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by Doug Casey and Robert H. Miller

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by George H. Smith

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Letters

Can't Win 'Em All

I saw a link to your site and decided to check it out. As soon as I saw the quote by Milton Friedman, the champion of the withholding tax, on the home page, I quickly concluded that the editors of the website possess no integrity whatsoever and vowed never to visit the site again.

Tim Tonnesen
Austin, TX

The Shouts Must Go On

It's no discredit to Bill Merritt that he says, in "The Hillary/Mamie meme" (Reflections, April), "By the time you read this, the shouting will most likely be over between Hillary and Obama . . ."

I only mention it because it's another sign of how unpredictable this year's presidential campaign has been.

Richard Winger
San Francisco, CA

Breathe, Breathe in the Air

In "Death by Environmentalism" (April), Gary Jason mentions the asbestos problem. I think it was Skeptical Inquirer that described the installation of asbestos insulation on pipes in submarines being built during World War II. The pipes were sprayed with an adhesive followed by a spray of asbestos particles.

Somebody complained that the asbestos workers were working without dust masks in a cloud of asbestos dust. That led 20 years later to a study of those workers. Yes, some 20 of those workers had contracted lung cancer. However, the study noted that 19 of those 20 were cigarette smokers.

Naturally the villain was asbestos, not tobacco. After all, tobacco generates lots of tax money, asbestos hardly any.

Everett DeJager
Cincinnati, OH

Writers of the World, Unite

Tim Slagle proves yet again ("Guild system," Reflections, March) that libertarians have a tendency to let their hatred for unions trump their principles. If some company had put out a DVD of the collected comedy routines of Mr. Slagle, for instance, for which sales they paid him royalties, as per his contract, and then turned around and started selling downloaded copies of said routines without providing him with any royalties, I would think that Mr. Slagle would hightail it to a lawyer and declare this an unfair exploitation of his intellectual property and a theft of his rightful royalty.

The members of the Writers Guild of America are essentially demanding that systems be put in place to ensure that they will be fairly compensated for the sale of their intellectual property through new technology, including the internet. They have taken a hard line because the last time new technology shook up the film and television industries, with the coming of the VHS tape and then the DVD, they bought the studios' line that the matter needed to be studied, and they got stuck with a lousy deal.

Would it help, Mr. Slagle, if some of the picket signs said "Stand Up for Intellectual Property Rights! Support WGA Residuals!" or does collective action by any group of workers offend you? Or do you just prefer dodging such issues by comparing apples to oranges, i.e., films and TV shows to cars and SUVs?

Charles K. Alexander II
Albany, NY

Slagle responds: It's not my hatred of unions. It is the principle of unions that I oppose. Yes, there is strength in numbers, but when someone submits to the

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will of a group, he forfeits individual rights. I understand why a worker might want to do that, but I prefer being a free agent.

And while we're on the topic, I actually do have a few videos out. I also have a CD, and internet downloads too. They're available at TimSlagle.com. I am paid generous royalties on the products that are sold there. There are also tapes and CDs available of the shows I've done for Liberty, which can be yours by calling 1-800-854-6991. I don't see a dime from those, but the profits help keep the magazine printed every month, and I think there's a value for that beyond royalties. Why the difference? Because I negotiated different contracts for each product.

That's the nice thing about being a comic: I don't have to belong to a union that dictates a set royalty that I agree to accept. I am free to charge as much or as little as I want from each product sold. I also don't have a mob of thugs telling me I have to stay home from work for the next three months while they try and get a couple extra pennies out of the clubs for me.

Mr. Alexander says the creation of an auto is different than the creation of a TV show, and I don't really get that. Work for hire is work for hire. Both products have teams that create, design, and engineer the production. There are also workers that put the products together, and a network of distributors that get the products to the customers. There is intellectual property in both products. The UAW doesn't get royalties for the people who build cars, or for the people who design them. (Some do — I believe Eddie Bauer, Carroll Shelby, and the estate of Giacinto Ghia all get royalties every time a vehicle is sold with their name on it.)

Anyway, it wasn't the union I was criticizing, but the lack of solidarity between artists' guilds and labor unions. I'm sure that the writers think they are part of the same struggle, but I guarantee that Joe from Detroit doesn't see it that way.

Decompartmentalizing

An ethnographer — at least one with any exposure to phenomenology — should know that phenomena cannot be understood in isolation. Jacques Delacroix's characterization of leftists ("Ethnography of the Left," April) matches perfectly my own experience of academentia. But it also matches just as well my experience of conservatives. The only difference I discern is in the content of the bad news to which they are attached: leftists insist that the world is being destroyed by capitalism; conservatives, by moral decay — as manifested, for example, in sexual license, postmodernism, and permeable borders leading to an influx of Catholics.

It is hardly a mystery why many liberals and conservatives alike are poorly informed, compartmentalize information, avoid pursuing political discussions in depth, and so on. Most people acquire their political opinions by osmosis, from either their childhood or college environment. The choice constitutes a core part of their identity — and of their moral identity, a point I have developed earlier in these pages ("Who's Your Daddy?: Authority, Asceticism, and the Spread of Liberty," April 2005) — so challenges will be resisted strongly. But, as also with religious beliefs, there is typically little intellectual basis, so defenses have to take forms like evasion or intimidation rather than sustained argument. The first line of defense, in fact, is commonly to surround yourself with like-minded people, so serious confrontations don't arise.

Few of us live or grow up in predominantly libertarian environments, on the other hand. We have to go out of our way just to find out about that view, and its intellectual properties are among its principal attractions. People don't become libertarians to fit in; indeed identifying as libertarian takes a pretty high tolerance for being perceived as deviant. And, given the general cultural hostility to libertarianism, you can hardly stick your nose out the door until you've become an expert in the literature on gun control, climate change, and the Panic of 1907. Libertarians can exhibit some of the same ignorance or defensiveness as leftists and conservatives, of course; but in many cases I think the problem is simply unexamined attitudes and commitments carried over from conservatism.

Delacroix is justified in describing his ethnographic project as "permanent"; with his apparent method, it would indeed take literally forever to understand anything at all. But I think that

From the Editor

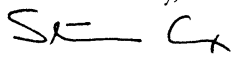
It's not the function of this little column to endorse political candidates. Not at all. But there's a political endorsement that does interest me. It's by Arlo Guthrie, the folk singer, who said this about Ron Paul, the libertarian candidate for the Republican nomination: "I love this guy. Dr. Paul is the only candidate I know of who would have signed the Constitution of the United States."

Now, when you think about it . . . isn't that true? None of the rest of them would have signed it. Not in a million years. If they had their way, they'd all be amending it to give the government more power over the individual. All for good purposes, of course — thousands of good purposes.

I'm proud of the fact that Liberty is that rarest of things in journalism — a nationally circulated magazine whose authors and editors would actually be happy to sign the Constitution. Well, there are exceptions. Some of our contributors wouldn't sign it because they believe it doesn't go nearly far enough in guaranteeing the individual's freedom to do what he or she wants to do. But that should make them just as lovable, in Mr. Guthrie's terms. After all, what's more lovable than a passion for liberty?

And we have it here.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox

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his puzzles might be resolved rather quickly just by expanding his social horizons.

Michael Acree
San Francisco, CA

Delacroix responds: Acree affirms an equivalence between the pessimism of liberals and the alleged pessimism of conservatives because, he says, the latter are obsessed with moral decay. It seems to me that he can only be referring to religious conservatives, or more narrowly, to evangelical Christians, or to a caricature of such. Here is what I mean by "conservatives": believe that rights belong to individuals, not to groups; think that capitalism, and pretty much only capitalism, works; object to big government on both economic and ethical grounds.

With this common definition, it seems obvious that many conservatives have a firmly secular orientation because they are deliberately rationalists, or because they are agnostics, or atheists (like me). Such people are rarely much preoccupied with the alleged moral decay of society in general. They take evil as more or less a constant. In fact, they may not think there is any such decay. (I, for one, see the world as slightly more virtuous than it was in my childhood.) Those who think the world is going to pot implicitly refer to a lost Golden Age; they are the children of Rousseau. Most conservatives are children of Locke, Burke, Voltaire, and, often, of Spinoza as well. (God does not care; it matters not if he exists. Hence, we have to do the right thing.) The fact that The Wall Street Journal and the Weekly Standard have a large readership suggests to me that my view is not wholly imaginary, that there are many such conservatives. My use of the term "conservative" may have rung Acree's bell in a way not intended. I am using the term in its conventional, commonsensical way, with no reference to finer sectarian distinctions. Millions of us are conservatives with libertarian leanings but not a deep-seated libertarian faith. I am reading between the lines of Acree's reply here: fortunately, libertarian thought and action are not limited to those in the Libertarian Party.

I agree pretty much with everything else in Acree's letter and, yes, I am opening my social horizons. That's why I wrote my micro-essay in the first place.

Face Value

Bernard von NotHaus ("The Attack on the Liberty Dollar," March) should have designated his silver coins by metallic content and weight. Although the government might still have objected, NotHaus could not then have been accused of piggybacking on the government's dollar-currency system. If the Liberty silver medallions had been

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Erratum

I want to correct a mistake I made in my review of Peter Dale Scott's book, "The Road to 9/11" (Liberty, April 2008). I indicated that Vice President Cheney had testified under oath to the 9/11 Commission. In fact, Cheney did not give sworn testimony to the Commission — he was not under oath at the time he was questioned.

— Jon Harrison

Reflections

And the winner is . . . — It's late on March 4, billed as the Second Super Tuesday. As I write this, it has become clear that Sen. McCain has secured his position as his party's nominee for president, while Senators Obama and Clinton will continue to fight for their party's title. After twelve losses in a row, the rustbelt state of Ohio seems to have favored Clinton, while Texas is "too close to call."

But can the same thing be said about the election as a whole? After all, whether it's Obama, Clinton, or McCain, it's not too close to make the call that the next president will be attracted to power as a moth to flame, will be happy to find new ways to spend your money on programs that he or she considers worthwhile, and will be willing to project force virtually anywhere in the world without any necessity of an act of Congress.

So I think on this fourth day of March, still eight months from election night, that we have already decided to elect Big Government. — Ross Levatter

The command ecology — I think I finally figured out why socialists tend to be on the pro-global-warming side of the debate. Most of us in the opposition think that the warming is inevitable. We believe that even if it is caused by human activity, with so many people on the earth who want the luxuries that carbon fuels provide, stopping the emission of carbon is impossible. It's like trying to make people give up sex.

It is the nature of socialists to believe that everything can be controlled. They believe they're smart enough to control the economy better than market forces, and given the power to micromanage they can bring more prosperity to the world. They also think that human development can be altered, and firmly believe crime, poverty, disease, and risk can be totally eliminated from the face of the earth. Why wouldn't they think that humans have power over the weather as well?

All we have to do is resign ourselves to their superior intellects, and accept their dominion over our lives. — Tim Slagle

Command and control — In late February, I listened to a report on inner-city Los Angeles street crime on National Public Radio's afternoon drive-time show "All Things Considered." The reporter was waltzing through the PC minefield of an increase in Black vs. Hispanic crime when she interviewed a witness to a recent daytime shooting. Asking leading questions, the reporter marveled that, with a police station only a few blocks away, the LAPD "couldn't control the neighborhood."

News flash to NPR's feeble-minded staff: it is not the job of the police to control neighborhoods. Their job is to investigate crimes. Residents are supposed to control their own neighborhoods. — Jim Walsh

See the world — I saw an advertisement for ArmedForcesEntertainment.com (Tag line: "Tour for the world's most appreciative audience"), which offered "Tour 08," visiting "Belgium, Greece, Italy, Japan, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Honduras, Puerto Rico, and Germany." These are, of course, just a few of the places where American troops are stationed (that is, permanently garrisoned).

