
- All in the Family*, 233
- Alonso Neira, Miguel Ángel, 129
- Alshamy, Yahya, 63
- Amazon, 37, 275, 297
- America, 28, 53, 66, 67, 70, 154,
157, 181, 191, 230, 327, 332,
334, 390, 396, 442, 480
- American, 25, 54, 66, 67, 70, 125,
180, 252, 259, 405, 449
- American Civil Liberties Union, 34
- American Communist Party, 108
- American Economic Association, 101,
237, 258
- American Enterprise Institute, 399
- American Federation of Government
Employees, 33
- American Founding Fathers, 397
- American Institute for Free Labor
Development, 108
- American Legislative Exchange
Council (ALEC), 463
- American Protestantism, 183
- American Revolution, 65
- Americans for Tax Reform, 489
- American University, 9, 220
- Amish, 360
- Ammons, Joshua, 63
- Ampuero, Dora de, 303, 304
- Amsterdam, 170
- Anarchism, 44–46, 84, 91, 128, 133,
195, 242, 243, 284, 319–321,
343, 374, 375, 428
- Anarchism.net, 44, 45
- Anarchist Federation, 428
- Anarcho-capitalism, 3, 45, 78, 79, 84,
118, 135, 136, 195, 206, 242,
254, 267, 271, 288, 320, 338,
346, 355, 367, 428, 444
- Anarcho-communists, 208
- Anarcho-conservatism, 95
- Anarcho-libertarian, 44
- Anarcho-nihilist, 320
- Anarcho-socialist, 320
- Anarcho-syndicalists, 208
- Anarchy, 49, 50, 61, 84, 444
- Anderson, Benjamin, 222
Economics and the Public Welfare,
222
- Anderson, Ian, 358
- Anderson, Martin, 22, 23
- Andersonville Prison, 54
- Andes Mountains, 65
- Andrews Air Force Base, 19
- An Essay on Capital*, 225
- Anglo-American, 179
- Animal Farm*, 107
- Annapura, 154
- Ann Arbor Public Library, 109, 392
- Anoba, Abraham, 218
- Anthem Libertarian Film Festival, 411
- Anticapitalism, 268
- Anti-communist, 199, 200, 251, 337,
364, 379, 381, 437
- Antifa, 273

- Antifa NYC, 353
 Anti-socialist, 50
 Apartheid Regime, 152
 Apple, 275
 Aquinas, Thomas, 49
 Arabic, 247
 Argentina, 4, 140, 174, 175, 397
 Aristotelian virtues, 332
 Aristotle, 49, 128
 Arizona, 220
 Arizona Christian University, 269
 Armand, Inessa, 108
 Armenian genocide, 235
 Armentano, Dominick, 404
 Antitrust: The Case for Repeal, 404
 Army, 468, 485
 Army-McCarthy hearings, 234
 Arrow, Kenneth, 224
 Ashcroft, John, 33
 Asia, 353, 435
 Aspen, Colorado, 409
 Astoria-Long Island City, 233
 Atlanta Secular Homeschool, 72
 Atlantic Ocean, 53, 180
 Atlas Economic Research Foundation, 246, 258, 312
 Atlas Foundation, 305, 323, 391
 Atlas Network, 11, 38, 74, 212, 213, 218, 246–248
 Atlas Network African Liberty conference, 220
 Auburn, Alabama, United States, 16, 48, 95, 129, 254, 258, 287, 298, 390, 404
 Auburn University, 268, 390
 Audiberti, Jacques, 282
 Audretsch, David B., 221
 August 1, 1979, 22
 August 8, 2006, 35
 Austin Graduate School of Theology, 185
 Austin, Texas, 291
 Australia, 11, 67, 329, 344
 Austria, 4, 177, 227–230, 423, 424, 434
 Austrian Economics, 7, 15, 16, 35, 60, 61, 63, 95–97, 102, 104, 105, 117, 129, 140, 141, 149, 154, 163–166, 169, 170, 184, 188–190, 204, 206, 224, 239, 243, 257, 259, 266–268, 285, 288, 297, 366, 368, 381, 390, 409, 416, 425, 444, 464
 Austrian Economics Center, 230, 231, 367
 Austrian Economics conference, 102
 Austrian Economics Research Conference, 129
 Austrian economists, 99, 163–165, 240
 Austrian Economists conference, 103
 Austrians, 102, 298
 Austrian Scholars Conference, 48, 53, 61, 185, 223
 Austrian School, 15, 57, 83, 96, 127, 128, 163, 169, 223, 230, 231, 257–259, 269, 284–287, 317, 367, 368, 404, 406
 Austrian School Economic Summits, 380
 Austrian School of Economics, 56, 83, 165, 175, 202, 230, 231, 252, 259, 269, 277, 366, 380, 423, 424
A Viennese Waltz Down Wall Street, 415
 AVO Syncro Caribe, 239
 Ayau, Manuel, 10
 Ayittey, George, 5, 213, 214, 220
 Applied Economics for Africa: A New Textbook for African Students, 220
 Ayn Rand Institute, 142, 368
 Azpilcueta, Martín de, 303

B

- Babeş-Bolyai University, 307, 311
 Back Bay, 342
 Baden bei Wien, 177
 Badnarik, Michael, 293
 Bagehot, Walter, 159
 Bagnolo Mella, Italy, 251
 Bagus, Philipp, 129
 Bahamas, 409, 416
 Balkans, 321, 439
 Baltimore, Maryland, 158
Baltimore Sun, 158
 Bank for Foreign Trade, 258
 Bank of Canada, 475
 Barnett, Randy, 90, 274, 399, 449
 Barracco, Giovanni, 126, 127
 Barr, Bob, 23
 2008 Libertarian Party, 23
 Barrett, David, 476
Barron's, 159, 160, 169
 Barron's Financial Weekly, 118
 Barrow, John, 445
 The Anthropic Cosmological Principle, 445
 Bartlett, Jr., Peter G., 479
 Bartley III, W.W., 223
 Collected Works, 223
 Bartyzel, Jacek, 95
 Baruch, Bernard M., 160
 Bases Foundation, 141
 Bassani, Luigi Marco, 254, 255, 338
 Bastiat, Frédéric, 73, 90, 99, 102,
 149, 177, 188, 201, 253, 304,
 310, 322, 338, 384, 457
 The Law, 201, 384
 Théories contre l'impôt (Theories against Taxation), 310
 The Seen and the Unseen, 384
 Bastiat Society of Bogotá, 368
 Bauer, Peter, 100
 Bay Area, 223
 Baylor University, 224
 Bayonne, France, 304
 BBC, 311, 437
 Beaulier, Scott, 61
 Becker, Gary, 309
 Beckerman, Gal, 70
 When They Come for Us, We'll Be Gone: The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry, 70
 Beck, Glenn, 260, 358
 Beijing, 379
Being Libertarian (BL), 449
 Belarus, 108
 Belgium, 10
 Belgrade, 434
 Belohradsky, Vaclav, 252
 Beltramino, Rafael, 142, 143
 Beltway, 34
 Bendix Corporation, 290
 Benegas Lynch, Jr., Alberto, 140
 Benfield, Brian, 76, 77
 Bengtsson, Mattias, 321
 Berkshire Hathaway, 110
 Berlin, Isaiah, 132, 337
 Berlin Wall, 228, 245, 380, 397, 438, 462
 Bernstein, Eduard, 364
Beyond Good Intentions: A Biblical View of Politics, 24
 Bhopal, 25
 Biddle, Craig, 72
 Loving Life, 72
 Biden, Joe, 194, 403
 Bilas, Richard, 468
 Bill of Rights, 34
 Binswanger, Harry, 11
 Bishop, Tho, 204
 Black Lives Matter, 273
 Blacksburg, Virginia, 285
 Blair, Tony, 374
 Blanchard, Jackie, 409
 Blanchard, Jim, 409, 415
 Blanco, María, 366

- Blaustein, Hank, 160
 Bleiberg, Robert M., 159
 Blinder, Alan, 463
 Block, Walter, 2, 16, 30, 53, 81, 90, 96, 112, 118, 119, 142, 184, 185, 206, 233, 254, 258, 263, 264, 273, 274, 278, 286, 298, 338, 359, 367, 369, 386, 387, 422, 457, 458, 473, 476
Defending the Undefendable, 118, 286, 386, 422
I Chose Liberty: Autobiographies of Contemporary Libertarians, 2
The Austro-libertarian Point of View, 142
The Classical Liberal Case for Israel, 142
 Bloom, Irene, 57
 Blumel, Philip, 90
 Blumert, Burt, 223, 258
 Blundell, John, 247, 345
 Boaz, David, 21, 206, 323
 Bodrum, Turkey, 17
 Boer War, 153
 Boettke, Peter, 59–64, 241, 243, 264, 405, 406
Elgar Companion to Austrian Economics, 241
 Bogotá, Colombia, 363
 Böhm-Bawerk, Eugen von, 99, 168, 202, 286
 Bolick, Clint, 429
 Bologna, Italy, 337
 Bolshevik, 108, 326
 Bolshevik Revolution, 353
 Bonner, Bill, 409
 Bonn, Moritz J., 102
 Borland Software Corporation, 153
 Bosnia-Herzegovina, 174
 Bostaph, Sam, 189
 Boston, 32, 155, 168, 390, 436
Boston Globe, 21
 Boston University, 342
 Botswana, 263
 Bouckaert, Boudewijn, 253
 Boudon, Raymond, 253
 Boudreaux, Donald, 118, 119, 206, 243, 309
 Boulder, Colorado, 172
 Bourgeois-Conservative Party, 328
 Bovard, James, 32
Shakedown: How the Government Screws You from A to Z, 33
 Boyack, Connor
The Tuttle Twins Learn About the Law, 37
 Boyle, T. Patrick, 476
 Boy Scouts, 396, 434
 Bozell, Brent, 295
 Bradford, Bill, 135, 409, 410
 Brady, Mark, 206
 Bramoullé, Gérard, 309
 Brandeis University, 9
 Branden, Nathaniel, 343, 344, 384, 418
Brave New World, 107
Brave New World Revisited, 107
 Bravo, Nino, 363
 Brazil, 4, 287, 288, 367
 Brazilian, 259, 287
 Breit, Bill, 172
 Brennan, Geoffrey, 292
 Brentano, Franz, 423
 Brescia, Italy, 251
 Brescian Alps, 254
 Brezhnev, Leonid, 395
 Brigham Young University, 408, 414
 Bright, John, 320
 Brignone, Andrea, 328
 Britain's Channel Four, 323
 British, 20, 28, 29, 101, 102, 150, 153, 155, 179, 229, 252, 278
 British Columbia, Canada, 273, 476, 477

- British High Commission, 28
 British Isles, 283
British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, 195
 British Labour Party, 421
 Bronx, 113
 Bronx High School of Science, 108, 234, 442
 Brookings Institution, 391
 Brooklyn, 233
 Brooklyn College, 233, 234, 236
 Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, 117
 Brook, Yaron, 11
 Broward County, Florida, 398
 Browne, Harry, 109, 111, 206, 384, 409, 415
How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World, 384
You Can Profit from the Monetary Crisis, 206
 Brown, Irving, 108
 Brown, T. M., 476
 Bruno Leoni Institute, 254
 Brussels, 11
 Buchanan Fellows, 61
 Buchanan, James, 59, 172, 252, 285, 292, 308, 404, 468, 469
The Calculus of Consent, 468
 Buchanan, Pat, 273, 456
 Bucharest, 94, 434
 Buckley, William F., 234, 296, 333
 Buddhism, 364
 Buenos Aires, 143, 169, 397
 Buffett, Warren, 159
 Bulgaria, 4, 174, 255, 283, 437–439
 Bulgarian, 434–437
 Bulgarian Turks, 437
 Bunin, Ivan, 326
 Bureau of Economics, 290
 Burlingame, California, 223
 Burning Man, 11
 Burning Man festival, 92
 Burstein, Meyer, 461
 Burundian, 214
 Bury, England, 421
 Bush-Cheney reelection campaign, 398
 Bush, George H.W., 456
 Bush, George W., 33, 265, 275, 374, 397
 Business Roundtable, 349
 Butler, Eamonn, 218
Friedrich Hayek: The Ideas and Influence of the Libertarian Economist, 218
 Butos, Bill, 297
 Byrne, Patrick, 112
- C**
 Cable Network News, 259
Cafes and Drinking Houses as Institutions of Social Liberation, 437
 Cairnes, John E., 102
 California, 36, 160, 219, 344, 347, 348, 408
 California Bar Exam, 153
 California LP, 343
 California State University, Sacramento, 100
 Callahan, Gene, 297
 Cal Tech, 172
 Calzada, Gabriel, 16, 17
 Cambridge University, 101, 316, 444
 Cameroun, 217
 Campbell, Alexander, 185
Address on War, 185
 Canada, 4, 29, 67, 274, 384–388, 396, 475, 477
 Canadian, 259, 396, 475, 476
 Canadian Caucus, 385
 Canadian Constitution Foundation, 387