Stop someone at random on the street and ask him if he thinks it is true or false that the American armed forces have fully staffed American military bases in Honduras, Belgium, Greece, etc., etc., etc.

My experience is that almost everyone says "No."

Then explain (possibly using a printout Wikipedia article or Google search) that it really is true; and ask if he has any problem with reciprocation — agreeing to allow foreign governments to set up military bases in the United States, run by soldiers from Qatar, Bahrain, Honduras, and perhaps even Iraq. My experience is that almost everyone says "Yes, I have a big problem with that." Foreign troops are not welcome here.

Nevertheless, a policy of American nonintervention-ism is difficult to sell to the American people: it's a combination of ignorance of the facts and an unhesitating belief in American exceptionalism. — Ross Levatter

Liberty and authority — Do the tenants in public housing have a right to post things on the outside of their apartment doors? The question came up to the Washington Supreme Court, which decided, 5 to 4, that they did have that right.

The case involved the Seattle Housing Authority. Some of its tenants were expressing themselves on their apartment doors, in some cases with swastikas or images of naked people. Other tenants complained, at which point the Authority banned all placards, postings, and signs. Typical of government, the Authority was not going to decide which images were offensive and which not, so it banned all of them. A tenant group sued, claiming that the ban violated its free-speech rights under the federal and state constitutions.

Four justices argued that the Authority, as a subset of the state, should have the same rights as any apartment owner, which would include the right to make rules for the outside surfaces of apartment doors. They argued that free speech did not apply to all public property — you cannot paint your

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

I promise that Word Watch will not become Election Watch. Though this is an election year, there are more important things than elections. Nevertheless, now is probably a good time to survey the low swamps and thickets of Obamaland. Maybe, then, we can get all that behind us.

Most readers of this journal — indeed, most people who are capable of reading — already realize that Obama's tirades about the necessity for change are just so many demands that the government take money from the rich (i.e., everyone not miserably poor) and give it to the disadvantaged (i.e., bureaucrats who have the advantage of administering social programs). Everything Obama advocates has been discredited by generations of thought and experience. What he wants is a return to the distant past, to a past beyond the reach of modern economics and the knowledge of modern history, or any history at all. He wants to return to some primitive condition in which politicians were worshiped for taking stuff from X and giving it to Y.

The oddity of the Obamist approach to history was apparent in Mrs. Obama's remarks in Milwaukee on February 18. "For the first time in my adult life," she said, "I am really proud of my country. Not just because Barack is doing well, but I think people are hungry for change."

This woman is 44 years old. She was educated at Princeton and Harvard. She may not cherish any personal recollections of the civil rights revolution of the 1960s, but someone might possibly have told her about it at some time. She might also have learned, somehow, about such small events as the American Revolution and the American Civil War, events that count for evidence of some degree of hunger for change on the part of the American people. And it's always possible that she retains some memory of the Reagan movement, and the hunger for change that it evinced. Her record as a public servant with a specialty in left-wing social meddling indicates that right-wing hunger would not be her favorite form, but hunger it was nonetheless. Its spectacular manifestation in the 1980s might have given her a hint that "change" isn't necessarily a good thing for everyone. I know this is a hard saying, almost impossible to understand, but change is not an exact equivalent for God. Think about it: some changes may actually be for the worse.

Here a long pause, to allow readers to grok this difficult point.

OK, I'm back.

Now, speaking of Reagan, or of Reagan's speaking, I have to tell you that I was never one of those people who regarded him as a "great communicator." Maybe he was something like that in the 1960s, but not in the 1980s. To me, at least, he came across as a nice guy and a strong personality, which can be hard to do, simultaneously; and he had an occasional burst of genius. But on the whole, he was a windbag like the rest of them. So's Obama, but without any bursts of genius. In fact, there are no bursts of anything in his oratory, except the kind of bluster that you used to hear in elections for the student council. You remember: "And so I say to you again, I am running on behalf of you, the students! Students who are on the side of change!" (Wild applause.)

In 2008 one can achieve distinction as a political orator by using nothing more than student council skills. We're not talking Webster, Clay, or Douglas here. We're not even talking William Jennings Bryan. We're talking Hillary Clinton, John McCain, and Barack Obama. After watching a few of the 100,000 debates in which these distant, very distant, followers of Demosthenes participated, Leland Yeager wrote to this column: "Hillary Clinton struck me as a hysterical demagogue, Barack Obama as an earnest demagogue, and John McCain as a calm demagogue." That's just about right, and I applaud Professor Yeager for staying awake long enough to complete his study. It was only a sense of duty that kept him going.

With his usual eye for the telling detail, Yeager noticed that "in CNN's coverage of Obama's speech, a man behind the speaker kept chewing gum vigorously throughout. . . . Could he have been a Republican mole?" Alas, no. If the Grand Old Party had any imagination, it would not be in the process of nominating John McCain. The empty spaces behind Obama are reserved for Democratic Party activists. The gum-chewing gentleman is the perfect representative of them and of all those other heroic Americans who are hungry for change.

Change. I'm for it. Go, Barack! Yeah. Oh yeah! Tell 'em, Barack. Whatever, dude.

I hope that when "change" comes, these people get it, good and hard. But they'll never know what hit them — not as long as they have a sufficient quantity of gum.

Item drawn at random from the news wires (Reuters, February 16): "Obama Hits Back." It's a report about Sen. Obama's response to Sen. Clinton's suggestion that he has no concrete policies to recommend: " 'The question is not who has got the policies,' Obama said at a rally in Eau Claire, WI. 'The question is who can get them done, who can bring people together.' "

If that's hitting back, then gum-chewing may be the appropriate audience reaction. Let's see . . . what are we witnessing here? We're seeing someone who's never accomplished anything replying to another person who's never accomplished anything, by telling her that he's the only one of them who can accomplish some-

name on the side of the police station — but only to public forums. And an apartment door is not a public forum. It is part of a housing unit and should be managed that way.

Five justices argued instead that the door to an apartment, being for the exclusive use of the tenant, is private property for the duration of the tenancy. It is the tenant's, and the tenant may tape a sign to it. It is important for tenants to have this right, the court said, because a sign on a home is a personal statement of much greater power than an anonymous sign along the street. It is cheap, the tenant can afford it, and it is meaningful to him. As a mode of expression it is not easily replaced. The court briefly suggested that the Housing Authority might impose regulatory limits on the sign, though it didn't define what those limits might be.

In a libertarian world there would be no government housing, but we don't live in that world. How should a libertarian answer the question posed? The Washington Supreme Court does have a libertarian, Justice Richard Sanders. He voted with the tenants. I would have gone the other way.

— Bruce Ramsey

The birds and the bugs — I have mentioned before the crucial role that independent thinktanks play in keeping even a modicum of balance in intellectual debates. With the universities now dominated by left-liberal thinkers, thinktanks are a vital voice. A free-market thinktank I have not mentioned hitherto is the Heartland Institute, based in Chicago. Two recent Heartland articles — both available from its website — give the flavor of its generally cheeky, politically incorrect approach.

The first, "Bedbugs Taking a Bite Out of New Yorkers," notes that New York City's heavy pesticide restrictions have had an unintended side effect: a dramatic increase in bedbug infestation. It seems that complaints about the blood sucking parasites (referring here to the insects, not the city's bureaucrats) have increased tenfold over the past three years.

After World War II, bedbugs were virtually eradicated by DDT, but when it was banned in the 1970s, the problem started to come back. New Yorkers, predominantly trendy environmentalists themselves, have led the way for decades in banning effective pesticides. The result is now, quite literally, biting them in their asses.

The second article, entitled "Altamont Pass Settlement Fails to Reduce Bird Kills," reports on a new ecological catastrophe: shredded tweet. Environmentalist activists — you know, the birds who killed nuclear power and oppose fossil fuels — are demanding tight regulation of wind turbine fields ("wind farms").

An example: the massive wind farm at Altamont Pass, CA., has 5,000 turbines. It therefore kills thousands of birds each year, including raptors such as eagles, hawks, kestrels, and owls; including many birds from protected species. Tasty rodents love to nest in the turbines, serving as bait that lures raptors into the whirling blades. (Oddly, the environmentalists don't seem to care what the rodents might think of this situation.)

Early last year, an environmentalist-instigated federal lawsuit led to a settlement, negotiated between the feds, the environmental mavens, and wind farm companies. But none of the agreed-to regulations appear to have helped. Scientists reported late last year that birds are being shredded at about the same rate as before.

No doubt the environmentalists will swoop in with more regulations, indifferent to whatever protestations the rodents might make.

— Gary Jason

Eco Qaeda — So-called "eco terrorists" of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) are suspected in the arson of five new

thing. And how does he plan to do that? By bringing other people together, so that maybe they'll accomplish something.

I know, I know, there's a subtle suggestion here: because Obama is black, he can shanghai other black people into his regime, thus bringing "people" (i.e., his own supporters) "together." So now you're excited, aren't you? Here is a really fresh approach to politics.

What excites me, though not in a good way, is Orator Obama's grasp of the possibilities of the English language, the world's richest source of words and ideas. Out of that treasury of knowledge and inspiration, intellectual precision and spiritual exaltation, what expressions, wise or witty, weighty or sublime, does Sen. Obama select? How, by his choice of words, does he define the great issues of our time?

The question is not who has got the policies . . . The question is who can get them done.

Abraham Lincoln, in his Cooper Union speech, said of the Southern threat of secession: "This has a somewhat reckless sound." He did not say, "This has got a somewhat reckless sound."

Alexander Hamilton, in the 80th paper in the "Federalist" series, argued in the following way for the establishment of federal courts: "No man ought certainly to be a judge in his own cause, or in any cause in respect to which he has the least interest or bias. This principle has no inconsiderable weight in designating the federal courts as the proper tribunals for the determination of controversies between different States and their citizens." Hamilton did not say that no man should be the judge of something "in respect to which he has got the least interest"; he did not say, "This principle has got no inconsiderable weight."

Strange, isn't it, how those old buzzards used to write?

It's worth remembering — unless you are one of the Obama troupe, who care nothing about history in any form — that politicians once wrote rich, complex, grammatically correct sentences, and distributed them to the general public. Lincoln's speech and Hamilton's essay were polemics directed at the voters of their time, who actually seem to have understood them.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the country has changed. Politicians no longer have to worry about richness, complexity, or grammar. For Sen. Obama (and who in his audience will contradict him?) a policy is something that one has got. And what does one do with policies? One gets them done.

I'm sorry, darling: Cooking is something you get done. Waxing the floor is something you get done. But policies aren't like that. You can say, "I got the washing done," but you cannot say, "I got the policy done."

Well, you can say it, in the sense of getting it out of your mouth. You can say it, and be applauded as a magnificent public speaker by everyone from Jesse Jackson to the American Spectator. But that doesn't qualify you to stand on the same platform as Lincoln and Hamilton. It qualifies you to shout and gesture to the chewers of gum.

"built green" houses in a Seattle suburb, given that signs on bed sheets at the site had "green" slogans and the initials ELF. The trouble for authorities is that ELF is purposely decentralized and organized in a way that those who maintain websites have no provable connection to those who burn houses, SUVs, and other products of modern capitalism deemed insufficiently green.

I remember before 9/11 that the FBI declared "eco terrorists" the greatest threat to domestic tranquility in the country. That seems almost quaint now, but at the time they had perpetrated the most destructive attacks on American soil (except for the Oklahoma City bombing, after which the militia movement became quiescent). And now, after 9/11, the radical greenies have performed more attacks on American properties than the Islamists, who have performed zero, though a few stumblebum wannabes have been arrested. It suggests that fear mongering about Islamists is more about providing justification for government expansion and crackdowns than a measure of the actual threat.