- Canadian Economic Association, 258
Canadian Lawyer, 386
 Cannan, Edwin, 101
 Cannes Film Festival, 280
 Canovari, Aldo, 253, 338
 Cantor, Paul, 5, 57, 267–269
 Gilligan's Island, 5
 Literature and the Economics of Liberty, 267, 268
 South Park, 5
Capital and Interest, 172
 Capitalism, 28, 45, 73, 91, 98, 114, 116, 117, 119, 126, 132, 140, 202, 206, 219, 220, 241, 242, 263, 284, 296, 323, 326, 328, 330, 354, 365, 366, 371, 401, 407, 436
Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, 98
 Capitalism & Morality seminar, 30
Capitalism, Socialism, and Anarchy. Towards a Social Order beyond the State and Politics, 288
 Capitalist, 112, 115, 117, 119, 127, 174, 229, 242, 260, 329, 330, 373, 377, 456
 Capitalist Party of South Africa (ZACP), 76, 79
 Capital Press, 418
 Capitol Hill, 273, 399
 Caplan, Bryan, 195, 196
 Carbone, Francesco, 17
 Carey, Drew, 348
 Carilli, Tony, 62
 Carl Menger Society, 424
 Carreiro, Óscar Rodriguez, 129
 Carson, Trey, 63
 Carter, Jimmy, 22, 208
 Carthage College, 259
 Cartwright, Alex, 63
 Carver, Thomas Nixon, 101
 Casablanca, Morocco, 310
 Casey, Doug, 29, 30, 368, 409
 Casey, Gerard, 50
 After #MeToo, 51
 Freedom's Progress?, 51
 Hidden Agender, 51
 ZAP, 51
 Castillo, Christian Aliaga, 302
 Castro, Fidel, 54, 113, 115
 Castro, Walter, 143
 Castrucci, Emanuele, 254
 Catholic, 86, 332, 333, 365
 Catholic Church, 82, 83, 86, 87, 364, 366
 Catholicism, 8, 86, 366
 Cato Institute, 21, 23, 91, 92, 142, 155, 174, 206, 245–247, 267, 323, 335, 344, 346, 349, 391–393, 399, 417, 419, 481, 483
 Cato Institute for the Center of Global Liberty and Prosperity, 8
 Cato's Center for Constitutional Studies, 335
Cato Supreme Court Review, 335, 399
 Caucasus, 439
 Cavallo, Jo Ann, 2, 81
 "Austrian Economics, Libertarianism, and Academic Writing in the Humanities", 57
 "From Ron Paul to Murray Rothbard: My Road to the Mises Institute", 53
 "How Ron Paul Rocked Our Family (Unabridged)", 53
 CBC, 259
 CBS's *60 Minutes*, 347
 CDC, 459
 Ceaușescu, Nicolae, 93
 Center for College Affordability and Productivity, 464
 Center for Free Enterprise (CFE), 202–204
 Center for Immigration Studies, 70

- Center for Libertarian Studies, 223
Center for Research and Legal Studies (CITEL), 303
Center for the Study of Public Choice, 285
Centi, Jean-Pierre, 253, 307, 309
Central and Eastern Europe, 401
Central and Eastern European, 405
Central Asia, 439
Central Bank of Russia, 170
Central Europe, 230, 439
Central European, 281, 424
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 296, 392, 408, 409, 414, 415
Central Lake, MI, 357
Centre for Applied Economic Research, 253
Centre for Civil Society, 392
Century Plaza Hotel, 22
Certified Public Accountant (CPA), 487
Cesar Chavez's United Farmworkers Union, 345
CEVRO Institute, 405
Chafuen, Alex, 246, 247
Chamberlain, John, 188
Chambon-sur-Lignon, France, 253, 308
Chandler, Alfred, 224
Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 292
Chapman University, 408, 411, 419
Charen, Mona, 295
Charity Medical Foundation, 328
Charleston, South Carolina, 106
Charlotte, North Carolina, 290
Charlottesville, 469
Chatham, England, 145, 150
Chávez Salazar, David
Estudios Libertarios, 368
Libertas Phyle, 368
Cheetah Generation, 214, 220
Chernobyl, 433, 437
Cheung, Steven, 164
Chiba University of Commerce, 488
Chicago, 168, 253, 333, 334, 398, 410
Chicago Mercantile Exchange, 168
Chicago School, 101, 127, 164, 165, 346, 414
Childs, Roy, 23, 206
Libertarian Review, 23
Chile, 4, 175, 368
China, 5, 67, 115, 164, 165, 248, 353, 377, 379–381, 435
Chinese, 10, 247
Chinese Communist Party (CCP), 377, 378, 381
Chisholm, Roderick, 424
Chitester, Bob, 323
Chodorov, Frank, 188
Choi, Young Back, 297
Chomsky, Noam, 115, 116, 371
American Power and the New Mandarins, 115
Christian, 81–83, 86, 87, 184, 186, 201, 332, 457–459
Christianity, 82, 83, 86, 354, 364, 458
Christian Popular Party, 302
Christian Science Monitor, 21
Christmas, 93
Chronicle, 295, 296
Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture, 456
Church, 414
Churches of Christ, 183, 184
Cirocco, Luis, 367
Citadel, 106
Clark, Ed, 22, 206
Classical Economists, 102
Classical liberalism, 4
Clean Air Act, 438
Cleary Gottlieb, 398

- Clemson Institute for the Study of Capitalism, 73
 Cleveland, Ohio, 385, 413
 Clower, Robert, 101
 Cluj, Romania, 307, 308, 311
 CNN, 152
 Coase, Ronald, 136, 172, 224, 468
 Cobden, Richard, 320
Coin News, 31
 Cold War, 19, 283, 311
 College Libertarians, 111
 College Republican, 21
 Collins, Doug, 273
 Colombia, 5, 363, 368
 Colombian, 365
 Colombian Communist Party, 364
 Colonial Williamsburg, 65
 Colorado School of Mines, 167, 170, 171
 Columbia Business School, 234, 418
 Columbia College, 159
 Columbia's Butler Library, 158
 Columbia University, 56, 234, 236, 333, 346
 Columbia University Department of Italian, 55
 Columbia University School of International Affairs, 158
 Committee for Justice, 481
 Communism, 7, 98, 200, 202, 233, 245, 260, 326, 330, 353, 364, 366, 380, 381, 383, 395, 396, 401, 402, 404, 435, 475
 Communist, 94, 95, 114, 175, 199, 200, 228, 229, 257, 258, 302, 305, 308, 310, 311, 319, 333, 342, 365, 367, 371, 374, 378, 380, 402, 413, 433-435, 437-439, 456, 475
 Communist Eastern Europe, 462
 Communist League in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 175
 Communist League of Yugoslavia, 175
 Communist Party, 200, 379, 401, 402, 435, 436
 Communist Party of Britain, 125
 Communist Party of Peru, 302
 Communist Party USA, 233, 413
 Competitive Economic Institute, 23
 Complutense University of Madrid, 304
 Confucianism, 56
 Confucius, 56, 57
Analects, 57
 Congo, 30
 Congress, 335
 Congress of the People (COPE), 76
 Connecticut, 103, 342
 Connor's Conundrums, 36
Conservative Chronicle, 295, 456
Conservative Digest, 21
 Conservative Party, 199, 200, 229
 Conservative Student Union, 21
 Constitutionalism, 3
 Constitution Day Symposium, 335
 Contracting and Organizations Research Institute, 224
 Contra Krugman, 299
Contro lo statalismo, 253
 Copenhagen Business School, 164
 Coppock, Lee, 297
 Corbyn, Jeremy, 125
 Cornejo, Carolina, 368
 Corral, Noemi Diaz, 129
 Coser, Lewis, 115
 Council of Economic Advisers, 174
 Council on Foreign Relations, 465
 Covent Garden, 148
 COVID-19, 129, 248, 276, 368, 430, 465
 Covid-era, 67

- Cowen, Tyler, 62
 Cox, Gary, 291
 Cox, Stephen, 267, 410
Literature and the Economics of Liberty, 267, 268
 Crane, Ed, 21–23, 335, 481, 482
 Crash of 1987, 110
Credere nello Stato? Teologia politica e dissimulazione da Filippo il Bello a Wikileaks, 256
 Credit Yunival Corporation, 327
 Creighton Medical School, 108
 Cripe, Glenn, 429
 Critical Race Theory, 450
 Crony capitalism, 202
 C-SPAN, 259, 464
 Cuba, 115
 Cuban, 7, 54, 306
 Culinary Libertarian, 359
 Cultural Revolution, 353
Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 193
 Currie, David, 398
 Curzon-Price, Victoria, 308
Cutting Back City Hall, 345
 Czech, 252, 403, 404, 434, 464
 Czechoslovak, 402
 Czechoslovakia, 228, 259, 283, 401, 434
 Czech Republic, 5, 405
 Czechs, 405
- D**
Daily Collegian, 111
 Daley, Richard, 334
 Dallas, 188, 189
 Damascus, 110
 Daniels, Mitch, 349
 Dante, 56
Divine Comedy, 56
 Daoism, 56
 Darity, William, 222
 Dartmouth College, 206, 291
 Davenport, Herbert J., 101
 Davidson College, 290
 Davie, Eustace, 448
 Davies, Antony, 359
 Davies, Paul, 444
 Davies, Steve, 309
 Dawes, Christopher T., 193
 Day, Adrian, 30
 Day, Gail, 449
Dead Wrong, 323
 de Bary, William Theodore, 57
 de Blasio, Bill, 353
Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 147
 Deism, 332
 Deist, Jeff, 30
 Delhi, 29, 392
Democracy the God that Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order, 355
 Democrat, 9, 107, 115, 205, 266, 299, 358, 359, 407, 413, 441, 456, 480
 Democratic, 293, 461
 Democratic Center, 366, 367
 Democratic Party, 273, 364, 413
 Dempster, Greg, 62
 Demsetz, Harold, 224
 Denmark, 164, 371
 Denzau, Arthur, 290
 Department of Defense, 173
 Department of Finance, 475
 de Soto, Jesús Huerta, 366, 367
Studies in Political Economy, 366
 Devonshire, England, 315
 Dhlamini, Mpiyakhe, 78, 79
 Diciotti, Enrico, 252
 DiLorenzo, Tom, 16, 54, 298, 457

- Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War*, 54
- Di Martino, Beniamino, 129
- Diogenes, 32
- Dirty Pictures*, 92
- Dissent, 115
- Dixie, 398
- Djukanovic, Milo, 176
- Dodd, David, 110
- Doering, Detmar, 14
- Dole, Bob, 240
- Dole, Elizabeth, 240
- Donagan, Alan, 334
- Donahue, Phil, 358
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor, 333
Crime and Punishment, 333
- Dot Com Bubble, 153
- Doti, Jim, 419
- Drantias, Nick, 429
- Drucker, Peter, 346
The Age of Discontinuity, 346
- Drug Enforcement Administration, 34
- Duke University, 292, 405
- Dummett, Michael, 422, 424
- Duncan, Tom, 63
- Duranty, Walter, 74
- Durdan, James, 367
- Durham, North Carolina, 292
- Dylan, Bob, 434
Everybody Must Get Stoned, 434
- E**
- Eagle Publishing, 415, 417
- Earhart Foundation, 390, 392
- East, 257, 437, 485, 486
- East Bloc, 34
- Easterly, William, 9
The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good, 9
- Eastern Airlines, 342
- Eastern Europe, 228, 230, 233, 260, 353, 380, 434
- Eastern European, 380
- Eastern Front, 281
- East Germany, 179, 283
- Ebeling, Anna, 243
- Ebeling, Richard, 189, 190, 243, 297, 418
Austrian Economics and Public Policy, 106
Political Economy, Public Policy and Monetary Economics: Ludwig von Mises and the Austrian Tradition, 106
- Eckhardt, Carey, 112
- Econ Journal Watch*, 236, 237
- Economic Freedom of the World Report, 393
- Economics of Life Summer Academy, 411
- Economic University, 437
- Economist*, 154, 159
- Ecuador, 174, 367
- Ecuadorian, 304
- Ecuadorian Institute of Political Economy, 304
- Edestein, Michael, 30
- Edgar Hoover, J., 413
- Edmund Burke Debating Society, 398
- Edward Coke Appellate Inn of Court, 400
- Eglin AFB, 20
- Egmont*, 108
- Ehrenfels, Christian von, 423
- Einaudi, Luigi, 337
- Einstein, Albert, 442, 443
- Eisenhower, Dwight D., 114
- Eisenstein, Sergei, 280
- Ekins, Emily, 483
- Elbe River, 396
- Elks Theatre, 411

Elliot, Matthew, 489
 Ellul, Jacques, 185
 Anarchy and Christianity, 185
 El Mallakh, Ragaei, 171
 Emory University Law School, 335
 Empire State Building, 99
 Employee Retirement Income Security
 Act of 1974, 235
Encyclopedia Britannica, 445
 End Game Investor, 123
 Enelow, James, 291
 England, 20, 422, 424
 English, 10, 11, 25, 44, 70, 101,
 108, 163, 269
 English Channel, 275
 English Crown, 129
 Enlightenment, 234, 341, 397
Entertainment Weekly, 33
 Epstein, Richard, 334, 398, 449
 Equal Employment Opportunity
 Commission, 34
 Erasmus, 16
Erewhon, 107
 Eritrea, 213
 Erlangen, Germany, 284
Essays on Liberty, 188
 Estonia, 174, 260
 Estonian, 259
Ethical Intuitionism, 196
 Ethiopia, 30, 213
 Europe, 11, 13, 16, 56, 94, 95, 129,
 229, 230, 256, 262, 283, 403,
 422, 424, 429, 435, 475
 European, 9, 43, 171, 180, 253, 288,
 398, 435
 European Center of Austrian
 Economics Foundation (ECAEF),
 142, 174
 European Monetary System (EMS),
 169
 European Monetary Union, 286
 European Parliament, 11

European Policy Information Center,
 312
 European Union, 428, 438
 European West, 402
 Evers, Bill, 223
 Evers, Williamson, 21
Every New Right Is A Freedom Lost,
 252
 Evoy, Bruce, 385
Explorations in Economic History, 462
 Eyres, Stephen, 148