It's not that the al Qaeda, etc., threat is nothing at all, but even the reconstituted al Qaeda central is still operating out of caves.

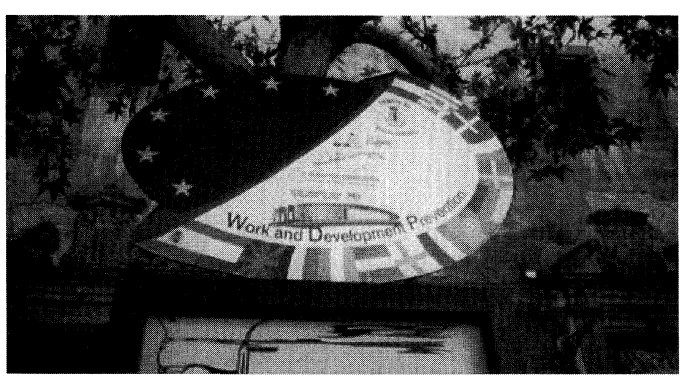
Seems to me that teaching citizens of the strongest country the world has ever known to tremble in fear at a bunch of stateless ragamuffins who could be wiped out by special forces and neutralized by law enforcement and ceasing to occupy Muslim countries (if we'd only stop fantasizing that military invasions are the only possible course) is unworthy of a free country and a terrible mistake in priorities.

— Alan Bock

Do you take this state . . . ? — About seven years ago on a belated honeymoon in Italy, I celebrated the union of me and my beautiful wife, Lisa. Not too long before, the European Economic Community had celebrated its own wedding, becoming the European Union.

In the poorer bits of this new state, such as southern Italy, its agencies and organs like to proclaim the benefits of the blessed Union. They do so on signs and panels posted around construction sites that remind me of old photos of New Deal works programs in progress. The signs are often in one of the major EU languages such as English, French, or German. According to National Geographic, the EU spends more than one billion dollars each year to translate its official communications into its many official languages.

We were in the middle of Piazza Armerina, Sicily, when I took the photograph reproduced below. The sign in the photograph serves a dual purpose, both reminding Sicilians of the benefits of the Union and demonstrating the results (in terms, of course, of intra-EU understanding and harmony) of a billion dollars in translation fees. — Michael Christian



Postal immunity — Driving in the older part of town today, I happened to notice that not every resident of my small Indiana town is equal under the law. I myself have to walk down the street to pick up my mail. When our subdivision was built in the '50s, it was considered a rural area, so our mail boxes are all stacked on a pole at either end of the street. That way the truck would only have to make a couple stops to service the neighborhood.

But I noticed that neighbors in an older part of town, built before the Depression, get their mail delivered directly to their door. They live less than a mile away from me, and get their mail brought right up to the door. They don't have to put on a coat and walk half a block like I do, they can practically get their mail naked.

There's no choice in the matter either. My neighborhood is just in a part of the country serviced by truck, and the post office won't change that. By the same token, the older part of town is full of senior citizens with nothing better to do than call their congressman every single day, so the post office isn't planning on downgrading their service any more than they plan on upgrading mine.

Contrast this to the newspaper delivery. I got a note a couple years ago from my paper company that the paper would no longer be brought up to my door, it would be dropped on my curb instead. I called the town's competing newspaper and explained my dilemma. They promised me if I switched my subscription over, they would make sure the carrier brought the paper right up to my door every morning. When I called the other paper to cancel, they asked me straight away, "Is this because of the curbside delivery? Because if it is, we changed our minds, and will bring it right up to your door."

Apparently the rash of cancellations was so significant that they'd changed their delivery policy by the time I made the call. Competition and market forces can move that paper a lot further than dedication to "public service."

I imagine if there was a law that pizzas had to be delivered by a Federal Agency I would have to wait in the street for it. Remember that the next time somebody brings up single-payer health insurance. — Tim Slagle

Rational choice in medical ethics — Three recent stories in the news made me think again about a curious bias common in writings on medical ethics.

The first story, by Laura Meckler, is called "Why Is It Hard to Give Away a Kidney?" (The Wall Street Journal, Dec. 26, 2007). Meckler explores the dilemma faced by hospitals regarding volunteer donors for kidney transplants.

There are at present about 75,000 Americans waiting for kidneys. People on the kidney waiting list either find a willing relative to step forward or wait for a kidney taken from the cadaver of someone who signed an organ donation card.

Now it turns out that some people are willing to be live kidney donors to total strangers, seemingly out of pure altruism. Indeed, as the story notes, websites have sprung up to help willing living donors select recipients.

But there is resistance in the medical profession to donors offering to give a kidney to a complete stranger. There is suspicion that they might be either mentally unstable, misinformed about the pain and risk involved, or secretly paid by the recipient (in violation of current federal law). As one doc put it, "If someone wants to help society, they can go work in a soup kitchen, they can join the Peace Corps, they can do a lot of things that don't put their lives at risk or implicate a [transplant] center."

Hospitals have every right to wonder why in the hell a person would risk his life to donate an organ to a complete stranger.

Remember the amount of medical litigation out there. If it could be shown that an altruistic donor was really being paid under the table, was unsound of judgment, or was grossly misinformed, a lawsuit would likely happen.

Transplant centers are somewhat more willing to deal with anonymous donors, that is, donors willing to donate without their identities being revealed to the organ recipients. As you might imagine, the numbers are small: of the 6,400 living donors last year, almost all were related to the recipients, and only 68 were anonymous.

But as another doc observed, since the large financial rewards to the doctors and staffs of transplant centers are pegged to the number of transplants performed, more and more hospitals are being pushed in the direction of welcoming altruistic donors.

The second article, by Patrick Hennessy and Laura Donnelly, is called "Organs to be Taken Without Consent" (The Telegraph, Jan. 13, 2008). It notes that in Britain, there is a similar shortage of organs for transplantation. There are more than 8,000 English people needing organ transplants, and each year, over 1,000 of them die while waiting. Prime Minister Gordon Brown has decided to push a plan (which he had earlier opposed) that is similar to Spain's, and that will allow hospitals to remove organs from any dead patient who hasn't explicitly signed a request not to have his or her organs harvested. That is, this system would require people to opt out of being potential organ donors, rather than (as is the case now) requiring them to opt in.

The opt-out system has made Spain the world leader in organ donors per capita. But patients' advocacy groups have protested the plan, saying (rightly) that it tramples people's rights to control their own bodies.

These stories reveal an odd mindset. To begin with the British story, we all agree that agreements are ethical only when voluntarily made by parties who understand what they are doing. Apparently Prime Minister Brown thinks that a person who hasn't gone to the trouble of signing a form stating that he opposes having his organs harvested posthumously must necessarily be a fully informed consenter. But this is sheer nonsense. A person might fail to sign the opt-out form because he never heard of the opt-out system, or hadn't found out where to go to opt out, or never thought about organ donation one way or the other, or didn't understand the issue, or just didn't get around to signing the card.

What the prime minister apparently refuses to consider is allowing hospitals and other organizations to get people to sign opt-in donor cards by paying them. This would encourage people to address the issue of organ donation rationally — think about it, learn about it, and then, if the compensation is reasonable and they consciously choose to do so — opt in.

The first article similarly refuses to entertain the obvious. Yes, hospitals have every right to wonder why in the hell a person would risk his life to donate an organ to a complete stranger. Does that person really understand what he is undertaking — for free? And if he is acting out of pity — manipulated, perhaps, by some website — and the operation goes badly, you can bet that lawyers will go after the clinic. And even if we assume that using only anonymous donors gets around the problem of possible emotional manipulation (and I don't see why it would), there were only 68 such donors in the United States last year. With 75,000 people needing kidneys, how realistic is it to think that waiting for altruists to donate organs will solve the problem?

So again, why not just pay people to donate? Granted, most wouldn't be willing to donate a kidney while alive, even for a large sum of money, but for substantial compensation a lot more will do so than those who currently do it for free. Moreover, many people certainly would sign opt-in donor cards to allow their organs to be taken when they are dead if a reasonable fee were paid to them while they were alive.

Ironically, the article itself concedes that organ transplant center doctors and staff are earning a great deal of money from the organ business. It is bizarre to think that while the person who removes a kidney from one person and inserts it into another profits from the operation, the person whose kidney it was to begin with should not.

The third article, "Indians Offer Wombs for Rent," by Sam Dolnick (AP, Dec. 31, 2007), is about a growing global business. It reports that a clinic in Anand, India, caters to couples from abroad who are desperately seeking surrogate mothers, women willing to have fertilized eggs from infertile couples implanted in their wombs. This procedure, called "commercial surrogacy," is legal in many countries (including the United States), and was legalized six years ago in India. The clinic in Anand takes care of the surrogate mothers — not just of their medical needs, but their room and board as well.

This outsourcing of pregnancy, the reporter avers, raises troubling questions about "morals and modern science, exploitation and globalization, and that most natural of desires: to have a family." But the clinic's head, Dr. Nayna Patel, feels that what it does is completely ethical. As she nicely puts it, "There is this one woman who desperately needs a baby and cannot have her own child without the help of a surrogate. And at the other end there is this woman who badly wants to help her own family. If this female wants to help the other one . . . why not? It's not for any bad cause. They are helping one another to have a new life in this world."

Why not, indeed? The predictable critics derisively refer to this as "wombs for rent" and bemoan the fact that India, with its huge number of poor folk, is becoming a leader in making this a big business. As one bioethicist frets, "It comes down to questions of voluntariness and risk."

But the story makes it clear that the Indian women are aware of the risks, because they've seen friends go through the surrogacy, and I would suspect that the doctor who runs the clinic takes care to minimize those risks. What's more, if it is reasonable to view an American woman's choosing to be a surrogate for $80,000 (the rate one couple was looking at paying) as an ethically acceptable transaction, why would it be any less ethical for an Indian woman to do it for $20,000 (the price the couple ultimately paid)?

I can see no cause for alarm. We don't have a case in which an authoritarian state exploits unwilling women for foreign currency gain. That the women in India are willing to take less money than American women doesn't indicate they are being exploited: the money goes farther there, and they need it more. Despite the view in certain quarters that any willingness to do an unpleasant task for less money than someone else would is an automatic signal of exploitation, there seems to be no exploitation here.

As I have argued before in these pages, the bias against even considering legal organ sales is as strange as it is deadly.

— Gary Jason

Phony benefits of a weak dollar — In congressional testimony on Feb. 28, as reported in The Wall Street Journal, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke noted "a rare bright spot" amidst worries about inflation and recession: the weak dollar helps exports, jobs, and the trade deficit.

One would have expected better from so justly eminent an economist than his repeating an old, old fallacy. Sure, the dollar's depreciation against foreign currencies makes American exports cheaper for foreigners and imports more expensive for Americans. But the resulting benefits to trade and jobs, such as they are, are only temporary. Floating exchange rates and the prices of actively traded basic commodities, including gold, are among the prices that respond earliest and most sensitively to underlying pressures on a currency's purchasing power. In a while the supposedly beneficial changes in exchange-rate-translated relative prices of American and foreign goods will be wiped out as the stickier dollar prices of goods and services in general catch up with the exchange rate. The dollar's depreciation is just one among several symptoms of accelerating inflation, itself the consequence of too-loose

monetary policy now and in the recent past. The supposed benefits will have to be paid for later on. But it is hardly news that politicians work with a short time horizon.