F

Fabian Society, 345
 Facco, Leonardo, 338
 Enclave. Rivista Libertaria, 338
 Facebook, 198, 275, 353, 374
 F.A. Hayek Program for the Advanced
 Study in Philosophy, Politics, and
 Economics, 63
 Fairfax, Virginia, U.S.A., 105
 Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 115
 Fake Nous, 198
 Fallon, Brian, 34
 Falls Church, Virginia, 400
 FARC, 365
 Farm to Consumer Legal Defense
 Fund, 359, 360
 Fascism, 355
 Fascist, 319, 352, 475
 Fawcett, Henry, 102
 FDA, 91, 345, 359, 360
 F.D.P., 14
 FDR's New Deal, 414
 Fed, Dallas, 373
 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI),
 413
 Federal Emergency Management
 Agency, 34
 Federalist Society, 23, 335, 398, 400
 Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 176

- Federal Reserve, 116, 160, 161, 296, 359
- FEE Fest, 411, 418
- FEE National Convention, 411
- Fegley, Tate, 63, 96
- Fenton-O’Creivy, Mark, 193
- Ferguson, Adam, 102
- Fernández, Federico, 368
- Ferrero, Bernardo, 367
- Ferrero, Guglielmo, 253
- Fetter, Frank A., 101
- Feulner, Edwin, 329
- Feynman, Richard, 297
- Fiedler, Patrick, 360
- Field of Dreams*, 411
- Financial Advisory Council, 173
- Financial Meltdown of 2008, 127
- Financial Times*, 323
- FindaBetterSchool.org, 72
- Finnish, 259, 435
- Finns, 435
- Firstenberg, Arthur, 387
- The Invisible Rainbow: A History of Electricity and Life*, 387
- First Gulf War, 152
- Fisher, Sir Antony, 74, 230, 246
- Fixler, Phil, 345
- Flat Tax in Bulgaria: History, Introduction, Result*, 439
- Floral Street, 148
- Florentine, 126
- Florida, 20, 71, 289, 349, 359, 408
- Florida DOT, 349
- Florida State University, 21
- Fogo de Chao, 480
- For a New Liberty*, 181
- Forbes*, 464
- Forbes, Steve, 173, 240, 347, 419
- Ford Motor Company, 173
- Foreign Policy Research Institute, 220
- Formani, Robert, 188
- Former communist GDR, 13
- Foss, Kirsten, 225
- Foss, Nicolai, 164, 225
- Organizing Entrepreneurial Judgment*, 225
- Foundation for Economic Education (FEE), 11, 23, 73, 74, 99, 103, 106, 188–190, 242, 386, 404, 410–412, 418, 419
- Foundation for Teaching Economics (FTE), 403
- Fourth Republic, 202
- Fox News, 237, 259, 260, 464
- France, 17, 169, 174, 255, 258, 283, 312, 328
- Francisco Marroquín University (UFM), 7, 8, 10, 304
- Francis, Sam, 456
- Franco, Andrés Cusme, 367
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 323
- Frank Knight, 178
- Franklin, Ben, 419
- Fraser Forum*, 386
- Fraser Institute, 386, 473, 476–478
- Frazier, Mark, 345, 346
- Free Africa Foundation, 5, 220
- Freedom and Entrepreneurship Foundation, 429
- Freedom and the Law*, 252
- Freedom Daily*, 457
- FreedomFest, 37, 411, 418, 419, 481
- Freedom Front, 321, 322
- Freedom Library, 312
- Freedom Movement, 302
- Freedom of Choice*, 70
- Freeh, Louis, 33
- Free Libertarian Party, 206
- Free Life*, 150
- Freemantle, Anne, 345
- This Little Band of Prophets*, 345
- Free Market Foundation (FMF), 76, 77, 448–450
- Free Market Road Show, 230, 231

- Free State, 155, 156
 Free State of New Hampshire, 151
 Free State Project, 154
 Free to Choose, 323
 French, 102, 125, 147, 169, 175, 176, 252, 253, 310
 French, Douglas, 30
 Frescobaldi, 126, 129
 Freud, Sigmund, 55, 436
 Fria Moderata Studentförbundet (FMSF), 43
 Friedberg, Albert, 169–171
 Friedberg Mercantile Group Inc., 169
 Friedlander, Lanny, 342, 343
 Friedman, David, 44, 133, 195, 242, 338, 384, 390, 403, 444
Legal Systems Very Different from Ours, 133
The Machinery of Freedom, 44, 242, 338, 444
 Friedman, Milton, 2, 4, 22, 73, 77, 78, 109, 112, 127, 148, 170, 180, 222, 234, 252, 253, 296, 323, 334, 337, 343, 347, 358, 366, 372, 403, 414, 415, 417, 418, 444, 463, 475, 478
Capitalism and Freedom, 296, 403, 414
Free to Choose, 127, 296, 403
Money Mischief, 296
Two Lucky People: Memoirs, 2
 Friedman, Patri, 209
 Friedman, Rose, 2, 112, 478
Two Lucky People: Memoirs, 2
 Friedrich Hayek Seminar, 311, 312
 From Public Duty to Private Pleasure, 55
 Front, 322
 FSU, 405
 Ft. Ord, 468
 Fukutsu City, 490
 Fuller, Caleb, 63
 Fund for American Studies, 142
 Fund for Peace, 480
 Furman University, 265
 Furnham, Adrian, 193
Further Explorations in Anarchy, 134
 Furth, Herbert, 177
Future of Freedom, 457
 Future of Freedom Foundation (FFF), 23, 106, 190, 191
- G**
 Galbraith, John Kenneth, 172
 Galician, 363
 Gallaway, Lowell Eugene, 462–464
Out of Work: Unemployment and Government in Twentieth-Century America, 463
 Galt, John, 442, 443, 445
 Ganev, Petar, 439
 García Pérez, Alan, 301
 Gardener, Martin, 445
 Garelo, Jacques, 253, 307–309, 313
 Garelo, Pierre, 255, 311
 Garibay, Gerardo, 367
 Garnsey, Morris, 171
 Garrison, Roger, 16, 223, 298, 390
 Garvin, Glenn, 345
 Gauteng province, 77
 Gaza, 122
 Gazans, 122
 GDR, 14, 436
General Treatise on Sociology, 471
 Genesis 8:21, 272
 Geneva, 253
 Genoa, Italy, 252
 George Mason University (GMU), 60–64, 105, 213, 236, 243, 404, 405
 George Mason University Law School, 398

- Georgetown's Center for the Constitution, 399
- Georgetown University, 8
- George Washington University, 335, 415
- Georgia, 255
- Georgia State University, 236
- Georgia Tech, 443
- Georgists, 208
- Gerbino, Ken, 409
- Gergils, Christian, 321
- Gericke vs. Begin et al*, 155
- German, 14, 15, 102, 107, 180, 277, 278, 285, 286, 288
- German-Brazilian Academic Exchange Program, 287
- German Historical School, 286
- German parliament, 14
- Germany, 5, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 54, 104, 255, 285, 286, 396, 423
- Gertner, Dan, 161
- Gewirth, Alan, 334
- Ghana, 30, 217, 218
- Ghanaian, 5
- Gherzi, Enrique, 301, 303
- Gibbon, Edward, 147
- Gigot, Paul, 411
- Gilder, George, 240, 419
- Giovanetti, Stephanie, 248
- Give Me Liberty*, 315
- Glahe, Fred, 171
- The Hayek-Keynes Debate – Lessons for Current Business Cycle Research*, 171
- Glasgow, Jesse, 159
- The Sun*, 159
- Glasgow University, 374
- Glushkov, Nikolai, 258
- Gödel, 443
- Gods and Generals*, 410
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 107
- Faust*, 107
- Going Broke By Degree*, 464
- Goizueta Business School at Emory University, 245
- Golden, Colorado, 171
- Goldsmith, Steve, 348
- Goldwater, Barry, 132, 333, 341, 342, 441, 469
- Conscience of a Conservative*, 333, 341
- Goldwater Institute (GI), 429
- Goodman, Nathan, 63
- Google, 275
- GOP, 20
- Gorbachev, Mikhail, 257, 258, 327
- Gordon, David, 48, 96, 184, 223, 254, 274, 298, 318, 457
- Austro-Libertarian Essays*, 318
- Gordon, H. Scott, 158
- Gore, Al, 265
- Górka, Stanisław, 428
- Göttingen, 423, 424
- Graduate Institute of European Studies, 253
- Graham, Benjamin, 110, 159
- The Interpretation of Financial Statements*, 159
- Gramm, Phil, 290
- Gramm, Wendy, 290
- Granite State, 154, 156
- Grant, James, 161
- Grant's Interest Rate Observer*, 160
- Grassl, Wolfgang, 243, 423
- Grateful Dead, 234
- Gray, John, 422, 424
- Graz, 425
- Great Britain, 229, 278, 345
- Great Depression, 101, 201, 296, 464
- Great Food Transformation, 360
- Great Inflation, 160
- Great Recession, 129
- Great Reset, 355, 360
- Greaves, Bettina Bien, 99, 103, 188

Greaves, Percy, 188, 241
Mises Made Easier, 241
 Greece, 32, 284
 Greek, 94, 139, 147
 Greenberg, Gary, 206
 Green Party, 365
 Gregory, Anthony, 184
 Grossman, Dan, 247
 Guatemala, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 288, 304
 Guayaquil, 304
 Guillaumat, François, 252
Gujarat Samachar, 389
 GULAG, 436
Gun Control on Trial, 92
 Guttman, Marc, 2
*Why Liberty: Personal Journeys
 Toward Peace & Freedom*, 2

H

Haberler, Gottfried, 174, 177, 258
 Haidt, Jonathan, 72, 483
 Hajdu, Csaba, 475, 476
 Hall, Abby, 63
 Hall, Gus, 413
 Haller, Rudolf, 424
 Hallinan, Vincent, 114
 Hamowy, Ronald, 387
 Hampden-Sydney College, 62
 Hannity, Sean, 358
 Hanson, Victor Davis, 398
 Harper, David, 297
 Harper, Floyd “Baldy”, 63, 102, 170, 188, 223
 Harriman, Averell, 115
 Harrington, Michael, 115
 Hart, David, 254
 Hartford, Connecticut, 70
 Hartup, Gerald, 148
 Harvard/MIT Objectivist group, 132
 Harvard University, 101, 132, 390
 Hässelby, Sweden, 319

Hattingh, Christo, 78
 Havel, Vaclav, 402, 434
 Hawai'i Pacific University (HPU), 43
 Hawking, Stephan, 444, 445
 Hayek Foundation, 328
 Hayek Foundation (Moscow), 325, 328
 Hayek, Friedrich, 2, 4, 7, 8, 29, 32, 50, 56, 59, 60, 73, 99–101, 103, 104, 117, 127, 128, 143, 148, 163, 166, 168, 170, 171, 177, 180, 184, 188, 201, 215, 218, 222–224, 228–231, 234, 248, 252, 257, 260, 267, 285, 286, 302, 306, 308, 317, 322, 328, 329, 337, 365, 366, 384, 387, 390, 404, 415, 416, 418, 422, 430, 444, 478
Denationalization of Money, 404
Intellectuals and Socialism, 306
Law, Legislation and Liberty, 127, 231, 252, 308
Legislation and Liberty, 387
New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and the History of Ideas, 177
Prices and Production, 166, 416
The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek, 223
The Constitution of Liberty, 8, 60, 127, 229, 231, 387
The Road to Serfdom, 29, 60, 99, 100, 218, 257, 260, 278, 308, 366
The Sensory Order: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology, 177
 “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 184
 Hayek Institute, 230, 231, 328
 Haywood, Dale, 240, 243
 Hazlett, Tom, 345

- Hazlitt, Henry, 2, 60, 90, 99, 103, 149, 170, 188, 222, 241, 296, 308, 384, 405, 457
Economics in One Lesson, 90, 149, 222, 241, 296, 308, 405
The Failure of the New Economics, 222
The Foundations of Morality, 60
- HBO, 412
- Health Advisory Committee, 71
- Hebrew, 54, 70
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, 396
- Heidegger, Martin, 252
- Heilbroner, Robert, 417
The Worldly Philosophers, 417
- Heinlein, Robert, 133, 341, 443
Have Spacesuit, Will Travel, 443
The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, 133
- Helsinki Process, 435
- Hemingway, Ernest, 107
- Hempel, Carl, 143
- Henry, John, 100
- Herbener, Jeffrey, 16, 298, 359
- Heritage Foundation, 328, 330, 391, 393, 419
Hermann und Dorothea, 108
- Hess, Karl, 343, 409
- Heyne, Paul, 308, 403, 406
The Economic Way of Thinking, 308, 403
- Higgs, Robert, 62, 63, 359, 387, 404, 405, 457
Against Leviathan, 359
- High Enlightenment, 147
- High, Jack, 105
- Hill, P.J., 438
- Hillsdale College, 61, 106, 190, 242, 243, 297, 418
- Hilton, Paris, 8
- Hindi, 25, 26, 28, 247
- Hine, Lewis, 233
- Hinich, Melvin, 291
- Hitler, Adolf, 275
- Hobbesian, 134
- Hobbes, Thomas, 76
- Hoffman, Beth, 411
- Hoffman, Michael J., 78
- Holder, Eric, 34
- Hollywood, 98
- Hollywood Public Library, 98
- Holman, John, 160
- Holmberg, John-Henri, 321
- Holmes, Frank, 29
- Holmes Jr., Oliver Wendell, 268, 417
- Holocaust, 274
- Holodomor, 74
- Homeric Poems, 146
- Homesteading, 3
- Hong Kong, 11, 153, 154, 177
- Honolulu, 43
- Hoover, Herbert, 464
- Hoover Institution, 22
- Hoppean, 355
- Hoppe, Hans-Hermann, 15–17, 48, 95, 126, 203, 223, 254, 255, 298, 338, 355, 367, 405, 425, 450, 457
Democracy: The God That Failed, 95
- Hopper, Deborah, 481
- Horowitz, David, 233
- Hospers, John, 343, 384
Libertarianism: A Political Philosophy for Tomorrow, 343, 384
- Hotel Schloss Weikersdorf, 177
- House of Savoy, 54
- Houston, Texas, 189, 442
- Howe, Irving, 115
How To Talk To a Conservative: Why the Libertarian Ideas Are Way More Effective and Solid than Conservative Ideas for a Youth Seduced by Socialism, 11