— Leland Yeager

Dirty little secrets — I often wish that "liberal" had not become a euphemism for socialist. It is such an appropriate term for people who think like we do, that it would be nice to have it back with the Jeffersonians. It's not even like the Left wants it anymore. Democrats always run away from that term. If an opponent calls a Democrat a "liberal" it is considered a slur. So what's the problem with being liberal?

In private life, being a liberal is a badge of honor. In academic and performing arts circles, people proudly declare themselves liberals. Usually at a Hollywood cocktail party, it is considered an insult to be called a conservative.

Yet, the reverse seems to be true of the Republicans. GOP candidates will publicly argue over who is the most conservative. One of the highlights of the campaign so far was watching everybody argue who is the most like Ronald Reagan (even Obama got in on that one). It kind of reminds me of playing baseball as a kid, and arguing with the other kids about who gets to be Al Kaline.

But the ultimate irony is that when Republicans get together at cocktail parties, they all deny that they're conservative. — Tim Slagle

What our definition of "is" is — For the first time in my life I stood before a judge, accused of violation of law. My crime: I had lost control of my car and run off the road, when the road was covered with snow. My car slid into the ditch, nose down, flipped over, and left my wife, my son, and me hanging upside down like startled bats. This was on Christmas Day, 2007, on a state highway just to the west of Mount Rainier in Washington state.

The state patrolman was sympathetic. The road was treacherous. There were many accidents on that road that day, including a head-on collision involving an ambulance. But the state's policy was clear: anyone who lost control and ran off the road would get a ticket for "driving too fast for the road conditions." The fine: $175.

Two months later I was in Lewis County Court, in the town of Chehalis — a couple miles down the road from Centralia, where American Legionnaires fought it out with the Wobblies in the Centralia Massacre of 1919. One of the Wobblies, who had mortally wounded a Legionnaire and then pistolwhipped him, was arrested, sprung by a lynch mob, castrated, and hung from a bridge — three times.

Well, I wasn't a Wobbly.

The judge, a woman, read the patrolman's affidavit about finding my car upside down in the ditch. She looked at me as if to say, No nonsense from you. What did I have to say?

The affidavit was accurate as far as it went, I said. But I had not been driving fast, and I had evidence to prove it: photos of my car in the impound yard. Here is a car that has flipped upside down. No windows are broken out. No body panels are bashed in. The car looks almost untouched, except that both outside mirrors are broken off — and that was because the tow truck had to roll the car back onto the road. The radio antenna is bent, a little piece of trim is missing, and there is some sod on the front bumper.

Obviously, I said, I had not been driving fast.

I entered the photos into evidence, and the judge looked at them as if at a beggar.

"Have you read the statute, Mr. Ramsey?"

Well — no.

"The statute does not make an allowance for driving under the speed limit. It is your responsibility to stay on the road and be cognizant of hazards, whether they are apparent or not. I find that you have committed the infraction. Do you want to pay now or later?"

I said I'd pay now. I thought about joining the Wobblies, then went out to prospect for a cheeseburger. — Bruce Ramsey

Why an anomaly? — If you work seriously and intently in several cultural domains, you come to notice discrepancy in reception. Over the past 45 years I've published poetry, fiction, criticism of both the arts and politics (always from a libertarian-anarchist perspective), produced visual art in several genres, and composed audio and video, among other things. The poetry and fiction get recognized in critical histories and encyclopedias of those art forms; so do my art books and my musical compositions. The entry on me in Encyclopedia Britannica even mentions my films that aren't acknowledged anywhere else. However, the only place my politics are mentioned is the entry on me in Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians. Its compiler, unlike the others, got his information directly from me.

Why the discrepancy? Probably my anarchist-libertarian writings aren't as good as my other stuff, try as hard as I do to make them relevant and readable. Consider the alternative that they haven't been published or publicized as well as my other work. The strongest supporting evidence of this last hypothesis is that few writers for libertarian publications get much recognition anywhere.

Now that I've reached an age when I want to focus on work that will survive me, perhaps my efforts at political criticism should come to a halt, having been consigned to the dustbin in the cultural free market. — Richard Kostelanetz

Subsidizing stupidity — Before my wife and I moved to Vermont, we sold our home in Massachusetts for more than twice the money we paid for it. We had owned the place for only five years. In other words, we made a killing.

The buyer no doubt believed home prices would just keep rising. "They can't make more land to build on," was the refrain back in the days of the boom — the implication being that demand would always outstrip supply.

That reasoning, of course, was faulty. The supply of people willing and able to carry ever-bigger mortgages was the real factor determining how large the housing bubble would grow, and how long it would last before it went poof!

The boom was artificially inflated and prolonged by the esoteric mortgage instruments invented by mortgage companies and banks. That was a function of greed on their part. The people who bought homes without making a down payment, or obtained mortgages with artificially low introductory interest rates, or who did both — in other words, people who bought homes they really couldn't afford — well, they were just plain stupid.

Because of the housing bubble's collapse, millions of homeowners now face the demon of negative equity. If they want

to sell their homes, they have to show up at the closing and actually give the bank a check. This has come as a shock to the many people who believed that selling a house for a hefty profit was their birthright.

Now the federal government may step in to protect people from their own stupidity. Seems the federals are searching for a way to bail out millions of homeowners confronted with negative equity. They are being prodded to act by the mortgage companies and banks that have massive exposure in the subprime market and therefore face huge losses down the line.

Chris Dodd of Connecticut (Ted Kennedy's old whoring and drinking buddy), who chairs the Senate Banking Committee, has got a plan to buy up delinquent mortgages and replace them with federally guaranteed loans that would carry lower interest rates and payments. A similar idea is being floated by Bank of America, which presumably feels it should be rewarded for acquiring Countrywide Financial (the biggest and greediest of the mortgage companies) and thus preventing the financial panic that Countrywide's declaration of bankruptcy would probably have created.

Barney Frank of Massachusetts, chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, is also developing a plan for the government to bail out homeowners in trouble. I'd like to know how many of his constituents bought ridiculously overpriced homes in Wellesley, Newton, and Brookline (outside of Boston) and are now clamoring for him to do something before the fall in prices infects their communities.

So far the Bush Administration, to its credit (and how often do you hear me say that?), has resisted bailing out either the banks or the troubled homeowners. It's critical that it hold the line here. If the taxpayer winds up footing the bill for the foolish greed of the banks and the stupidity of people who thought they could get something for almost nothing, then we will at last have touched the depths of nanny-statism. If we make it all right again for big, grownup banks and the millions of boneheads they serviced, why should the rest of us bother to exercise prudence or responsibility in the future?

Alas, I fear that as the election nears, the administration's knees will weaken. Republicans in Congress will whisper that the Democratic gains look to be big, so we'd better do something. Even if the administration holds firm, the Democratic sweep in November (oh yes, it's coming) will probably lead to the biggest bailout of all time — bigger even than the resolution of the S&L crisis in the '80s.

We shall all be the poorer for it, in more ways than one.

— Jon Harrison

William James would love it — While it is not my metier, I find experimental psychology fascinating. A couple of recent articles from the estimable journal Psychological Science (the official journal of the Association for Psychological Science) brought to mind an argument for theistic belief put forward by the American pragmatist philosopher William James.

The argument is to be found in James' famous book, "The Varieties of Religious Experience" (1902). His view, roughly put, is that, after centuries of dispute, nobody can prove — philosophically or scientifically — the existence of God. Nor can anybody disprove it. But, James said, there are other rational reasons for believing in something besides scientific or metaphysical proof. Even when no objective proof is available regarding a belief, if it contributes to your well-being then it makes sense to cultivate it. That includes one's ethical or psychological well-being.

The first article that gives James' argument a contemporary twist is "God Is Watching You: Priming Behavior in an Anonymous Economic Game," by Azin Shariff and Ara Norenzayan (Psychological Science 18.9 [2007] 803–809). It reports on two experiments devised to test whether religious belief increases cooperative ("prosocial") behavior.

The authors tried to set up an experiment that didn't make participants consciously reflect on religious concepts, nor one that relied on participants' self-reported levels of religiosity. Samples — first of college students, then of ordinary adults — were randomly divided into two groups. One group was primed by a scramble-sentence technique for God concepts, while the other was neutrally primed. (The priming technique required the participant to unscramble a sentence, dropping an extraneous word. The religion-primed sentences contained one of the words "God," "spirit," "divine," "sacred," and "prophet." The non-primed sentences did not.)

The participants then played a game in which they were given ten dollars and could keep as many of the dollar coins as they liked, leaving the rest for the recipient player. Those who were neutrally primed left significantly fewer coins for the other player ($2.56 on average) than those who were religiously primed ($4.56 on average). In other words, even unconsciously thinking about religion before the game led people to be more generous with the recipients.

However, it turns out that people who were primed with moral concepts left nearly as much for the recipient players ($4.44 on average) as did those primed with the religious concepts — a point to which I shall return.

The second study, "The Value of Believing in Free Will: Encouraging a Belief in Determinism Increases Cheating," by Kathleen Vohs and Jonathan Schooler (Psychological Science 19.1 [2008] 49–54) reports the results of two experiments testing whether losing belief in free will increases dishonest behavior. They note that in a large survey of people in 36 countries a few years back, over 70% expressed a belief in free will. They also note that recent work in neuroscience seems to be lessening that belief in the general population.

In one of their experiments, students who came to the lab were randomly assigned to read either a passage from a book by Nobel laureate Francis Crick debunking free will, or a neutral passage from the same book (i.e., one in which the issue wasn't discussed). After reading the assigned passage, the students were surveyed for their degree of belief in free will and then given a computer-based math test. They were told that there was a bug in the computer program that displayed the correct answer below the problem unless they hit the space bar to block it. The participants were urged to solve the problem without cheating by looking at the solution. By counting the number of times the participants hit the space bar the researchers had a decent measure of honesty.

The results showed that those who read the anti-free-will passage were significantly, indeed, dramatically more apt to cheat than those who read the neutral passage. And they found that there was a strong negative correlation between strength

of belief in free will and cheating. These results were the same in the second experiment, in which cheating involved more active behavior.

Now, all of this brings to mind a couple of points. First, as critics pointed out to James, there is a big difference between the usefulness of a belief and its objective truth. I mean, even if you showed that belief in Santa Claus produced more sharing behavior in children, it would not follow, alas, that Santa really exists. As Vohs and Schooler put it, "It is crucial to emphasize that the findings reported here do not speak to the larger issue of whether free will actually exists. It is possible that free will is an illusion that offers some functionality" (53).

Second, to revisit the point briefly raised earlier, perhaps cultivating a secular moral sense would work nearly as well as cultivating a religiously based one. That is, instead of preaching Jesus' Golden Rule, we might teach Kant's Categorical Imperative.

Yet these experiments reinforce what common sense suggests: moral excellence can be enhanced or lessened by what people are led to believe. — Gary Jason

Hocus pocus — In her last debates with Sen. Barack Obama prior to her comeback wins in Texas and Ohio, Sen. Hillary Clinton attacked his health insurance plan for America, declaring her plan to be much better. Why? Because Obama's might allow "as many as 15%" of Americans to go uninsured, while hers "covers everyone."

But how? Answer: it's mandated.

Clintonian health insurance mandates are like being frisked by the TSA at airports. The latter is designed to create the illusion of safety. The former is designed to create the illusion that everyone has coverage. The homeless man with no permanent address, the heroin entrepreneur who works in the underground economy, the self-employed citizen who has successfully avoided filing income taxes for the past eight years — all will magically be covered with a health insurance mandate.

How? Why, weren't you paying attention? See that word "mandate" right there in the first sentence of the legislation.