- How To Talk To a Socialist: Why Social Democracy Enhances Poverty instead of Eliminating It*, 11
- Huemer, Michael
Justice Before the Law, 198
The Problem of Political Authority, 197
- Huerta de Soto, Jesús, 16, 17, 129, 303, 305
- Hugo, Victor, 305
- Hülsmann, Guido, 2, 16, 17, 255, 298, 405, 424
 “Deflation: When Austrians Become Interventionists”, 16
Mises: Last Knight of Liberalism, 2
Human Action, 48
Human Events, 21, 98, 99, 415, 456
- Hume, David, 102, 147, 148, 297, 341, 471
- Humphries, Suzanne, 387
Dissolving Illusions: Disease, Vaccines and the Forgotten History, 387
- Hungarian, 7, 54, 475
- Hungary, 228, 259, 342
- Hunt, John, 30
- Husserl, Edmund, 423, 424
Logical Investigations, 423
- Hutchison, Francis, 471
- Hutt, W.H., 188
- Hypatia, 72
- I**
- Iannello, Nicola, 254, 338
- Ibaraki University, 487
- Ibarguen, Giancarlo, 10
- Iceland, 134
- I.H.S.-Europe, 309
- Ikeda, Sandy, 297
- Il libertarismo di Murray N. Rothbard*, 252
- Illinois, 32
- ILLUMINATUS!, 89
- Il Medioevo delle libertà* (The Middle Ages of Liberty), 338
- IMF, 9
- Income Tax Day, 19
- Inc.*, 347
- Independent Institute, 5, 63, 463
- Independent Women’s Forum, 246
- Index of Economic Articles*, 101
- India, 5, 25, 26, 29, 153, 390–393, 435
- Indian, 27, 28
- Indianapolis, Indiana, 106, 348
- Indiana Toll Road, 349
- Indiana University, 158
- Indian School of Public Policy, 394
- Indonesia, 176
- Industrial Revolution, 242
- Ingalls Wilder, Laura
Pioneer Girl, 2
- Ingarden, Roman, 423, 424
Controversy over the Existence of the World, 423
- Inquiry*, 23, 344, 345
- Institute for Economic Affairs, 465
- Institute for Economic Studies - Europe (IES), 253, 255, 308
- Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), 60, 90, 91, 102, 103, 188, 206, 223, 253, 267, 334, 347, 348, 387, 392, 393, 397, 463
- Institute for Labor Research, 258
- Institute of Peace, 258
- Institute of Race Relations (IRR), 448, 450
- Institutionalists, 100
- Instituto Juan de Mariana, 17
- Instituto Mises Brasil (IMB), 287
- Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 23, 397
- International Academy of Philosophy (IAP), 425

- International Capitalism Day, 329
 International Development, 9
 International Financial Reporting Standards, 488
 International Rescue Committee, 108
 International Society for Individual Liberty (ISIL), 429
 International Society for New Institutional Economics, 225
 International Society of Individual Liberty, 304
 International Trade Commission, 34
 Interventionism, 83, 141, 201, 202, 252, 286, 404
 Interventionist, 14, 104, 141, 164, 487
In the Basements of the Twilight, 303
 Iowa, 19, 22, 31, 167, 438
 Iran's Shah, 21
 Iraq, 33, 62, 266, 275, 292, 399, 459
 Iraq War, 266
 Ireland, 5
 Iron Curtain, 69, 228, 402
 Irvington-on-the-Hudson, New York, 103, 188, 404, 410, 418
 Isaacs, Justin, 62
 Islam, 125
 Israel, 5, 70, 121, 122, 142, 274, 395
 Israeli, 121
 Israel, Karl-Friedrich, 96
 Italian, 55, 252–255
 Italian Liberal Party, 251
 Italian Renaissance, 55, 56
 Italy, 5, 10, 17, 53, 81, 228, 251, 253, 258, 338, 367, 434
 Ivanov, Vyacheslav, 326
 Ivory Coast, 255
 Ivy League, 172
 IX International (Communist) Youth Festival, 434
- J**
 Jackson-Vanik, 395
 Jacobsen, Peter, 63
 Jacobs, Glenn, 358
 Jacobs, Jane, 472
 Systems of Survival, 472
 Jagiellonian University, 430
 Jamaica, 5, 263, 264
 James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, 236
 James, William, 442
 Essays in Pragmatism, 442
 Jamis, Fayad, 306
 For this freedom, 306
 Japan, 5, 266, 485–488, 490
 Japanese, 161, 487–489
 Japanese Institute of Certified Public Accountants, 488
 Jefferson, Thomas, 234, 321
 Jeon, Yoong-deok, 202, 204
 Jethro Tull, 358
 Jewish, 54, 70, 139, 205, 310, 436
 Jewish Policy Center, 400
 Jews, 108, 122, 395, 396
Jo Ann Skousen's Money Letter for Women, 409
 Jobs, Steve, 153
 Johannesburg, South Africa, 152
 John 1: 6-8, 305
 John Birch Society, 456
 John Locke Institute of Canada, 387
Johnny Profit, 220
 Johns Hopkins University, 167, 172, 173
 Johnson, Lyndon, 333, 441, 461, 469
 Johnson, Pete, 297
 Joint Economic Committee of Congress (JEC), 462, 464
 Jolis, Albert, 108
 Jolly, E. Grady, 398
 Jones, Gareth, 74
 Jönköping University, 43

- Journal des économistes*, 253
Journal des Economistes et des Etudes Humaines, 225
Journal of Economic History, 462
Journal of Economic Issues, 100, 235
Journal of Labor Research, 235, 464
Journal of Law & Economics, 346
 Jouvenel, Bertrand de, 126, 297
 J.P. Morgan, 61
 Juan de Mariana Institute, 367
 Jung, Carl, 55
 Psychology and Alchemy, 55
 Junge Libérale, 14
 Jungian, 55
 Justice Department, 34
- K**
 Kane. *See* Jacobs, Glenn
 Karl Marx Economic Institute, 437
 Kaspersky, Leon, 343
 Kastner, Michael, 15
 Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
 Belgium, 9
 Kato, Hiroshi, 488, 489
 Katowice, Upper Silesia, Poland, 428
 Katz, Howard S., 235
 Kaufman, Bruce E., 236
 Kavanagh, Patricia, 158
 Kazan State University, 327
 Keeler, Davis, 334
 Kemmerer, Donald, 461, 462
 Kemp, Jack, 240
 Kennedy, David, 392
 Kennedy, John, 333
 Kennedy, Pete, 359
 Kenosha, Wisconsin, 259
 Ken, Schoolland, 43
 Kent, England, 145
 Kentucky, 481
 Kenya, 5, 211, 214, 217, 218, 220, 316
 Kenyan, 214, 247
 Kephart, Robert D., 409, 415
 Inflation Survival Letter, 409
 Keynesian, 100, 101, 105, 158, 189, 230, 290, 298, 414, 462, 463, 487
 Keynesianism, 287
 Keynes, John Maynard, 102, 104, 127, 222, 365, 418, 472, 477
 The General Theory, 222
 KGB, 436, 475
 Khabarovsk Krai (USSR), 327
 Khrushchev, Nikita, 396
 Kiguhi, Linda Kavuka, 218
 Kinch, Fred, 358
 Kingston, Ontario, 317
 Kinsella, Stephan, 255, 424, 449
 Kipling, Rudyard, 485
 Kirk, Russell, 158
 The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot, 158
 Kirznerian, 169
 Kirzner, Israel, 103–105, 117, 168, 170, 188, 190, 206, 222, 225, 285, 297, 309, 366, 390, 404, 425
 Competition and Entrepreneurship, 285
 Klausner, Manny, 343, 344
 Klaus, Vaclav, 464
 Klein, Benjamin, 224
 Klein, Daniel B., 236
 Klein, Harald, 304
 Klein, Peter G., 16, 45, 221, 224, 225, 298
 The Capitalist and the Entrepreneur: Essays on Organizations and Markets, 221
 Klein, Sandra K., 225
 Knight, Frank, 101, 225, 470
 Knight of the Order of the Flag, 174

- Knox County, TN, 358
 Kochan, Thomas, 236
 Koch, Charles, 21, 344
 Koestler, Arthur, 108
 KoLiber, 428, 429
 Kolm, Barbara, 367
 Konkin, Samuel, 45, 368
 Koppl, Roger, 297, 390
 Korea, 5, 23, 199–202, 204
 Korean, 110, 202
 Korean War, 19, 199
 Korwin-Mikke, Janusz, 427
 Kosovo, 298
 Krause, Martín, 366
 Kresge, Stephen, 223
 Krugman, Paul, 127, 298, 299, 418
 Krumm, Ingolf, 16
 Kudlow, Larry, 161
 Kuehnelt-Leddihn, Erik von, 126
 Kuhn, Thomas, 49, 110
 Kuniński, Miłowit, 430
 Kuprin, Alexander, 326
 Kuwaiti, 169
 Kwong, Jo, 247
- L**
- Laar, Mart, 260
 Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA), 236
 Lacan, Jacques, 55
 Lachmann, Ludwig, 103–105, 168, 225
La Croce contro il Leviatano. Perché il Cristianesimo può salvarci dallo Stato onnipotente (The Cross against Leviathan. Why Christianity Can Save Us from the Omnipotent State), 339
 Ladies of Liberty Alliance, 481–484
 Ladispoli, Italy, 395
 LaFaive, Michael, 242
 Laissez Faire Books, 206, 223, 241, 245, 253, 444, 457
 LaissezFaire bookshop, 116
 Lake Tahoe, 36
 Lancelyn Green, Roger, 146
Tales of Troy, 146
 Landes, Bill, 398
 Landgrebe, Jobst, 425
Why machines will never rule the world, 425
 Lane, Rose Wilder, 315, 316
Langenberg's Kitchen, 170
 Langenberg, Harry, 170, 171
 Language of Liberty Institute (LLI), 429
 Laos, 153
 Laredo, Texas, 187, 191
 La Salle, 367
 Las Vegas, 411, 418, 481
 Latin, 71
 Latin America, 9, 11, 303, 304
 Latin American, 304, 305
 Latvian, 259
 Laughlin, J. Laurence, 101
 Laurent, Alain, 308, 310
 Lavoie, Don, 105, 206
 Law of the Sea Treaty, 23
 Lazzari, Gustavo, 305
 LeBar, Mark, 405
 Lecca, Favio León, 302
 Lecky, William Edward Hartpole, 147
 Lee, Dwight, 224
 Lee, Jeff, 204
 Lee Seung-bok, 200
 Lee Seung-bok Children's Memorial Hall, 199
 Leeson, Peter, 61, 133
Legal Systems Very Different from Ours, 133
 Legalism, 56
 Lega Nord, 254
 Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb, 160

- Lehmann, Erik E., 221
 Leijonhufvud, Axel, 101
 Lemberg, 423
 Lemennicier, Bertrand, 307
 Lemieux, Pierre, 387
 Lemke, Jayme, 63
 Lemmenicier, Bertrand, 253
 Lenin's Library, 257
 Leningrad, 401, 435, 436
 Leningrad Faculty of Philosophy, 436
 Lenin, Vladimir, 75, 316, 326
 Leoni, Bruno, 252, 255, 387, 405
 Freedom and the Law, 405
 Lepage, Henri, 251, 252, 308
 Tomorrow, Capitalism, 251
L'epopea libertaria del Far West (The
 Libertarian Epic of the Far West),
 338
L'éthique de la liberté, 252
*Le ragioni del diritto. Libertà
 individuale e ordine giuridico nel
 pensiero di Bruno Leoni*, 252
Le regolarità della politica, 254
 Lerner, Gerda, 233
 Leroy-Beaulieu, Paul, 102
 Leube, Kurt, 141
 Levendis, John, 112
 Levey, Curt, 481
*Leviatano sanitario e crisi del diritto.
 Cultura, società e istituti al tempo
 del Covid-19*, 256
 Levin, Mark, 358
 Lewin, David, 236
 Lewin, Peter, 188
 Lewis, Bernard, 125
 Lewisham Central Library, 147
 LewRockwell.com, 45, 185, 298,
 456, 457
Liberalism is Freedom, 305
 Liberal Network of Latin America,
 RELIAL, 304
 Liberalni Institut, 403, 404
*Liberal Sense: the Urgent Path of
 Freedom*, 305
 Liberation Theology, 365
 Liberec, 434
 Liberilibri, 253
 Libertarian Alliance, 150, 422
Libertarian Anarchy, 49
 Libertarian Christian Institute, 186,
 459
 LibertarianChristians.com, 186
 Libertarian Club, 428
Libertarian Pages, 304
 Libertarian Party, 22, 23, 206, 234,
 242, 245, 293, 343, 346, 409,
 444, 480
 Libertarian Party of America, 149
 Libertarian Party of Canada (LPC),
 385
 Libertarian Party of Korea, 202
Libertarian Review, 344, 345
 Libertarian Scholars Conference, 223
 Libertarian Solutions, 430
 Libertas Institute, 36, 37, 39
Liberty, 410, 411, 417, 457
 Liberty & Society Seminars, 392
 LibertyClassroom, 50
Liberty for All, 305
 Liberty Forum, 154
 Liberty Fund, 106, 142, 223, 245,
 255, 267, 296, 387, 425, 463
 Liberty Institute, 391
 Liberty International, 219, 220, 429
 Liberty Movement, 302, 303, 481,
 482
 Library of the Academy of Sciences,
 436
Libre (Free!), 363
 Libya, 275
 Lido di Ostia, Italy, 70
 Liechtenstein, 142, 174, 368, 425
 Liggio, Leonard, 90, 247, 309, 334,
 403

- Lima, Peru, 301, 304
 Limbaugh, Rush, 295, 358, 456
 Lincoln Center, 465
 Lindert, Peter, 264
 Lindhahl, Erik, 102
 Lindsay, John, 118
 Lindsay, Ontario, 396
 Lips, Brad
 Liberalism and the Free Society in 2021, 248
 Lipscomb, David, 185
 On Civil Government, 185
 Lipscomb University, 185
 Lips, David, 245
 Literary Analysis and Psychoanalysis, 55
 Literature and Liberty, 268
 Lithuania, 174, 258
 Lithuanian, 247, 259
 Lithuanian Free Market Institute, 259
 Little House on the Prairie, 316
 Live and Let Live, 220
 Livingstone, Frank, 108, 111
 Local Government Center (LGC), 345, 346
 Locke, John, 2, 73, 94, 266, 316, 321, 341
 Lofthouse, Jordan, 63
 Lomonosov Moscow University, 327
 Lomonosov, M.V., 327
 London, England, 25, 106, 147, 148, 152, 169, 230, 284, 312, 416, 424, 465, 476
 London School of Economics, 101, 104, 317, 398, 422
 Long, Roderick, 56
 Loompanics, 90
 Lord Acton, 2
 Lord Harris of High Cross, 309
 Los Angeles, 8, 22, 98, 99, 343, 345, 347, 348, 385
 Los Angeles International Airport, 348
 Los Angeles Times, 33, 347
 Lottieri, Carlo, 56, 252, 253, 255, 256, 338
 Privatizziamo il chiaro di luna! Le ragioni dell'ecologia di mercato, 338
 Speaking Truth to Power in Medieval and Modern Italy, 56
 Lou Church Memorial Lecture, 48
 Louisiana, 277
 Louw, Leon, 77
 Lovestone, Jay, 108
 Lowe, Adolph, 116
 Loyola University, 278, 279
 Lucas, David, 63
 Ludwig von Mises Institute, 456
 Ludwig von Mises Studies Circle, 302
 Lugano, Switzerland, 253
 Lukas, Carrie, 246
 Lundberg, Erik, 102
 Lviv, 423
 Lynch Jr., Alberto Benegas, 303
- M**
 Macau, 153
 Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 148
 MacBride, Roger, 234, 343
 Machan, Tibor, 2, 309, 342–344
 The Man Without a Hobby: Adventures of a Gregarious Egoist, 2
 Machiavelli, Niccolò, 54, 56, 176
 Machlup, Fritz, 101
 Mackey, John, 419
 Mackinac Center, 391
 Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 241–243
 Madelin, Alain, 309
 Madrid, Spain, 16, 17, 129

- Mafikeng, South Africa, 151
 MAGA America, 273
Magic and Religion in the Renaissance, 55
 Maharrey, Mike, 359
 Maison Blanche, 177
 Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers, 49
 Makovi, Michael, 142
 Malan, Koos, 450
Malevolent your Absence, 305
 Malgeri, Michael, 219, 220
 Maltsev, Yuri, 5
 Manchester, England, 421, 424, 425
 Manchester School, 320
 Mandela, Nelson, 152
 Mandeville, Bernard, 245, 297
The Fable of the Bees, 245
 Manhattan, 105, 116, 118, 119, 160, 234, 333
 Manhattan's Lower East Side, 396
 Manhattan College, 59–61
 Manhattan Institute, 400
 Manners, Ron, 11
 ManPatria Podcast, 78
 Maoism, 284
 Maoists, 132
 Mao, Zedong, 65, 115, 378, 379, 434
 March of the Living, 123
 Marcuse, Herbert, 434
 Marginal Revolution, 166
 Mariana, Juan de, 303
 Marietta, Georgia, 267
 Markov, Boris, 437
 Markov, Georgy, 434
 Marković, Ante, 175
 Marquette University, 463
 Martínez, Antonio, 129
 Martínez Meseguer, César, 129
 Martin, James G., 236
 Martino, Antonio, 253
 Marty, Anton, 423
 Marty, Antonella, 11
 Marx brothers, 100
 Chico Marx, 100
 Groucho Marx, 100
 Harpo Marx, 100
 Zeppo Marx, 100
 Marxian, 279, 280, 487
 Marxism, 268, 284, 353–355
 Marxism-Leninism, 280
 Marxist, 50, 55, 100, 126, 194, 203, 284, 288, 302, 308, 316, 351, 354, 355, 364, 402, 421, 436
 Marxist-Leninist, 280, 281
 Marx, Karl, 140, 141, 222, 234, 353, 354, 403, 418, 434
The Communist Manifesto, 126
Theses on Feuerbach, 126
 Maryland, 19
 Masters, Bill, 196
 Mather, Cotton, 234
 Matić, Gorin, 176
 Matsutani, Kiyoka, 486
 Matthew 13: 18-23, 305
 Matthew 22, 185
 Matthews, Lipton, 78
 Matvey Yakovlevich, Kovalzon, 327
 May, Tim, 135
 Maze, William, 241
 Mbeki, Thabo, 76
 McAfee, Derek, 63
 McAfee, Mark, 359
 McCarthy, Joseph, 234
 McClanahan, Brion, 358
 McCloskey, Deirdre, 11, 142
 McCobin, Alexander, 213
 McCrory, Pat, 293
 McCubbins, Mat, 291
 McCulloch, John R., 102
 McDonnell & Co., 158
 McGovern, George, 20
 McMaken, Ryan, 57

- Commie Cowboys*, 57
 McNamara, Robert, 173
 McVeigh, Timothy, 33
 Medici, 56
 Meiji Era, 486
 Member of Parliament (MP), 76, 79
 Memorial Day 2022, 331
 Mencius, 56, 486
 Mencken, H.L., 159
 Mendenhall, Allen, 57
 *Literature and Liberty: Essays in
 Libertarian Literary Criticism*,
 57
 Menem, Carlos, 175
 Menger, Carl, 99, 165, 189, 202,
 229, 284, 286, 416, 418, 422,
 425
 Principles of Economics, 189
 Menlo Park, California, 102, 103
 Mercado, Tomás de, 303
 Mercatus Center, 213
 Mercer, Ilana
 *Into the Cannibal's Pot: Lessons for
 America from Post-Apartheid
 South Africa*, 274
 Mercer Street, 116
 Mercy College, 408, 412, 418
 Merino, Beatriz, 303
 M.E. Sharpe, 417
 Metropolitan University Prague
 (MUP), 405
 Metternich, Klemens von, 126
 Mettingen, 14
 Mexican, 480
 Mexico, 305, 367
 Mexico City, 11
 Miami, Florida, 248, 341
 Michigan, 396, 461
 Mid-Atlantic Civil War battlefields, 20
 Middle Ages, 126, 338
 Middlesex University, 106
Midland Daily News, 242
 Midland, MI, 240, 242, 243
 Miglio, Gianfranco, 254–256
 Milan, 253–255
 Milken, Michael, 347
 Mill, James, 102
 Mill, John Stuart, 102, 234, 308, 321
 On Liberty, 235
 Mill Unions, 474
 Miller, Amos, 360
 Miller, Jim, 291
 Miller, Vince, 385
 Milošević, Slobodan, 176
 Milton, John, 281
 Minarchism, 3
 Minarchist, 131, 133, 297, 366
 Minarchy, 136
 Mingardi, Alberto, 254, 338
 Minnesota, 379, 396
 Minsky, Hyman P., 290
 Miranda, Luis, 394
 Mises Academy, 287
 Misesian tradition, 15
 Mises Institute, 16, 17, 29, 48, 53,
 56, 61, 95, 96, 103, 118, 142,
 184, 202, 204, 222, 223, 254,
 255, 258, 259, 266–268, 287,
 298, 366, 375, 390, 404, 417,
 456, 457, 463
 Mises Institute's 35th Anniversary,
 203
 Mises Institute (in Brazil), 287
 Mises Institute (in Germany), 288
 Mises Institute Korea, 204
 Mises Institute Wire, 355
 Mises, Ludwig von, 2, 7, 8, 14, 15,
 32, 47, 48, 50, 57, 59, 60, 64,
 73, 99, 100, 103, 104, 106, 117,
 123, 128, 140, 141, 143, 148,
 163–166, 168, 170, 180, 181,
 184, 188–190, 215, 222, 225,
 234, 240–245, 254, 259, 264,
 267, 285, 286, 296, 297,

- 302–304, 329, 337, 354, 355, 366, 385, 390, 404, 415, 418, 422, 424, 425, 436, 444, 450, 457, 485, 486
- Anti-Capitalistic Mentality*, 222
- Bureaucracy*, 14
- “Economic Calculation in a Socialist Commonwealth”, 184
- Economic Policy*, 241
- Human Action*, 99, 117, 163–166, 189, 234, 240–243, 254, 297, 302, 303, 385, 404, 485
- Institute of Human Action Studies*, 304
- Liberalism*, 60, 64, 241
- Liberalismus*, 14, 15
- “Middle of the Road Policy Leads to Socialism”, 184
- Six Lessons on Capitalism and Liberalism*, 302
- Socialism*, 302, 354, 436
- Theory and History*, 141, 302
- The Theory of Money and Credit*, 47, 48, 245, 302
- The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 366
- Mises Media, 50
- Mises.org, 45
- Mises Studies Circle, 303
- Mises Study Group Conference, 486
- Mises University, 16, 17, 129, 223, 259, 463
- Mises University 2006, 184
- Mises University 2017, 367
- Mississippi, 398
- Mississippi Justice Institute, 400
- MIT, 172, 341–343, 403, 414, 441–444
- Mitra, Barun, 391
- MIT Students for Goldwater, 342
- Moberg, Vilhelm, 323
- Moderaterna, 43
- Molina, Luis de, 303
- Molinari, Gustave de, 128, 253
- Molyneux, Stefan, 30
- Mondale, Walter, 357
- Monetarist economics, 487
- Mongolia, 24
- Monopoly, 4
- Montaner, Carlos Alberto, 303, 305
- Mont Dallas Society, 188
- Monteiro, Fernando, 367
- Montenegro, 174, 176, 230
- Monterroso, Fernando, 304
- Montesquieu, 147
- Montessori private schools, 71
- Montevideo, Uruguay, 175
- Mont Pelerin Society, 170, 223, 248, 403, 417
- Moore, Michael, 371
- Morgantown, West Virginia, 19
- Mormon, 414
- Morning Edition and All Things Considered*, 464
- Morning Glory, 10
- Moroccans, 310
- Morocco, 255, 310, 311
- Morrell, Ben, 188
- Mosca, Gaetano, 253, 255
- Moscow, 106, 257, 258, 325, 328, 329, 395, 396, 436
- Moscow State University, 257, 327
- Moses, Robert, 235
- Moss, Robert, 148
- Moynihan, Pat, 234
- Moyo, Dambisa, 9
- Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*, 9
- Mr. Jones*, 74
- Mueller, Antony P., 78
- Mulligan, Kevin, 424
- Mundell, Robert, 173
- Munger, Michael, 405

- Munich, 288, 423
 Munich-Göttingen, 423, 425
 Münster, 15, 17
 Münster Erasmus, 16
 Münster University, 16
 Murata, Toshio, 485, 486
 Murphy, Bob, 184
 Murray, Charles, 418
 Muscovites, 396
 Muslims, 310
 Myrdal, Gunnar, 102
- N**
 Nakano, Yuta, 490
 Namibia, 153
 Naples, Italy, 255
 Narveson, Jan, 387
 Nassau, 416
 Näsulea, Christian, 312
 Näsulea, Diana, 312
 Nathaniel Brandon Institute, 99
 National Association for Freedom, 148
 National Association of Scholars, 235, 237, 465
 National Catholicism, 366
 National Cryptologic School, 71
 National Democratic Movement, 264
 National Democratic Revolution (NDR), 76, 78
 National Industrial Recovery Act, 464
 National Library of Bulgaria, 436
National Post, 386
 National Prosecution Authority (NPA), 76
National Review, 98, 241, 296, 333, 342, 456
 National Review Institute, 400
 National Socialism, 329
 National socialist, 319
 National Socialist German Workers Party, 149
 National Taxpayers Union (NTU), 346, 465
 National University of Rosario, 140
 NATO, 397
Nature, 111
 Naumann Foundation for Liberty, 304, 305
 Naval Reserves, 100
 Navy, 157
 Nazi, 352, 434
 Nazi Germany, 297
 NBC's *Prime Time Saturday*, 345
 Neapolitan Catholic priest, 81
 Nebraska, 20
 Negative externalities, 4
 Neoclassical economics, 165
 Nepal, 153, 435
 Neri, Max, 17
 Netanyahu, Benjamin, 142, 464
 Network of a Free Society, 213
New American, 456
New and Improved, 323
 New Deal, 278, 461, 464
 New Democratic Party (NDP), 476, 477
 Newfoundland, 474, 476
 New Hampshire, 22, 154–156
 New Jersey, 54, 316
 Newman, Jonathan, 96
 New Orleans, 198, 278, 279
New Republic, 98
 New School for Social Research, 116
New Testament Theology of the State, 185
 New York, 92, 151, 154, 159, 160, 189, 197, 198, 205, 206, 235, 237, 332, 353, 398, 408, 411, 418, 444
 New York's Free Libertarian Party, 234, 235
 New York City, 99, 154, 159, 168, 203, 205, 233, 237, 298, 442