— Ross Levatter

The green zone blues — On Feb. 22, Muqtada al-Sadr, Iraq's radical Shiite cleric, extended for a further six months the ceasefire he had proclaimed in August 2007. His Mahdi Army, tens of thousands strong, apparently will remain off the board until at least the end of summer. The American command congratulated al-Sadr on his restraint, and pledged to go after only those Sadrists who "commit terrorist and criminal acts," as the U.S. deputy commander in Baghdad put it.

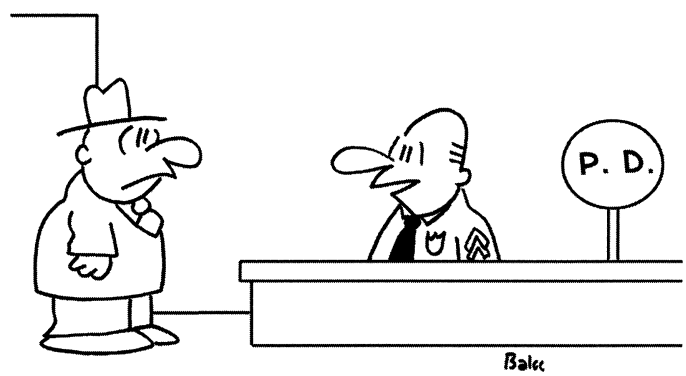
At least at this time, al-Sadr wants no repetition of the bloodshed that followed the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra on Feb. 22, 2006. During the 18-month period ending in August 2007, the Sadrists took over much of Baghdad, killing thousands of Sunnis in the process. The violence eventually spun out of control, damaging al-Sadr's standing in the Shiite community and threatening to undermine his hold over the Mahdi Army. Now, with the sectarian cleansing of Baghdad virtually complete, al-Sadr can be patient. He is primed, once the Americans are gone, to step into a position of power — either as a big player in the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government, or perhaps as the Grand Ayatollah and Supreme Leader of a future "Islamic Republic of Iraq."

Nevertheless, U.S. commanders must have breathed a sigh of relief at the continuation of the ceasefire, for the last thing they want is a fight with the Sadrists. As it was, immediately after al-Sadr announced the extension, breakaway Mahdi Army fighters fired rockets and mortar rounds into the Green Zone, which houses the Iraqi government, the U.S. embassy, and Gen. Petraeus' headquarters. Without al-Sadr's restraint, Iraq would almost certainly be witnessing violence on a scale comparable to 2006 and early 2007.

Iraq has taken a turn for the worse since the beginning of the year. U.S. combat deaths rose in January after months of steady decline. Iraqi civilian deaths rose in January by about a third over December's total, and then increased again in February. Bombings in Baghdad are up, including two devastating blasts on Feb. 1 and Feb. 10. Casualties among Sunni fighters allied to the U.S. are up. Major fighting has broken out in the north, particularly in Mosul, where al Qaeda in Iraq remains strong. In the south, the struggle for power among Shiite factions in and around Basra (which the British handed over to the Iraqis last September) has created a situation bordering on anarchy (see the Feb. 23 New York Times article, "Ominous Signs Remain in City Run by Iraqis").

On Jan. 25, the Iraqi government announced that a "decisive" offensive would be launched to drive al Qaeda out of Mosul. Not surprisingly, nothing has happened in the weeks since. Elsewhere in the north, Turkish forces are conducting cross-border operations against P.K.K. (Kurdish Worker's Party) guerrillas. The U.S. is providing intelligence assistance to the Turks. The Iraqi government, however, is unhappy about the violation of its sovereignty, while the Kurds (our best friends in Iraq) are upset because we are helping the Turks. It's a damned mess, and one requiring multiple balancing acts that this administration is unlikely to pull off.

Added to all this, U.S. combat power is in decline as the surge brigades depart. By July, U.S. troop strength will be down almost to the pre-surge level. The word is that Gen. Petraeus wants the troop drawdown to pause at that point, to ensure that the gains of the surge are maintained. On the other hand, the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. George Casey, knows his force is overextended, and wants the withdrawals to continue.



"She jumped out of the shadows and took your blood pressure? — Are you *sure* it was Hillary Clinton?"

The president, who believes his position in history is at stake, has already decided in favor of Petraeus.

The whole business since the surge began looks more and more like a Potemkin village put up to fool the American people until Bush leaves office. Petraeus and Bush will get out of Iraq — the former to become Commander of NATO, the latter to write his memoirs and build his presidential library — before the worst happens. Pity poor John McCain or Barack Obama, one of whom will inherit an Iraqi house of cards.

— Jon Harrison

With love and missiles — Both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are firmly against the war in Iraq. However, they show little or no inclination to look deeply into the policy assumptions that underlie the war. In their Cleveland debate they affirmed that the United States must remain the leader of the world, that it must keep an eye on Pakistan and help it to become more stable and democratic (having proven in Iraq how good the U.S. is at such little chores). They were willing to consider intervention, even military intervention, in Darfur, and the issuance of an ultimatum to Russia to the effect that the sacred independence of Kosovo so recently declared (and of no import whatever to America's core interests) would be defended with military might if necessary.

If one of them is elected, I hope (though even there I can't be sure) that he or she will begin an orderly withdrawal from Iraq as quickly as feasible. But it's dispiriting that neither is ready even to begin the process of questioning whether the United States needs to keep troops in so many countries of the world or to view the world as merely a province of the United States, cosseted by the watchful Mother Eagle. — Alan Bock

Hillary's muddy risk management — There's a point about Hillary Clinton's latest stab at so-called "health care reform" that bears constant repeating: participation in her program would be mandatory for all citizens and residents. This will force inefficiency on the health care financing marketplace.

The number of Americans without health insurance is a hotly-debated statistic. Interested parties — including those who support Clinton's Freudian presidential candidacy — manipulate and selectively combine public records to serve their policy aims. But, for the sake of argument, let's say that 30 million Americans have no health coverage.

Some of these people are caught between being too poor to pay for standard coverage and not poor enough to qualify for existing state programs. Some have money but bad health histories that leave them uninsurable. And some make the choice not to pay for health insurance.

This choice can be a rational one — especially if the person so choosing is young, healthy, and childless. A young, healthy person may see better things to do with his or her money than pay premiums for health coverage he or she isn't likely to use. That person may prefer instead to live in a nicer place, drive a faster car . . . or wear more fashionable clothes.

Risk management experts call such choices "self insurance." If a young woman skips health insurance in order to buy a pair of Jimmy Choo high heels, she'll have to find some way to pay her own medical bills when she gets sick. If she has any sort of job or personal resources, this isn't very difficult. Most hospitals and health-care providers will negotiate payment terms — and many have separate, lower-fee schedules for patients who pay cash.

These options work as a market check on the elaborate cost structures created by the insurance industry.

Hillary Clinton will do away with all this. In her reptilian mind, she sees healthy people who make the rational choice to self-insure as a resource to be taxed. The junior senator from New York doesn't hesitate to tell her younger counterpart that she can't buy the fancy shoes: she must buy government-approved health insurance.

So lost in her reverie of a command economy is Sen. Clinton that she has difficulty realizing the logical flaws in her plans. Instead, she ridicules her presidential rivals for not forcing everyone to buy government-issue coverage — so, making lesser statists like Barack Obama and John McCain seem like free-market advocates.

Experience isn't the critical distinction between Sen. Clinton and her rivals. Clarity of mind is. She lacks it.

— Jim Walsh

Blow, blow, blow — Received wisdom has it all wrong. Most people, including so-called economists, businessmen, and journalists, urge consumers to spend, spend, spend to produce economic prosperity. And Congress passes law after law calling for more government spending, even a special "stimulus" package designed to put more money in people's hands and bank accounts — all to persuade them to go to the malls and spend. But this is precisely the wrong approach.

Government would be much better advised to encourage saving. Contra Keynes, it is only saving that makes possible the production of the things that people go to the malls to buy. It is only saving that enables entrepreneurs to embark on projects to produce what consumers want — not only food, clothing, and shelter, but TVs, computers, medicine, and medical devices, automobiles, cell phones, movies, etc. All those things first require savings. It is only saving that makes it possible for people to send their children to college and plan for their own old age.

Government may be bureaucratic, corrupt, inefficient, wasteful. But one thing it is good at is destroying the value of the dollar. When the government inflates, by the convoluted processes arranged through the Federal Reserve and the banking system, it increases the number of dollars in existence. And, as the law of supply and demand indicates, increasing the number of dollars reduces the market value of every pre-existing dollar. To see how the increased stock of dollars over recent years has reduced the purchasing power of every individual dollar, check the Fed's statistics on the quantity of money; check also the cost of living indices over the last few years; and check the prices of bread, milk, and meat at the grocery store. Ask the people who eat out at restaurants or fast-food outlets what they paid for a meal several years ago and what they pay for the same meal today. Ask anyone who drives a car what he pays now for gasoline, repairs, and tires, and how it differs from what he paid in the past. Ask any businessman what he pays now, as compared with some time ago, for workers and for supplies of the things he needs to operate — iron, steel, electricity, gasoline, toilet paper, transportation, office cleaning supplies, insurance, and so forth.

When people learn to expect that the prices of almost everything will go up, everyone tries to buy what he wants and needs sooner rather than later. That expectation is destructive of saving. Monetary expansion hasn't yet reached the point it reached in 1923 in Germany, when workers collected their pay every morning in wheelbarrows full of paper marks, so their wives could hurry to the market to buy necessities before prices rose even further. But if government doesn't stop its spending spree, we could be on our way to that point.

By inflating, the government encourages consumer spending. But that is not the way to prosperity. By inflating, the government discourages saving, and thus discourages the source of future production, and prosperity itself.

— Bettina Bien Greaves

Is there a decent writer in the house? — Meeting a professional adoption advocate, who claimed to represent "kids," I innocently asked him how many adoptions in America aren't registered by the state. He raised the epithet "guardian," but that designation (as opposed to "parent") would also be known to legal authorities. How would we characterize a person (other than a blood relation or a lover) taken into the house as an unofficial permanent guest who pays no rent? Suppose we add the qualification of an indefinite period of time?

Whoever persuaded the federal government to offer the incentive of tax deductions for legalized adoptees probably recognized this problem, at least implicitly; but all would agree that the reward of a few hundred bucks would scarcely be a sufficient incentive to register a guest, either by those too rich to care or by those too poor to pay taxes. One fear of adopting-off-the-books, I suppose, is that some cop may take the guest away, depositing him or her the Lord knows where. Conversely, the guest might leave without fear of being forcefully returned "home."

Not only didn't the advocate have any statistic for such people, but the thought of an unauthorized adoption never occurred to him. I tried to find a statistic elsewhere, but precisely because such adoptions are "off the books," especially for people too poor or unsophisticated to "go legal," they cannot be counted on any levels above the street, so to speak. (An analogy of something that can't be counted is how many people safely repel a criminal simply by brandishing their own guns.)

Since I customarily write about problems personally experienced, I'm pained to report that I can't recall knowing any informal adoptees. On the other hand, since they aren't tagged (yet), I might not have noticed.

Isn't this an appropriate subject for a book (by someone other than me)?

— Richard Kostelanetz

Death of a hero? — Rep. Tom Lantos died on Feb. 11 from esophageal cancer. The San Francisco Chronicle, his hometown paper, reported it thus: "In the nearly 60 years Tom Lantos spent in the United States, he never lost his Hungarian accent, his love for animals or his stubborn belief that political leaders have a duty to speak out against tyranny or oppression, wherever it occurs. . . . He championed the causes of those who often had no other voice, whether they were in Tibet, Darfur, China or anywhere else in the world. . . . As a teenage boy in Hungary, Lantos escaped from Nazi labor camps and the genocide of the Holocaust, which took the lives of most of his family. It was a time he never forgot and that shaped the rest of his life."