- New York Post*, 237
New York Review of Books, 445
 New York Stock Exchange, 118
New York Times, 74, 119, 127, 159, 234, 347, 399
 New York University, 9, 104, 105, 108, 117, 188, 190, 206, 208, 222, 297, 298, 351–353, 390, 465, 483
 New York University's Stern School of Business, 236
 New York University Graduate School, 485
 New York University Press, 463
 NeXT, 153
Neznayka, 486
 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 316
 Nicolaus Copernicus University, 95
 Nicula, Roxana, 11
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 172, 252, 352
 Niger, 275
 Nigeria, 5, 217, 218
 Nigerians, 219
 Nikolova, Dessislava, 439
 Nisbet, Robert, 126
 Nisbett, Richard, 264
 Niskanen, William, 173, 174
 Nixon, Richard, 20, 31, 32, 109, 239, 244
 Nixon White House, 22
 Njoya, Wanjiru
 Economic Freedom and Social Justice, 317
 Property in Work, 316
 Nobel Prize, 100
 Nobel Prize in Economics, 103, 228, 368
Nobility and Civility: East and West, 56
 Nock, Albert Jay, 158, 170, 226, 338
 Our Enemy, the State, 158
 Nolan, David, 342, 343
 Non-Aggression Principle (NAP), 1, 3
 Non-anarchist, 346
 Noninterventionist, 21, 456
 Norberg, Johan, 312
 In Defense of Global Capitalism, 312, 323
 Norquist, Grover, 489
 North Carolina, 291–293
 North, Douglass, 224, 290
 Northern Bavaria, 283
 Northern League, 254
 North Korea, 199, 200, 380
 North Korean, 247
North Shore News (NSN), 273
 Northwestern University, 461
 Northwood Institute, 240
 Northwood University, 106, 240
 Norway, 24, 428
 Norwich University, 480
 Nosov, Nikolay, 486
 Nott, David, 348
 Nowakowski, Paweł, 95
 Nozick, Robert, 3, 43, 95, 131, 197, 252, 285, 321, 343, 428
 Anarchy, State, and Utopia, 95, 252, 285, 321
 NPR, 464
 NSF, 442
 Nutter, Warren, 172, 468
 Political Economy and Freedom, 172
 Nyerere, Julius, 316
 Nyíri, J.C., 424
Nyliberalen, 321
- O**
 Oates, Titus, 234
 Obafemi Awolowo University, 218
 Obama, Barack, 34, 275, 293, 358, 364, 464
 Obamacare, 399
 Objectivism, 140, 326, 343, 385, 392

- Objectivist, 11, 342
 Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria, 233
 Ocoee, Florida, 289
 October 1, 1980, 13
 O'Driscoll, Gerald, 188, 206
 Odysseus, 147, 305
 Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 173
 Offutt AFB, 19
 Ogilvie, Sheilagh C., 252
 Ohio University, 462, 465
 Okederain, Mayowa, 218
 Okediran, Olumayowa, 212, 448
 Okinawa, Japan, 157
 Oklahoma, 33
 Oklahoma City bombing, 33
 Old American West, 338
 Old Testament, 412
 Oledajo, Barrister Odunola, 218
 Oliver, Mike, 209
 Olsen, Darcy, 429
 Olympics, 398
 Olympic Training Center, 71
 Omaha, Nebraska, 19, 108, 168
 Omojuwa, Japheth, 218
On the Origins of the Modern Libertarian Legal Movement, 335
Open Society Magazine, 303
 Opitz, Edmund, 188
 Oprea, Ryan, 61
 Orange County, 348
 Ordeshook, Peter, 291
 Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA), 77
 Organization of American States (OAS), 480
Organizing Entrepreneurial Judgment: A New Approach to the Firm, 225
 Orlando, 416
 O'Rourke, P.J., 397
All the Trouble in the World, 397
 Orthodox-Christian, 310
 Orwell, George, 29, 108, 310, 486
 1984, 29, 310, 486
 Animal Farm, 29, 310
 Orwellian, 102
 OSCE Summit on the Environmental Protection, 438
 Österåker, 43
 Otawara City, 490
 Ottawa, 475
Out of Work, 464
 Overstock.com, 112
 Overton, Joseph, 242
 Owen, Nathaniel, 448
 Owens, Matthew, 63
 Owen, Wilfred, 152
 "Dulce et Decorum Est", 152
 Oxfam, 9
 Oxford, England, 20
 Oxford Libertarian Society, 421
 Oxford University, 317, 421, 424
- P**
 Pacific Legal Foundation, 22
 Packer, Clyde, 344
 Packer, Edith, 72
 Packer, Kerry, 344
 Padua, Italy, 255
 Page, Benjamin, 291
 Palmer, Tom, 8, 212, 247, 309, 311, 313
 Palo Alto, California, 463
Pandemia e Dirigismo, 129
 Paper Makers Union, 474
 Pardy, Bruce, 317
Pareto aujourd'hui, 253
 Pareto, Vilfredo, 255, 286, 470, 471
 Paris, 169, 253
Paris Match, 169
 Park, Chung-hee, 200, 202, 203
 Park, Geun-hye, 202, 203
 Park, William, 201, 202, 204

- Parliament, 79
- Paterson, Isabel, 2, 222
The God of the Machine, 222
- Patriot Act, 91, 373
- Patton Boggs, 398
- Paul, Apostle, 458
- Paul, Carol, 38
- Paul, Rand, 481, 482
- Paul, Ron, 4, 35–39, 53, 54, 56, 92, 109, 111, 122, 123, 161, 186, 204, 373, 409, 481
- PayPal, 275
- PBS *News Hour*, 259, 464
- Pearson, George, 102
- Penn State University, 110, 111
- Pennsylvania, 292, 413
- Penrose, Roger, 444
- Perdue, Bev, 293
- Perednik, Gustavo, 140
- Perez, Javier, 11
- Perryville, Missouri, 14
- Persian, 247
- Persian Gulf War, 456
- Personal Finance*, 409
- Personality and Individual Differences*, 193
- Peru, 5, 301, 304
- Perun Libertarismo vincente. Strategie politiche e culturali* (Towards a Victorious Libertarianism. Political and Cultural Strategies), 85
- Peruvian, 301
- Peruvian Aprista Party, 302
- Peterson, Jordan, 72
- Petraeus, David, 399
- Petroni, Angelo, 308
- Pettit, Philip, 424
- Philadelphia Society, 334
- Phillips, Tom, 415
- Phoenix, Arizona, 429
- Pilon, Roger, 335, 399
- Pina, Juan, 11
- Pinochet, Augusto, 175
- Piombini, Guglielmo, 254
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 236
- Plimer, Ian, 30
- Plonka, Agnieszka, 367
- Pluta, Leonard, 475
- Podborany, 401
- Poirot, Paul, 188
- Poland, 5, 14, 23, 123, 259, 367, 396, 423, 424, 427–431
- Polish, 54, 94, 95, 423
- Polish-American Leadership Academy, 430
- Polish Nobles' Commonwealth, 94
- Polish People's Republic, 94
- Polo, Marco, 56
- Polyphemus, 147
- Pompeo, Mike, 177
- Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 302
- Pontón, Rogelio, 143
- Poole, Robert W.
A Think Tank for Liberty, 349
Cutting Back City Hall, 346, 347
Rethinking America's Highways, 349
- Popperian, 143
- Popper, Karl, 110, 223, 302, 337, 422
- Popular Action, 302
- Population Council, 133
- Porcupine Freedom Festival, aka PorcFest, 154
- Portland, Oregon, 413
- Portuguese, 247, 480
- Positive externalities, 4
- Postmaster General, 34
- Postrel, Virginia, 347
- Post-socialist, 402, 405
- Potemkin, 172
- Poverty, Inc.*, 9

- Powell, Benjamin, 61, 405
 Prague, 402, 403, 423, 429
 Prague Spring, 433
 Praxeology, 165
 Pre-capitalist, 316
 Pregl, Zivko, 175, 176
 Presley, Sharon, 206
 Pretoria, South Africa, 151, 152
 Princeton Theological Seminary, 316
 Princeton University, 142, 245, 247, 316, 397, 462
 PRINCIPIA DISCORDIA, 90
 Private property rights, 3
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 444
 Progress & Freedom Foundation, 246
 Prohibition, 278
 Project Arizona, 430
 Prokofiev, Sergei, 326
 Property and Freedom Society, 17, 258
Property, Freedom, and Society, 255
 Protexarms, 328
 Proverbs 3:30, 457
 Provo, Utah, 414
 Public Accounting Committee, 487
Public Choice, 464
 Public Choice, 8, 288, 290, 346, 404
 Public Lands Council, 174
 Public Sector Accounting (IPSA), 488
 Public services, 4
 Pugsley, Jack, 409
 Pulitzer Prize, 74
 Pure Libertarian Student Organization (Students for Liberty - Korea), 203
 Putin, Vladimir, 464
- Q**
 Quain, Anthony, 236
Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics, 224, 259
- Queen's University, 317
 Queensview, 233
 Queensview West, 233, 235
- R**
 Rachmaninov, Sergey, 326
Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement, 92
 Radio France Internationale, 311
 Radio Free Europe, 311, 436
 Rahn, R.W., 438
 Raico, Ralph, 16, 90, 206, 254, 255, 298, 387, 457
 Raimondo, Justin, 2, 223, 298
An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard, 2
 Raleigh, North Carolina, 292
 Rallo, Juan Ramón, 367
 Ramaphosa, Cyril, 78
 Rand, Ayn, 3, 7, 10, 29, 41, 43, 46, 60, 72, 98, 99, 106, 132, 139, 140, 148, 149, 152, 194, 195, 197, 221, 222, 241, 246, 263, 316, 322, 326, 329, 333, 338, 341–343, 377, 384, 385, 389, 392, 397, 422, 457, 482
Anthem, 377
Atlas Shrugged, 10, 72, 98, 194, 234, 241, 246, 316, 317, 326, 333, 341, 383–385, 387, 397, 442
Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, 222
For the New Intellectual, 194
The Fountainhead, 29, 221, 389, 442
The Virtue of Selfishness, 140
We the Living, 195
 Rand Corporation, 98, 345
 Ransom, Greg, 260

- Rapid City, South Dakota, 411
 Rasmussen, Douglas, 255, 309, 311, 313
Rational Standard (RS), 448
 Ratliff, Charles, 290
 Ravello, Italy, 255
 Rawlsian, 318
 Rawls, John, 76
 Raw Milk Institute, 359
 RCMP, 477
 Read, Leonard, 103, 149, 170, 188, 190, 191, 312, 410, 418, 458
I, Pencil, 312
 “Leonard Read Changed My Life”, 188
 Reagan Republicans, 207
 Reagan, Ronald, 22, 23, 32, 66, 174, 208, 239, 240, 245, 252, 291, 293, 334, 335, 337, 357, 397, 413, 415
Real Heroes, 73
Reason, 21, 91, 174, 342–345, 347, 387, 417
 Reason, 419
 Reason Enterprises, 343
 Reason Forum, 347
 Reason Foundation, 91, 345, 346, 348, 349
 Reason TV, 348
 Red Army, 281, 396
 Red Army Fraction, 284
 Red Cross, 395
 Red Guards, 378
 Redneck Intellectual, 73
 Reed, Lawrence, 30, 73, 242, 418
 Refugee Resettlement and ‘Freedom of Choice’: The Case of Soviet Jewry, 70
 Refuseniks, 70
 Rehmke, Gregory, 311, 411
 Reilly, Chandler, 63
 Reinach, Adolf, 423, 425
The A Priori Foundations of the Civil Law, 424
 Reisman, George, 16, 241
Capitalism, 241
 Reno, Nevada, 174
Reports on Progress in Physics, 445
 Republican, 9, 55, 123, 241, 265, 266, 276, 291–293, 299, 334, 357–359, 374, 407, 413, 441, 456, 463, 480
 Republican National Convention, 334
 Republican Party, 20, 21, 71, 239, 240, 242, 291
 Republic of Peru, 303
 Resch, George, 223
 Resistance International, 108
Restoring the Promise: American Higher Education Today, 464
Reuters, 170
Review of Austrian Economics, 224, 463, 464
Review of Economic Perspectives, 112
 Reynolds, Alan, 345
 Rhee, Syng-man, 200, 202, 203
 Rhodesia, 159
 Ricardo, David, 189
 Rice, 443
 Rich, Andrea, 409
 Riesman, George, 117, 118
Capitalism: A Treatise on Economics, 117
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 151, 480
 Riordan, Richard, 348
 Riverdale, New York, 59
 Rizzo, Mario, 297
 Roark, Howard, 442
 Robbins, Lionel, 128
 Robertson, Dennis, 101
 Roberts, Paul Craig, 240
 ROCKME, 219
 Rockwell, Llewellyn, 103, 222, 223, 258, 367, 456, 463

- Roepke, Wilhelm, 128
 Roethke, Theodore, 110
 Rollins College, 408, 416
 Roman, 94, 147
 Romania, 5, 255, 310–312, 333
 Romanian, 54, 308, 310, 312
 Romanian Communist Party, 308
 Romanian Revolution, 93
 Romans 13, 185
 Rome, Italy, 10, 83, 125, 297, 395
 Ronald N. Simon Foundation, 411
 Ronald Reagan's Council of
 Economic Advisers, 290
 Ron Paul 2008 presidential campaign,
 267
 Ron Paul 2012 presidential campaign,
 123
 RonPaul.com, 122
Ron Paul Revolution, 92
 Ron Paul Revolution, 36, 38
 Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 221, 413
 Röpke, Wilhelm, 102, 170
 Rosario, Argentina, 141
 Rosenblum, Walter, 233
Rose of the Winds, 304
 Ross, Roslyn, 30
 Rostow, Walt, 115, 116
 Rothbard Graduate Seminar, 129
 Rothbardian circle, 106
 Rothbard, Joanne, 387
 Rothbard, Murray N., 2, 3, 14, 15,
 43, 48–50, 56, 57, 60, 62,
 83–85, 90, 91, 96, 103, 105,
 106, 116, 117, 123, 128, 142,
 148, 159, 160, 166, 180, 181,
 184, 185, 188, 195, 197, 201,
 203, 206, 222, 223, 234, 235,
 242, 252, 255, 258, 263, 264,
 267, 296, 297, 308, 317, 318,
 322, 338, 343, 355, 359, 367,
 384, 404, 415, 417, 422, 425,
 428, 444, 447, 450, 457, 458,
 463
A Libertarian Manifesto, 278
America's Great Depression, 415
Anatomy of the State, 56, 184, 359
Conceived in Liberty, 48
*Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against
 Nature*, 317, 318
For a New Liberty, 60, 62, 180,
 201, 242, 297, 338
History of Economics, 48
Journal of Applied Philosophy, 425
Man, Economy and State, 60, 103,
 105, 116, 166, 404, 415
Power and Market, 404
Rothbard-Rockwell Report, 457
The Ethics of Liberty, 14, 15, 48,
 96, 242, 252, 447
The Libertarian Manifesto, 428
*What Has Government Done to Our
 Money*, 404, 415
Rothbard-Rockwell Report, 387
 Rouanet, Louis, 96
 Rougemont, Denis de, 253
 Routledge, 223, 417, 425
 Rubin, Robert, 463
 Ruby Ridge, 33
 Rudolf, Crown Prince, 229
 Ruff, Howard, 408, 409, 415
 Rugey, Véronique de, 309
 Rule, Rick, 30
 Rural Metro Corporation, 347
 Russell, Dean, 188
 Russia, 5, 75, 248, 258, 260, 278,
 325, 326, 329, 330, 397, 418,
 439
 Russian, 65, 71, 74, 247, 259, 278,
 297, 326–328, 434, 436, 437,
 464
 Russian Empire, 326
 Russian Federation, 325, 326
 Russian Insurance Bank, 327

- Russian Revolution, 75
 Russo, Aaron, 35
 America: Freedom to Fascism, 35
 Rustici, Thomas, 429
 Rutgers University, 195, 196
- S**
- Sabino, Carlos, 305
 Sadowsky, S.J., Father James, 297
 Safire, William, 295
 Said, Edward, 56
 Orientalism, 56
 Sakeliga (*Business League*), 450, 452
 Salamanca, 16, 303
 Salazar, Federico, 301–303
 Salem Communications, 415
 Salerno, Joseph, 16, 48, 95, 254, 297, 405
 Salesian School, 301
 Salt Lake City, 36
 Sammeroff, Antony
 Universal Basic Income – For and Against, 375
 Samuel, Peter, 345
 Samuelson, Paul, 100, 102, 172, 180, 403, 414, 444
 Economics, 100, 403, 414
 San Diego, California, 100
 San Francisco, 21, 152, 153, 347
 San Joaquin Valley, 398
 Santa Barbara, California, 342, 344, 347
 Santiago, Chile, 175
 Santorum, Rick, 292
 Sapienza University of Rome, 9
 Sarah Lawrence College, 234
 Sardi, Jorge Ospina, 365
 The Conservative Ideas, 365
 Sarjanovic, Ivo, 143
 Commodities as an Asset Class: Essays on Inflation, the Paradox of Gold and the Impact of Crypto, 143
 Sato, Masao, 487
Saturday Evening Post, 157
 Saudi, 169
 Saul of Tarsus, 110
 Say's law, 417
 Say's Principle, 101
 Say, Jean-Baptiste, 102
 Scandinavia, 283
 Scarlett, Lynn, 347
 Schimmelbusch, Heinz, 170, 171
 Schlafly, Phyllis, 295
 Schmidt, Michael, 387
 Raw Milk and the Search for Human Kindness, 387
 Schmidtz, David, 405
 Schmitt, Carl, 254
 Schoenfeld, Gabriel, 234
 Schoolland, Ken, 218, 220, 377, 405
 The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible, 218
 School of Oriental and African Studies, 125, 129
 Schuhmann, Karl, 425
 Schultz, George, 397
 Schumpeterian, 170, 417
 Schumpeter, Joseph, 168, 171, 225, 286
 Schwab, Klaus, 384
 Schwartz, Thomas, 291
 Schwarz, Jiri, 403
 Sciabarra, Chris, 206
 Scient Corporation, 153
 Scotland, 5, 371
 Scottish, 102
 Scottish Enlightenment, 469–472
 Scottish Libertarian Party, 374
 Scottsdale, Arizona, 347
 Seasteading Institute, 209
Secessione. Una prospettiva liberale, 254

- Sechrest, Larry, 367
 Secretary of Agriculture, 34
 Secretary of Housing and Urban
 Development, 34
 Secretary of Labor, 32, 34
Security Analysis, 110
Selected Writings of Ludwig von Mises,
 106
 Selgin, George, 224, 309, 366
Theory of Free Banking, 309
 Seminar for Austro-German
 Philosophy, 424
 Senegalese, 9
 Senior, Nassau, 102
 Sennholz, Hans, 103, 188, 404, 409,
 418
 Serbia, 176
 Serbian, 176
Sesame Street, 70
 Sforza Castle, 255
Shadow's Mouth, 305
 Shaffer, Bretigne, 118
 Shaffer, Butler, 30
 Shakespeare, William, 469
As You Like It, 469
 Shanghai, 380
 Shapiro, Daniel, 235
 Shapiro, Ilya, 267, 335
 Shearmur, Jeremy, 422, 424
 Shea, Robert, 89
 Shepsle, Kenneth, 290
 Ship, Reuben, 234
The Investigator, 234
 Short, Gary, 188
 Siberia, 396
 Sicilian, 56
 Siegan, Bernie, 335
 Sierpiński, Jacek, 428
 Sierra Club, 34
 Sierra Leone, 217
 Sikorsky Aircraft, 342
 Silicon Valley, 153
 Simon, Herbert, 224
 Simons, Peter, 424
 Simultaneous Least Squares, 477
 Sinclair, Upton, 360
The Jungle, 360
 Singapore, 153, 263
 Singh, Amit, 481
 Sing Sing Correctional Facility, 408,
 412, 418
 Skarbek, David, 133
*Legal Systems Very Different from
 Ours*, 133
Skepticism and the Veil of Perception,
 195
 Skousen, Jo Ann, 412, 419
*Matriarchs of the Messiah: Valiant
 Women in the Lineage of Jesus
 Christ*, 412
 Skousen, Mark, 312, 366, 408–410,
 412, 419
Economic Logic, 418
Economics in One Page, 312
Forecasts & Strategies, 409, 415
High Finance on a Low Budget,
 408, 412
*Mark Skousen's Complete Guide to
 Privacy*, 408
*Tax Free: All the Legal Ways To Be
 Exempt from Federal, State and
 Social Security Taxes*, 409
The Banking and Credit Almanac,
 408
*The Making of Modern Economics:
 The Life and Ideas of the Great
 Thinkers*, 417
The Structure of Production, 416
 Slivinski, Steve, 429
 Slonim, Poland, 108
 Slovakia, 429
 Slovaks, 405
 Slovenia, 259
 Smiley, Gene, 463

- Smith, Adam, 14, 73, 102, 142, 189, 245, 266, 302, 320, 341, 366, 417, 418, 469, 471
An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, 73, 189
Wealth of Nations, 245
- Smith Barney, Inc., 246
- Smith, Barry, 423
Austrian Economics: Historical and Philosophical Background, 423
Austrian Philosophy: The Legacy of Franz Brentano, 423
- Smith, Donald, 247
- Smith, George, 90, 136
- Smith, Nathaniel, 63
- Smith, Red, 159
- Smith, Vernon L., 368
- Snelson, Jay Stuart, 30
- Snyder, Carl, 222
Capitalism: The Creator, 222
- Sobel, Russ, 62
- Socialism, 37, 45, 50, 66, 70, 73, 76, 84, 94, 96, 98, 115, 117, 119, 128, 140, 149, 170, 184, 194, 195, 202, 217–219, 228, 246, 259, 260, 284, 316, 325, 327, 329, 330, 353, 354, 364, 402, 413, 414, 436, 449
Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis, 354
- Socialist, 9, 10, 14, 59, 66, 76, 78, 86, 102, 104, 105, 115, 117, 119, 125, 127, 141, 149, 174, 175, 193, 194, 200, 203, 208, 233, 259, 260, 264, 284, 305, 310, 311, 316, 320, 326, 327, 330, 337, 365–367, 371, 374, 392, 402, 417, 428, 436, 450–452, 475–477, 486, 487
- Socialist Party, 50
- Socialist Students Association, 288
- Socialist University Association, 284
- Socialist Venezuela, 11
Social Theory and Practice, 196
- Societas Christiana*, 126
- Socrates, 234
- Sofia, 434, 435, 438, 439
- Soho Forum, 119
- Solidarity Movement, 452
- Solís, Paul Laurent, 302
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr, 235, 434, 436
Gulag Archipelago, 235
- Somalis, 243
- Somary, Felix, 168, 169, 171, 178
- Sorbonne, 253
- Sorman, Guy, 337
Freedom on Bail: The Real Thinkers of the Twentieth Century, 337
- Soto, Ángel, 305
- Soto, Hernando de, 9, 303
The Other Path, 9, 303
- Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 57
- South, 20, 442
- South Africa, 5, 76–79, 104, 151, 153, 159, 274, 447, 448, 450–453
- South African, 75, 77, 259, 274, 451, 453
- South African Constitution, 78, 452
- South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL), 77
- South America, 65, 175
- South Asia, 381
- Southern Baptist, 265
- Southern Economic Association, 258
- South Korea, 24, 199
- South of China, 378
- South Royalton, Vermont, 102, 103
- South Sudan, 213
- Sovgavan, 327

- Soviet, 7, 70, 148, 172, 179, 257, 258, 260, 280, 325–327, 395, 396, 401, 402, 437, 456, 486
- Soviet Bloc, 280
- Soviet Jews, 70
- Soviet Union, 20, 25, 70, 115, 119, 194, 229, 257, 259, 260, 283, 326, 327, 351, 380, 395, 402, 413, 436, 437, 486
- Sowell, Thomas, 2, 78, 117, 296, 346
A Personal Odyssey, 2
Knowledge and Decisions, 346
- Spain, 5, 16, 17, 129, 283, 288, 303
- Spanish, 10, 11, 16, 54, 259
- Special Assistant to the President for Policy Development, 23
- Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 465
- Spencer, Herbert, 99
- Spendel, Jacek, 220
- Spivey, Matt, 269
Re-Reading Economics in Literature: A Capitalist Critical Perspective, 269
- Spooner, Lysander, 90, 255, 308
- Stagnaro, Carlo, 254
- Stalinist, 113, 351
- Stalinist Marxists, 100
- Stalin, Joseph, 74–76, 396, 437
- Stanfield, Elijah, 37
Stanford Arena, 21
Stanford Daily, 21, 22
Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 78
- Stanford Law School, 21
- Stanford University, 21, 172, 223, 463
- Star-Spangled Banner, 397
- Star Trek, 152
- State Committee on Prices, 258
- Staten Island, New York, 160
- State University of New York at Buffalo, 425
- Steele, David, 422, 424
- Stein, Ben, 418
- Stein, Edith, 424
- Stevenson, Adlai, 114
- Stevens, Sean, 237
- Stiftung, Friedrich Naumann, 14
- Stirner, Max, 320
- St. John Paul II, 423, 424
- St. Louis, Missouri, 170, 290
- Stockholm, Sweden, 41, 151, 319, 321
- Stockman, David, 291
- Stolper, Gustav, 102
StoriaLibera, 86, 129, 181
- Storr, Virgil, 61, 63
- Stossel, John, 11
- St. Petersburg, Florida, 435
- Strategic Air Command, 19
- Street Vendors' Act in 2014, 394
- strike-the-root.com, 45
- Stringham, Edward, 61, 405
Anarchy, State, and Public Choice, 61
- St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, 424
- Students for a Libertarian Society, 206
- Students For Liberty, 186, 211–213, 218, 366, 367, 419, 448
- Students for Liberty Africa, 219
- Studies in Higher Education*, 237
- Stuyvesant High School, 206
- Successful Liberal Policies 2, Solutions to Overcome Poverty*, 305
- Suharto, 176
- Summers, Larry, 463
- Summer University, 309
- Sumner, Bill, 247
- Sumner, William Graham, 99
- Sunnyside, 233
- Sunstein, Cass, 398

Supreme Court, 4, 34, 334, 336,
399, 429
Surrey, England, 125
Swarovski, Daniel, 175
Swaziland, 153
Sweden, 5, 41–43, 152, 229, 323,
403
Swedish, 42–44, 102, 320
Swiss, 29, 253
Switzerland, 438
Syracuse University, 332, 333
Syria, 275
Szasz, Thomas, 274

T

Taggart, Dagny (fictional character),
72
Taleb, Nassim, 112
Tallahassee, Florida, 21
Tallinn, Estonia, 260
Tame, Chris, 149, 150, 422
Tanzania, 379
TASIS, 125
Taussig, Frank, 101
Taxpayer's Day, 489
Taxpayer Protection Pledge, 489
Tax Reform (JTR), 489
TED Talks, 220
Tejada, Alexander Sáenz, 302
Tejera, Ariel, 141
Templeton Foundation, 312
Templeton, Kenneth, 102
Templeton, Sir John, 247
Texas, 290
Thailand, 153
Thatcher, Margaret, 173, 229, 252,
323, 337, 347, 386, 422, 464,
489
The Bell Curve, 109
The Cold War, 456
*The Economy and Society of the Age of
Statism*, 202