Of course, Lantos also championed the cause of Janet Reno against the survivors of Waco, taking the government position without question or hesitation, a hearty and all-too-eager worshiper at the shrine of the modern liberal state.

He saw as a boy the horror that can occur when evil men arrogate to themselves great power, and devoted his life to making sure that only men such as himself, whom he felt were good, were allowed to wield great power over others.

It is a common tragedy, and an all-too-common lesson.

This Reflection for Liberty would typically end here, brief and to the point. But there's a larger story that readers may also find of interest.

My original comment, italicized above, was first made as a response in the famous libertarian-leaning legal blog, Volokh.com (kudos to Eugene Volokh, UCLA professor of law): no reference to Lantos' role in Waco, merely a reflection that people can sadly learn the wrong lesson from traumatic childhood events. Lantos, a Holocaust survivor, a witness to the horrors of a powerful state, was nonetheless a liberal Democrat his entire professional career, always pushing for greater powers for the centralizing state he could call his own. Wonder what response was made to my remark on this libertarian-conservative blog? Here are some samples from fellow commentators.

An extremely well-known and well-respected legal academic said, "I have no idea what you're talking about. Is that supposed to be your dig against his political views, given that you disagree with him on political matters?" Since I hadn't really mentioned Lantos' political stands on anything, merely implied that he never in his career focused on limiting government power, despite his experience in Nazi Germany, this seems a strange interpretation by a normally keen and incisive thinker.

Another writer offered: "Who among us has never advocated a political position that a large number of people would find loathsome? Do I agree and celebrate everything Lantos ever said or did? Of course not. But, my God, be civilized, be charitable and be gracious." It's true, I have often advocated political positions that a large number of people find loathsome, given that I insist that people in civil society not be allowed to initiate force, even to achieve otherwise worthwhile goals, a position regarded as especially loathsome in today's world.

As for being civilized and charitable, thank goodness this person has never read any obituaries written by H.L. Mencken. If he did, he'd have a conniption. Imagine, for example, this

sensitive soul coming across Mencken's notice of the passing of William Jennings Bryan. It's entitled "To Expose A Fool." This is one of the kinder things Mencken said of Bryan: "There was something peculiarly fitting in the fact that his last days were spent in a one-horse Tennessee village, and that death found him there. The man felt at home in such scenes. He liked people who sweated freely, and were not debauched by the refinements of the toilet." Again, all I said about Lantos was that it is tragic that people sometimes learn the wrong lessons on being exposed to childhood horrors.

Many people today treat politicians with what can only be described as religiosity. That is, just as they can't bear critical analysis of, say, the Christian view of transubstantiation, for if they studied it carefully they might lose their faith, so they dare not tolerate even the least criticism of politicians, for if they ever studied the matter rationally, they'd have to wonder why they let these moral grotesqueries rule over them.

— Ross Levatter

Death of an icon — William F. Buckley died on Feb. 27. It's impossible to overestimate the influence he had on conservatism. When he founded National Review in 1955, the conservative movement was fractured and virtually without influence. Twenty-five years later, thanks in no small part to Buckley's efforts, it had carried Ronald Reagan into the White House.

Buckley and Milton Friedman were the great conservative-libertarian public intellectuals of the second half of the 20th century. They, and Reagan, made conservative and libertarian ideas understandable and, eventually, popular. Had they not lived, one can only wonder where we would be today.

I have never been a regular reader of National Review. But I grew up watching "Firing Line," Buckley's long-running PBS program. Particularly in the '70s, when Buckley's on-air persona had mellowed a bit, "Firing Line" was simply the best damn show on television. The caliber of the guests, the level of discussion, and the host's sharp wit and intellect made it a weekly must-see. It always left me wanting more. I learned more watching that show, I believe, than I did in all my years of schooling.

When I think of the people representing conservatism today, in print and on television, and compare them to Buckley, I cringe at the disparity. A great oak has fallen in the forest.

—Jon Harrison

Athwart history, yelling "Stop!" — How does one characterize William F. Buckley? He made people who weren't New York intellectuals or Harvard profs feel that they could be smart, too. He called himself a "conservative" and a "libertarian" at various points in his long public life. His magazine, National Review, brought limited-government advocates together with the American Right's other blocs.

He was surely a wit and gadfly, stirring up trouble for Manhattan's liberal, statist establishment. In debate, he was a great counter-puncher. But was he devoted to individual liberty? Two critical stands suggest not.

First, and infamously, Buckley and National Review opposed civil rights reforms in the 1960s, offering a rigged version of "states' rights" as a defense of institutional racism. This seemed an argument designed more to contradict liberal pieties than to stand on its own logic.

Second, in 2002 and 2003, the man and magazine cheered George W. Bush's run-up to the Iraq invasion. Later, Buckley would say that if he'd known how flimsy the evidence of Iraqi WMDs really was, he'd have done differently. But that's a lazy reply. He never admitted that Bush's strategy all along was nation-building — and that nation-building is always folly.

Libertarian principles, consistently applied, will make a person a contrarian and gadfly against conventional wisdom. However, some people are gadflies first and mostly. Just because you run against the grain doesn't mean your beliefs are consistent and well-considered.

To be sure, Buckley was a joy to watch on TV and — most of the time — to read in his columns and novels. By all accounts, he was personally a decent and pleasant man. But some of his eulogists have admitted difficulty explaining why Buckley was so important to modern American politics. Perhaps because the witty, decent man often said what he was against in the public arena . . . but less often what he was for.

— Jim Walsh

Buckley, pro and con — In the late 1960s, I parted ways with Buckleyite conservatism — too warlike, too inconsistent in support of limited government, on the wrong side of the civil rights movement (not that it didn't have excesses), too willing to give up liberties in the name of fighting a communism destined to die of its own internal contradictions, too respectful of authority, etc., etc.

Nonetheless, I never ceased to have an affectionate place in my heart for Bill Buckley himself. His way with words never failed him, and his affection for the language was infectious. He was almost always civil and witty, even as he was slicing and dicing an intellectual opponent. And there's little doubt that he had an enormous impact on the history of this country and rightly deserved the sobriquet of godfather of the modern conservative movement, for better and for worse.

From time to time he declared himself on the libertarian side of things, and he had some libertarian impulses, as befits somebody influenced in his youth by such giants as the quasi-anarchist essayist and raconteur Albert Jay Nock and the brilliantly quirky individualist Frank Chodorov. His intellectual independence shone through from time to time, as in his early understanding that the drug war was unwinnable and socially corrosive, and his realization, fairly early, that the Iraq war was a disaster, something that the war-addled folks to whom he turned over National Review have yet to come to grips with. I don't know whether it is a commentary on present-day conservatism or present-day cable news that it is difficult to imagine a program of civil discussion like "Firing Line" from the current batch of angry shouters and rude dealers in the ad hominem that pass for conservative (and most liberal) talkers today.

People talk of his graciousness, and I have no doubt he usually was gracious. But his nasty and mean-spirited obituary of Murray Rothbard, an early ally who made the mistake of being too consistent a champion of individual freedom (if sometimes tactically erratic) was the antithesis of graciousness.

Bill Buckley wasn't perfect. Yet he was an accomplished, protean figure who usually had a twinkle in his eye. I'll miss him.

— Alan Bock

William F. Buckley, R.I.P.

William F. Buckley, Jr., America's foremost intellectual conservative, died on February 27 at the age of 82.

So wide was his influence and so complicated was his political character that it is impossible to write about him without arousing controversy, which is another word for bitter criticism. Left-liberals of Buckley's generation, and their disciples in the current age, feel toward him the kind of emotion that turns faces purple and makes veins protrude. Many libertarians feel the same way. Yet for millions of Americans, including many working-class people who might have been expected to reject Buckley's effetely literate style, he was the hero who introduced them to libertarian as well as conservative ideas.

Buckley was the son of an oilman and the member of a large and at times very eccentric family. He was a devout Roman Catholic whose first book, "God and Man at Yale" (1951), exposed the shocking fact that the faculty of his Ivy League alma mater inhabited a secular and collectivist intellectual world that was not only isolated from much of the rest of the intellectual world but was even more isolated from ordinary American thinking. This revelation actually did shock people. "God and Man" was very mild stuff. Its almost incredibly hostile reception by the Eastern brain trust showed that it had something important to say.

The great event of Buckley's life was his founding of National Review in 1955. NR gave conservatives a rallying place, a means of self-definition, and a staging area for the electoral campaigns they eventually won. It was the cradle of the modern conservative movement. In the beginning, and from time to time thereafter, NR also gave libertarians a place where they could be heard by a national audience. It provided an arena in which libertarians and conservatives could cooperate, if they wished to do so, in attacking their common enemy, the modern liberal state. In addition, however, it provided an arena in which conservatives could try to define their differences from libertarians, most of whom were used to calling themselves, for want of a then-more-readily-communicable term, "conservatives."

On the whole, this process was good for both sides, as intellectual honesty usually is; but it wasn't pretty to watch, because of the way it was carried out. National Review mounted what was, in effect, a purge against Ayn Rand, the greatest contemporary influence on libertarians. It published a long review falsely implying that her ideas weren't libertarian but totalitarian. This attack wasn't just ugly; it was morally wrong. Rand responded by publishing an embarrassingly premature "obituary" of the conservative movement. Many libertarian isolationists (and most libertarians were and still are isolationists) viewed NR chiefly as a proponent of the Cold War and of military interventionism in general.

The libertarian economist Murray Rothbard and his followers castigated Buckley's movement for abandoning the principles of what Rothbard called the Old Right, the isolationist and (sometimes) small-government people of the preceding generation — people such as Robert Taft and John T. Flynn. Rothbard and his friends believed that Buckley had hijacked a movement that should have been theirs. When, in the 1960s, libertarian students broke with Young Americans for Freedom, which Buckley had helped to create, they knew the joy of advocating purely libertarian positions. For many of them, as for Rothbard and Rand, Buckley remained a Satanic figure. It didn't help that Buckley, who had made his way to real political power, displayed only a mild amusement toward these adversaries.

Despite all this, it's hard to resist the conclusion that on balance both conservatives and libertarians benefited from their encounters with one another, in and around the house that Buckley built. No, the acrimony and recriminations weren't beneficial, but each side did need to define itself — as well as ally itself with others.

The best years of National Review were the early ones, when both libertarians and conservatives regularly published in its pages. National Review moved many people "up from liberalism," in Buckley's phrase, and many of those people became libertarians. A lot of them would never have found that road if they hadn't started off with NR. Buckley himself had been deeply influenced by such radical libertarians as Frank Chodorov, as well as by such conservatives as Russell Kirk. He called himself a libertarian. He entertained libertarian ideas and spokesmen on his long-running television show, "Firing Line." If you made a list of the ideas and policies he espoused, you'd find that most of them were authentically libertarian. He was the first American that most people of the time actually heard hammering away at the laws against marijuana, or questioning Keynesian economics, or protesting the idea that what this country needs is more control by the forces of social democracy, more "government control over our lives."

No one has greater respect for the so-called Old Right than I do. I wrote a book about Isabel Paterson, one of the most prominent members of the Old Right — if, that is, the Old Right had anything like a membership, which it didn't. (Few of the putative members liked or agreed with many of the others, if they had ever heard of them, which in some cases they hadn't.) But it was obvious why Buckley's movement supplanted the "Old Right." The latter was politically moribund.

In his old age, Albert Jay Nock, another libertarian hero of Buckley's and a prominent litterateur of the 1920s, boasted that he could still write an essay that would "rock the nation." He never wrote that essay, and it wouldn't have rocked the nation if he had. Not then. Not that late in the game. The ideas of people like Nock had to be revived, and only Buckley, as it appears, had the ability to revive them on a big scale — even if the operation was only a partial success.

In his early television appearances, Buckley came across as a lisping grotesque. It's hard to imagine anyone liking that person inside the tube. Gradually, and probably with difficulty, he created another self-image: acerbic yet avuncular, patrician yet colloquial. "If you had to decide," he asked his guests on "Firing Line," "whether the United States should be governed by the faculty of Harvard College or by 2,000 people chosen at random from the Boston phone directory, which would you choose?" Even college professors answered, "The second, of course." He wrote sarcastically of "New York City, which groan[ed] under the weight of the greatest density of intellectuals per acre this side of Socrates' academy," but which still couldn't explain why the "residents of Detroit, or West Virginia, or Key West" should "subsidize the cost of rapid transit in New York City."

It was probably hard for Buckley to write a note to the garbageman without making it amusing.

As the years went on, Buckley got too chummy with his famous TV guests, trading compliments and inside jokes with fools like John Kenneth Galbraith, and calling these antics "debates." But at his iconoclastic best, Buckley was the man who said of Galbraith, who had told him he was on his way to lecture at the University of Moscow, "So long as Galbraith continues to teach economics to the Soviet Union, we will have a market for our excess grain." Buckley was the man who wrote in his obituary for Eleanor Roosevelt, "'With all my heart and soul,' her epitaph should read, 'I fought the syllogism.'" One of Buckley's coldest ironies was directed at John F. Kennedy: "Kennedy after all has lots of glamor. Gregory Peck with an atom bomb in his holster."

Buckley wasn't H.L. Mencken. He wasn't Emerson. He wasn't La Rochefoucauld — not by a long shot. But somebody in the late 20th century had to puncture the modern liberals' balloons, and Buckley was very good at doing that. Few people have been better. And the exposure and demoralization of the modern liberal state is a necessary condition for its dismantling.

Buckley's wit in person — on TV and in private letters — was often much better than his wit on the printed page. His printed style was often too heavy. His novels were unreadable, except by people who bought them because they idolized the author. But his personal comments were dependably fresh and witty. It was probably hard for him to write a note to the garbageman without making it amusing. This was an inborn tendency, but he didn't try to repress it, even when it was likely to get him into trouble.

Buckley wrote scores of little books — often compilations of his journalism — but he never wrote the big book that he planned in his early days. Its title, according to Russell Kirk and others, was to be "The Revolt Against the Masses." Kirk finally concluded that the book would never come out. "He'll never do it," he told me, attributing the failure to Buckley's expensive style of life and his need to keep money coming in from his journalism and his public speaking and those little books of his. I don't know whether Kirk (who had written his own big book, and had conducted his intellectual life heroically, with perilous means of financial support) was right about that. Maybe the problem was simply that Buckley's libertarian-conservative philosophy was never coherent enough to stand forth on its own, in theoretical form. But, like Kirk, I wish I could have read Buckley's big book, whether I approved of its message or not.

What Buckley achieved instead of a major political theory was the most influential editorial career that any American ever had. He started NR, he made it successful, and he used it to push the country more or less in the direction he wanted it to go. He had immensely more power than anyone else in his profession ever attained. He enjoyed it. But, like any good editor, he knew his limitations — and he was a very good editor, as long as his heart was in his work. He recognized talent when he saw it, and he worked with it as well as anyone could. Go to the library and read the first few volumes of National Review. You'll see what I mean.

When I was researching the life of Isabel Paterson, I had the opportunity to study the difficult relationship between a brilliant editor (Buckley) and a brilliant writer (Paterson), whom he courted and tried hard to exploit, in the best sense of that term. The relationship resulted in a few substantial articles by Paterson, and many substantial headaches for Buckley. He never got over his anger at Paterson for the hard time she gave him when he was a young man, but he never became so successful that old friends ceased to interest him. When Paterson died, he wrote a long, many-sided obituary, the kind of account that reflected real feeling for an "intolerably impolite" and "awesomely talented" writer. (His essay was written when "awesome" meant something.) Fifteen years later, he linked her with Friedrich Hayek, in a tribute to that great free-market economist ("Essays on Hayek," ed. Fritz Machlup, with a foreword by Milton Friedman). According to him, Hayek and Paterson were libertarians who were nobody's fools and whose words deserved respect.

About ten years after that, I came along, investigating Buckley's relationship with Paterson, and asked for access to his correspondence. He was instantly and warmly helpful. When, after many more years, I published my book, he mentioned it in a New Yorker interview (making sure that Paterson's name was spelled correctly) and wrote a long review for NR, in which he again paid her the tribute of frustrated admiration. It was late in his life, and it must have been an inconvenient task, reviewing my book. But he did it anyway.

In his obit for Paterson (NR, Jan. 28, 1961) he had said, "If I go wherever she is, when I leave this vale of tears, I expect she will be there at the gates, with a bill, 10 cents a word, for every word quoted from her in this aggrieved obituary notice." I like to think that she's there right now, presenting her bill, and when Buckley rejects it, she'll continue her debate with him — the great libertarian and the great conservative, discussing the ideas that divided and united them. — Stephen Cox

The Paul Vote

by Bruce Ramsey

The campaign may be winding down,
but the movement is far from finished.

As I write, Ron Paul has scaled down his campaign for president and gone back to Texas to defend his seat in Congress — which he should. The votes are in — enough of them. He is not going to be president, and we do need to have at least one avowed libertarian in Congress.

Liberty never inhaled the smoke that deluded some into believing that Rep. Paul could win the Republican nomination for president. It began after the debate of May 15, 2007, when Rudy Giuliani tried to indict Paul for the crime of blaming America by criticizing the war in Iraq, and the internet cheered for Paul. Later, Paul won mock primary elections on myspace.com (with 37%) and facebook.com (40%).

The applause for *Ron Paul! Ron Paul!* came also from crowds of the sort that Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, and John McCain did not have. Paul did not attract Barack Obama-sized crowds — let us admit that — but among Republicans the fervor of the Paulistas was unrivaled. I was at a rally in Seattle in September. Paul pulled a thousand fans into the Westin Hotel: old rightists, computer geeks, students, and just plain folks. The head of the state party stood by the doorway, feeling out of place in his pin-striped suit, marveling at the turnout.

At InTrade, the internet bookie, a bet on the nomination of Ron Paul was rising from below 1-in-100 in May 2007, steadily upward. By late September, a Paul nomination was trading at 5.2, which was higher than McCain's. The bet price of Paul kept rising, hitting 9 after his "money bomb" in early November, slumping to 5, and hitting 9 again in December, with the success of his second money bomb. Paul ended the year trading at 8.

Then, on Jan. 3, 2008, came the first caucus, Iowa — in which Paul got a 10% vote. Here was reality. For a candidate as radical as Paul, 10% was a good showing, but the "investors" were expecting something higher than that. His InTrade price collapsed. A week later came Jamie Kirchick's slime attack in the New Republic (See "Is There a Racist in the House?" Liberty, April 2008). The damage had already been done: the Paul dirigible had been deflated by the election returns.

By late February, Paul's InTrade quote was back to 1. So much for the superior judgment of markets. A market does

reflect what participants know — and also what they hope and believe.

Paul's fans cursed the media. "This blackout is systematic and it is self conscious," wrote former Paul aide Gary North on LewRockwell.com. It did seem like a blackout sometimes, particularly on Fox News, and being in the media industry I know that most editors never took Paul seriously. But there was reason for that. The purpose of an election is to choose a winner, and it was obvious that Paul was not going to win. He is a radical in a non-radical nation. That is not the kind of candidate who suddenly appeals to great masses of voters who have no ideology and are only vaguely paying attention. Huckabee was that kind of candidate; he could zoom from no place to the top of the heap; then *poof!* Barack Obama is quintessentially that kind of candidate — and most likely will be the next president of the United States.

By late February, Paul's InTrade quote was back to 1. So much for the superior judgment of markets.

Paul did, in fact, get a fair amount of coverage. He got more than Duncan Hunter or Tom Tancredo, and he started with about the same chances they had. He got more than Dennis Kucinich, Joe Biden, Chris Dodd, or Mike Gravel. He earned attention because of the internet polls, the money bombs, and the crowds chanting *Ron Paul! Ron Paul!*

The Paulistas who kept bellyaching at the press seemed to think that their man had an egalitarian right to the same air time as Mitt Romney. My word to them: Tanstaafl. There ain't no such thing as a free lunch. You've got to earn it. Ron Paul would have received more favorable attention — and a whole lot more unfavorable attention — if more Americans had voted for him.

The voters have spoken in many states. As with all candidates of strong belief, Paul did better in the caucus states — where participation requires support at a public meeting — than in those with a convenient secret ballot. At press time, he had done the best in the following caucus states, with the percentages applying either to the participants voting or to the delegates they elected: Montana 25%, Washington 22%, North Dakota 21%, Maine 19%, Alaska 17%, and Minnesota 16%.

These states are all on the Canadian border. Paul, who is from the Gulf Coast of Texas, apparently peaked at the 49th parallel.

In primary elections, Paul did best in New Hampshire 8%, the District of Columbia 8%, Washington state 7%, New York 7%, Michigan 6%, Maryland 6%, and Tennessee 6%. (Washington state has caucuses *and* a primary, and in its primary, Paul did best — over 11.5% — in five rural eastern counties, including four on that mysterious Canadian border.)

In primary elections, he did his worst in the Deep South, pulling 3 or 4% in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. He also pulled 3% in the most Republican state, Utah — but that is also the Mormon state, favoring Romney. Paul won only 4% of the Republican vote in McCain's home state, Arizona, and the same in California. His best showing in California, 11%, was in Alpine County in the Sierras.

Paul actually won in some county caucuses. In Nevada, where he took 14% of the caucus vote overall, he won in Nye County, a large, thinly populated territory (two people per square mile) that includes legal bordellos, gold mines, the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site, and the home of Liberty contributing editors Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw, who moved there because it didn't require building permits. Paul took four scattered counties (Blue Earth, Lincoln, Meeker, and Red Lake) in Minnesota, and several in Montana.

Who were the Paul supporters? Probably many were like the voters labeled generic libertarians in various surveys. Writing in the Cato Policy Analysis of Oct. 18, 2006, David Boaz and David Kirby used data from the Gallup Organization, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, and American National Election Studies to estimate the libertarian voter at 13% of the electorate. Qualifications were not rigorous. According to Pew, generic libertarians tend to be male (59%), young, and white. In regard to race, religion, education, and income, Pew's demographic portrait of generic libertarians is much like its portrait of generic liberals (more white, less religious, possessed of more education and income), except that most liberals are women.

Pew's survey of New Hampshire voters before the primary showed Paul running at 3% among women and 14% among men.

The Paul attendees at the Iowa caucuses also skewed toward men, and they tended to be young, less religious, and better educated than the average. Yet, although Paul supporters there were of all income levels, they were located disproportionately toward the lower end of the income scale.

Paul actually won some county caucuses. Who were the Paul supporters? Many were like the voters labeled generic libertarians in various surveys: male, young, and white.

I note that in the state of Washington, Paul's best counties are among the poorest in the state. They are places of rugged living — small ranches, orchards, and hardscrabble farms, logging operations and gold mines. They are places where people go to live off by themselves. So are Nye County,

Nevada, and Sierra County, California. So is Montana, and so is Maine. So is Alaska.

That is not to say that most of Paul's vote is from such places. Alpine, pop. 1,200, is the least populated county in California. Paul won a much smaller percentage of voters in San Francisco, but he got more *votes* in San Francisco because there are many more people — and more libertarians — there. It is the same with the states: the total Paul turnout in Montana — about 400 — could fit into a middle-school gymnasium.