The Eris Society, 409
The Fraser Institute, 393
The Freeman, 99, 188, 342, 386,
418, 457
The Free Market, 456, 457
The Free Nation, 148, 149
The Fund for American Studies
(TFAS), 8, 429
The Globe and Mail, 384
The Independent Review, 5, 62, 63,
457
The Individualist, 343
The Inflation Survival Letter, 415
The Japanese Institute of Certified
Public Accountants, 488
The Law, 73
The Lawyers Weekly, 386
The Little Curly Black Hair, 152
The Machinery of Freedom, 132–135
The Market and Accounting, 485
The Naked Communist, 413
The Nation, 98
The Nature of the Market, 164
The New Guard, 133
*The New Palgrave Dictionary of
Money and Finance*, 173
*The New Path of Freedom, Four
Liberal Essays*, 305
The New Prohibition, 196
The New Republic, 342
Theory of Public Sector Accounting,
489
*The Populist Deceit: How Our
Countries Get Ruined and How
to Rescue Them*, 11
The Radical (libertarian column), 133
Theresienstadt Concentration Camp,
434
*The Review of Austrian Economics
(RAE)*, 63

- The Routledge Companion to the Makers of Modern Entrepreneurship*, 221
 Theroux, David, 5, 63, 223
The Soviet Ideology, 364
The Sun, 158, 159
The Sun Also Rises, 107
The Sunday Sun, 158
The Third "I", 152
 The Tikvah Fund, 142
The Times, 323
The Truman Show, 55
The Virtue of Selfishness, 98, 241
The Wire, 158
 Thick libertarianism, 4
 Thiel, Peter, 209
 Third World, 30
This is Burning Man, 92
 Thomas, Cal, 295
 Thommesen, Sven, 390
 Thompson, Bradley, 73
 Thompson, Earl, 134
 Thornton, Mark, 16, 95, 298
 Three-mile-Island, 437
 Tiananmen Square, 380
 Tianjin, China, 377
 Tier, Mark, 344
 Timberlake, Dick, 463
 Timbro, 322, 323
Time, 273, 397
Time and Modes of Being, 423
 Tocqueville, Alexis de, 130
 The Old Regime and the Revolution, 130
 Tolstoy, Leo, 278, 281, 378
 The Devil, 278
 War and Peace, 378
 Tolyatti, 435
Tomorrow, Capitalism, 252
Tonight Show with Jay Leno, 464
 Tool, Marc, 100
 Torcuato Di Tella University, 143
 Toronto, 169, 384–386, 396
Toronto Star, 384
 Toronto Trust Argentina (TTA), 169
 Torquemada, 234
 Torres, Nelvar Carreteros, 302
 Toruń, Poland, 95
 Tramedoro Edizioni, 339
 Transportation Security Administration, 34
 Trapani, Daniel, 142
 Trent, Darrell, 22
 Trent, Tyler, 447
 Trinity Church, 160
 Tritnaha, 321
 Trotskyite, 208
 Trumbull, Bill, 62
 Trump, Donald, 161, 177, 275, 403
 Tsvetaeva, Marina, 326
 Tuccille, Jerome, 234
 It Usually Begins with Ayn Rand, 234
 Tucker, Jeffrey, 30, 50, 268
 Tullock, Gordon, 59, 61, 134, 172, 285, 468
 Explorations in the Theory of Anarchy, 61
 Further Explorations in the Theory of Anarchy, 61
 Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, 302
 Turkey, 284
 Tuscany, 173
 Tuttle Twins, 37–39
 Twitter, 275, 351, 352, 399
 Two Roads, One Truth, 49
 Tyrol, 227, 229, 231
- U**
 Uchiyama, Masaru, 489
 Uganda, 217
 Ukraine, 5, 74, 258, 329, 423

- UkraineGenocide.com, 74
- Ukrainian, 54, 74
- Ukrainian War, 281
- Un'idea elvetica di libertà. Nella crisi dell'Europa*, 253
- Unicef, 9
- Unification of Italy, 54
- Union, 54
- Unión Editorial, 303, 305
- Union Leader*, 155
- United Arab Emirates, 173
- United Federation of Teachers, 233
- United Gymnastics Academy, 71
- United Kingdom, 5, 20, 26, 28, 229, 374, 424
- United Nations, 9, 360, 398, 480
- United Order, 414
- United States, 3, 4, 11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 25, 29, 31, 32, 37, 54, 62, 66, 67, 70, 71, 91, 108, 122, 170, 173, 177, 179, 180, 202, 209, 229, 247, 248, 258, 259, 272, 283, 286, 292, 296, 297, 323, 326, 328, 338, 358, 367, 379, 380, 390, 391, 394, 395, 397, 399, 402, 404, 410, 422, 429, 431, 441, 442, 444, 451, 456, 480, 488
- Universal Encyclopedia*, 94
- Universe Books, 345
- Universidad de La Salle, 365
- Universidad Francisco Marroquin (UFM), 288
- Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 302
- Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, 17, 129
- Université d'Aix-Marseille III, 307, 309, 312
- Université Paris-Dauphine, 307
- University in London, 125
- University of Angers, 17
- University of Arizona, 405
- University of California, Berkeley, 167, 172, 174, 194, 195, 223, 224
- University of California, Los Angeles, 234, 236, 346
- University of California, Santa Barbara, 342
- University of Chicago, 32, 101, 132–134, 331, 333, 398, 414, 461, 463
- University of Chicago Law School, 134
- University of Chicago Press, 223
- University of Colorado (CU), 171, 172, 196
- University of Dallas, 189
- University of Donja Gorica, 230
- University of Economics, 402–405
- University of Edinburgh, 418
- University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU-EN), 284, 285
- University of Florida, 90, 289, 408
- University of Georgia, 224, 463
- University of Hartford, 103
- University of Houston, 442
- University of Ibadan, 218
- University of Illinois, 461
- University of Innsbruck, 229
- University of Italian Switzerland (USI), 253
- University of Las Vegas, 15
- University of Manchester, 424, 425
- University of Maryland, 443
- University of Michigan, 108, 109
- University of Michigan-Dearborn, 391
- University of Missouri, 45, 224
- University of Nairobi, 316
- University of Nairobi's School of Law, 211
- University of North Carolina, 291
- University of North Florida, 71
- University of Pretoria, 152, 447, 450

- University of Salamanca, 303, 304
 University of San Diego Law School, 335
 University of San Marcos, 302
 University of Siena, 254
 University of Southern California, 468
 University of Stockholm, 322
 University of Texas, 187, 188, 291
 University of Texas at Austin, 185
 University of the Latin American Educational Center (UCEL), 140
 University of Toronto, 385
 University of Toronto Schools, 397
 University of Verona, 254
 University of Virginia (UVA), 5, 172, 468
 University of Western Ontario, 386
 University of Witwatersrand, 76
 Unmarried Mothers' Association, 146
 Upper Silesia, 428
 Uribe, Álvaro, 366
 U.S. Air Force, 19, 71
 U.S. Army, 159
 US Army Military Government, 202
USA Today, 34
 US Commerce Department, 416
 U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor and Genocide Awareness, 74
 U.S. Constitution, 3
 U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, 398
 USDA, 360
 U.S. Federal Trade Commission, 290
 U.S. Institute of Peace, 258
 US Libertarian Party, 385, 431
 USS Hornet, 158
 USSR, 433, 435–437
 Utah, 36
- V**
 Vaduz, 142
 Vance, Laurence, 185
 van Dun, Frank, 449
 van Eaton, Charles, 297
 Van, Germinal G., 78
 van Huyssteen, Christiaan, 448
 van Staden, Martin, 78
 Vargas Llosa, Mario, 301, 302, 305
The City and the Dogs, 305
 Varveus, Anders, 321
 Vasquez, Ian, 8
 Velvet Revolution, 402
 Venezuela, 66, 367
 Venezuelan, 65, 66, 247
 Venice, Italy, 487
 Vermont, 332
 Verón, Leandro, 141
 Vesuvius, 83
 Victor, Marc, 220
 Vienna, 70, 104, 169, 175, 177, 278, 367, 395, 398, 423
 Viennese, 104, 168
 Vietnam, 19, 153, 345, 441
 Vietnam War, 32, 100, 115, 180, 275, 284, 434, 441, 462
 Villeneuve, Denis, 194
Dune, 194
 Vinnytsia, Ukraine, 69
 Virginia, 31, 61, 62, 468, 481
 Virginia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 400
 Virginia Military Institute, 189
 Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI), 134
 Virginia Tech, 32
 Vitale, Alessandro, 254, 338
 Vitoria, Francisco de, 303
 Voice of America, 311
 Volcker, Paul, 160
 Voltaire, 147, 234, 341
 Vonnegut, Kurt, 152
Cat's Cradle, 152

Slaughterhouse-Five, 152

W

- Wacker, Ulrich, 305
 Wagner Act, 464
 Walker, Michael, 386
 Wall Street, 118, 158, 159, 296
Wall Street Journal, 33, 237, 347, 411, 246, 463
 Walmart, 14, 465
 Walters, Sir Alan, 173
 Walton, Garry, 403
 Wanniski, Jude, 240
 War between the States, 54
 Warner, Matt, 247
 Warsaw Pact, 228, 283, 434
 Washington, D.C., 10, 19, 23, 32, 173, 177, 218, 220, 258, 347–349, 398, 408, 416, 429, 448, 480
 Washington Duke Inn, 292
Washington Post, 21, 34, 237, 347, 419
Washington Times, 33
 Washington University, 290
 Watergate, 20, 32, 239
 Waterloo Bridge, 434
 Waugh, Evelyn, 278
Brideshead Revisited, 278
 Weapons of Mass Destruction, 33
 Weaver, Vicki, 33
 Weber, Max, 255, 436
Protestant Ethics, 436
Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 175
Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 175
 Wechat, 165
 Weidenbaum, Murray, 290, 293
 Weigl, Jim, 342, 343
 Weingast, Barry, 290
 Weinschenk, Aaron C., 193
 Weiss, Kai, 367
 Weisz, Nicolae, 310
 West, 25, 28–30, 70, 164, 212, 214, 228, 276, 283, 353, 378, 395, 430, 434, 437, 451, 453, 485, 490
 West, E.G., 297
 Western, 257, 405
 Western and Eastern Europe, 53
 Western civilization, 83
 Western Czech, 434
 Western Czechoslovakia, 434
 Western Economic Association, 258
 Western Europe, 310, 327, 402
 Western European, 310, 402
 Western Union, 10
 Western University, 475
 Westerwelle, Guido, 14
 West Germany, 13, 14, 179, 180, 283, 285
 West Thirties, 234
 West Virginia University, 62, 235
 West Virginia University College of Law, 267
 West Wing, 23
 Whetstone, Linda, 74, 212, 247
 White House, 23, 177, 299
 White House Council of Economic Advisers, 226
 White, Lawrence, 141, 224, 366
 Whitfield, Dan, 482
 Whole Foods Market, 419
 Wholesome Meat Act of 1967, 359
 Wicker, Elmus, 158
 Wicksell, Knut, 102
 Wicksteed, Philip, 101
 Wiesbaden, Germany, 13
 Wilder, Laura Ingalls, 2
 Williamson, Oliver, 224
 Williams, Walter, 2, 78, 237, 296
Up from the Projects: An Autobiography, 2

Williston Park, New York, 157
 Wilson, Robert Anton, 89
 Wimmer, Larry, 414
 Winn, Abel, 61
 Wintermans, Toni, 475
 Winter Park, Florida, 408, 416
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 49
 Wojtyła, Karol, 423, 424
 Woleński, Jan, 424
 Wolff, Richard, 119
 Wolff, Robert Paul, 76
 Wolfram, Gary, 243, 297
 Woode-Smith, Nicholas, 448
 Wood, Garrett, 63
 Woodrow Wilson School of Public
 and International Affairs, 397
 Wood, St. Johns, 416
 Woods, Tom, 48, 50, 127, 184, 260,
 298, 299, 358, 367, 457
YouTube, 127
 Wooldridge, William C., 346
Uncle Sam, The Monopoly Man, 346
 Woolworth Building, 161
 World Bank, 9, 34
 World Economic Forum, 384
 World Health Organization, 91, 360
 World Taxpayers Associations, 489
 World Trade Center, 33, 265, 411
World Trade Magazine, 174
 World Trade Organization, 323
 World War I, 101, 123, 229, 278
 World War II, 20, 54, 179, 201, 229,
 281, 332, 345, 485
 World Wars, 214

X

Xoán de Lugo Institute, 129

Y

Yale University, 55
 Yandle, Bruce, 429
 Yeager, Leland, 172, 390, 468
 Yiannopoulos, Milo, 353
 Yokkaichi, Mie Prefecture, 486
 Yoshida, Hiroshi, 489
 Young America's Foundation, 418
 Young Americans for Freedom, 234,
 342
 Young Americans for Liberty (YAL),
 23, 66, 186
 YouTube, 10, 78, 119, 264, 298,
 358, 372–374
 Yugoslav, 175, 176
 Yugoslavia, 175, 176, 228, 229, 283,
 434

Z

Zambia, 30, 379
 Zaragoza, Spain, 10
 Zen Buddhism, 435
Zero Percent, 412
 Zhejiang University, 163, 164
 Zimbabwe, 30, 451
 Zinovievna Rosenbaum, Alisa, 326
 Zuma, Jacob, 76, 78
 Zupan, Marty, 344, 347
 Zwolinski, Matt, 4
 “Bleeding Heart Libertarians: Free
 Markets and Social Justice”, 4