The Paul phenomenon has divided professional libertarians. The Cato Institute has mostly ignored it — either because the Cato people are embarrassed by Paul's nationalist rhetoric over the supposed North American Union and by other trappings of conservatism, such as his stand on abortion and immigration, or because they don't want to tie themselves to someone who's going to lose, or because their attorneys warn them about losing their 501(c)(3) status.

At LewRockwell.com, where Cato is derided as a corral of "beltway libertarians," enthusiasm for Paul has been so great that Rockwell had to agree, last summer, to give up 501(c)(3) status.

Rockwell was Paul's chief of staff decades ago, and has been cheering for Paul at high decibels.

On the Paul phenomenon, Rockwell writes:

> In addition to garnering more primary votes than any libertarian candidate in American history, Ron has accomplished precisely what he set out to do. He has re-founded the libertarian movement on a principled basis, liberated the ideas of peace and free enterprise from monopolistic control, exposed the political apparatus for the fraud that it is, and laid the groundwork for a future flowering of liberty.

I made a more modest claim in the August 2007 Liberty:

> What Paul can hope for — and it would be a very big thing — is to lead a group willing to identify itself as Republican and opposed to a foreign policy of preemptive war.

He has done something broader than that, maybe more like what Rockwell says. He has run an explicitly libertarian campaign within the Republican Party. If a political party is imagined as a tent, Paul has enlarged the tent to include people who were outside it, or maybe were in it and about ready to leave. Now they have a champion. Paul uses classic Republican language to defend a libertarian point of view and to demand that his small-government, constitutionalist, antiwar, and free-market faction be recognized and accommodated *as Republicans*.

This faction is far from a majority. The idea that most Republicans believe Paul's philosophy, and that they would flock to him if he enunciated it, was always a delusion. But before Paul's campaign, they could ignore it. Now they have to argue with it. When they argue for continuing the occupation of Iraq they can no longer pretend that all their opponents are Democrats. They have opponents in their own tent. It is only a faction, but other factions, such as the foreign policy realists, may be able to ally with it. Having a faction also allows new issues to be put on the table — in Paul's case not only a withdrawal from Iraq but also the currency issue. It might not be a gold dollar, but even a Republican emphasis on a *strong* dollar would be a change.

The influence of Paul's faction depends on how Paul plays his cards. He has said that he will not run an independent candidacy, which is smart. If he did, his influence within the party would be no greater than Ralph Nader's in the Democratic Party. In 1988 Paul ran as a Libertarian, got 0.47% of the vote, was invisible and had no influence whatever. To do it again this year, merely to satisfy the people who get a thrill (and a salary) from campaigning would be a colossal mistake. He cannot do this, no matter how much his groupies importune him. He will have to endorse McCain — not now, and not with enthusiasm, but he will have to do it after McCain is nominated. Paul can still argue with McCain, of course, and he should — as a Republican.

Being in the party, and in the Congress, gives him a place to stand and be heard. And other Republicans will have to deal with him. (Says Fred Barnes in the Weekly Standard, "He [McCain] must attract the relatively small contingent who've supported Ron Paul to prevent Paul from running as a third party libertarian candidate for president.")

Paul's influence also depends on what happens later on. Gary North wrote in July 2007, "It will be interesting to see what his campaign organization does with all those email addresses" of contributors. In January 2008 North wrote about those addresses again: "I have read that Ron Paul has 100,000 email addresses of supporters."

North has made his living in newsletters, and the value of the list would be obvious to him. He wasn't mentioning it as a sales list for gold coins or newsletters, but as a list of Americans who could be inspired by a campaign of political ideas.

There is yet more to the story of Ron Paul. ❑

Who voted for Ron Paul?

Like most candidates of more pronounced idealist appeal, Paul does better in caucuses than in primaries. Here are the details (through early March) of the percentage of votes cast for Paul in the various state GOP events:

Caucus results	
Mont.	25%
Wash.	22%
N.D.	21%
Maine	19%
Alaska	17%
Minn.	16%
Nev.	14%
Kan.	11%
Iowa	10%
Colo.	8%

Primary results	
D.C.	8%
N.H.	8%
Wash.	7%
N.Y.	7%
Mich.	6%
Md.	6%
Tenn.	6%
Wis.	5%
La.	5%
Ill.	5%
N.J.	5%
Ark.	5%
Va.	4%
Ariz.	4%
Mo.	4%
Del.	4%
Calif.	4%
Conn.	4%
S.C.	4%
Ala.	3%
Fla.	3%
Utah	3%
Ga.	3%
Mass.	3%
Okla.	3%

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- John Mackey (Whole Foods) and John Goodman (National Center for Policy Analysis) debate Marxist economist Michael Perelman (UC Chico) and David Himmelstein, MD (Physicians for a National Health Program) on universal health care.
- "Was the Civil War Necessary?" Jeff Hummel (San Jose University) takes on Harry Jaffa (Clermont Institute) about Abraham Lincoln, slavery, and the Civil War.

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- Steve Moore, Wall Street Journal: "The Coming Tsunami: What An Obama Presidency Will Mean."
- David Boaz, Vice President, Cato Institute: "The Politics of Liberty."
- Warren Coats, former IMF official and expert on Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan: "The Truth About the Middle East."
- Gene Epstein, columnist, Barron's: "Why We Need Real Monetary Reform Now: Is Ben Bernanke the World's Most Dangerous Man?"
- Charles Murray, American Enterprise Institute, author of "Losing Ground": "There's Too Many Kids in College!"

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- Tyler Cowen, George Mason University: "Culture Wars: Does Western Capitalism Destroy Eastern Cultures?"
- Chuck Muth (Citizen Outreach): "Freedom in Education: Give Choice a Chance!"
- Harry King, MD: "How to Live to be 100, and Enjoy it!"

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Sun, Seegars, and Socialism

by Doug Casey

For two decades, Doug Casey has been Liberty's roving reporter, with a unique access to interesting people and places and a unique approach to everything he sees. No one but Casey could have written this report on his encounter with one of the world's most notorious personalities. It appeared in the July 1994 issue of Liberty.

— Stephen Cox

Too young to witness firsthand Castro's Cuban Revolution, I recently had a chance to observe the island's current, more salutary transformation. I was invited to Cuba by an investment organization — in effect, by the Cuban government — in hopes that I would recommend investing there.

I made two trips to Cuba, and had to fly in through Mexico City each time. Direct charters can supposedly be had through Miami, but they aren't really available unless you have family on the island. One of my European companions who did arrive via Florida made the mistake of informing an immigration official where he was headed. He and five others were immediately detained in a locked room at Miami International Airport while the agents spent two hours running background checks on them.

It's legal for Americans to visit Cuba, but officially discouraged: it's against the law to spend money while you're there, and it's best not to have the necessary visa stamped on your passport. That might provoke your own government to be much less friendly than Cuba's, as my friend from Europe discovered.

The first thing I noticed about Cuba was the absence of economic activity. No construction. No shops. Little traffic — a few American cars from the '50s, some primitive Ladas from Russia, mostly Chinese-made bicycles. The only restaurants were populated by Canadian and European tourists.

Cuba has a wonderful road system, and there's absolutely no traffic once you're out of Havana, so it's a pleasure to drive on it. Someday soon, those roads will be filled with rental cars filled

with foreign tourists venturing away from the beaches. Right now, the government is ambivalent about promoting tourism, because it will inevitably "corrupt" the workers and peasants. The nation's rigid currency controls have already been compromised by the fact that a bellboy in a hotel can earn a dollar from one tip — about as much as a doctor or engineer earns for two weeks' work. Worse still, the doctor or engineer is paid in pesos, which are almost valueless now. Unless a Cuban has relatives sending goods from the U.S., he's in big trouble. Dollars are actually the main currency in daily commerce.

He was detained in a locked room at Miami International Airport while agents spent two hours running background checks.

Once you're out of Havana, even dollars have marginal value, because there's nothing to buy. One of the country's few private employers has taken to paying his workers partly with items like soap, chocolate, and toothpaste, because those things would simply be unavailable to them otherwise. There is nothing in the country, literally nothing. That's a hard concept for someone coming from the land of Wal-Marts to grasp.

I spent a lot of my time out of Havana visiting rural areas in archaic Russian aircraft. One M1-8 helicopter provided some comic relief. I love the sound of a chopper's jet turbines spooling up, but this one tried twice, and just died each time. On the third try, the co-pilot started poking around in the fusebox with a screwdriver, and the whole cabin filled with acrid electrical smoke. We exited post haste. The episode illustrated just how primitive and laughably outdated Russian aircraft are. (A fusebox? A screwdriver?) But it's a good thing they're primitive: they don't require quite as much maintenance as more sophisticated machinery. And in Cuba, intelligent maintenance is very scarce.

Havana itself is in a time warp — quiet, with no activity. But it is not repressed. The block committees that assured political correctness in the bad old days are gone. Cuba is no longer a Stalinist society; it's just poor. Poor, and burned out, like a coke-head coming down from a long binge.

Wasn't It a Time?

And what a binge it was. Times have certainly changed. Back in the '60s and '70s, things seemed to be going very well for the Revolution. Everyone was adequately fed. Beggars, prostitutes, and the Mafia disappeared. Education and medical care became available to all. The average Cuban saw his society as the wave of the future. Those who fled the country were viewed as leeches, exploiters, unpatriotic bad apples — and in many cases, considering the nature of the pathologically corrupt Batista regime, they were. Good riddance to them, the people said, and good riddance to the criminals who joined them in the export of the Marielitos.

At the same time, Cuba was hosting thousands of disaffected children of the American bourgeoisie. The awe-stricken revolutionary tourists reassured the workers and peasants of their righteousness, and showed their solidarity by helping to cut cane.

Meanwhile, the imperialists were in full retreat on all fronts. In the U.S., the government had to bring in the National Guard to quell race riots. The Kennedy and King assassinations, the Symbionese Liberation Army, the Manson Family, the Chicago Seven, Watergate, the Weathermen, high inflation, a collapsing dollar, ballooning deficits, a hundred other traumas — the United States seemed to be on its last legs.

Sandal-clad Vietnamese peasants handed America a painful military defeat. Socialism seemed ascendant everywhere — in Chile, then Grenada, then Nicaragua. The Cuban Army was part of the world-wide revolution, on the move in Angola and Ethiopia.

Inundated with propaganda that framed all this with a Marxist perspective, it made good logical sense for the average Cuban to believe that Castro was riding the wave of the future. It was a great time to be alive and a revolutionary Communist.

Goodbye to All That

It's hardly necessary to point out what went wrong with Fidel's vision. But it's important to see things the way the average Cuban does, if we're to understand the situation in Cuba today.

Up until about 1990, when the old Soviet Union started to implode, the Cubans were able to trade sugar to Comecon (the Communist common market) at artificially high prices, and buy oil, machinery, and other necessities for prices that were artificially low. The subsidy is estimated to have been worth between $3 billion and $5 billion a year. Economically, it was a pretty stupid charade, but combined with what could be begged and borrowed abroad, and with capital left over from the old days (e.g., fixing up the pre-1959 U.S. cars that populated Cuba's streets and selling them to collectors), the Revolution was able to stay afloat for a good long time. As Adam Smith observed, there's a lot of ruin in a country.

The decline and fall of the USSR meant the end of the party. The Cuban economy's inevitable slide into oblivion has assumed the trajectory of a flat iron thrown out of an airplane.

A bellboy in a hotel can earn a dollar from one tip — about as much as a doctor or engineer earns for two weeks' work.

The American Left's onetime paragon of economic virtue now sports the lowest standard of living in the hemisphere, with the possible exception of Haiti. Rations are two kilos of rice and one of beans each month, and that's about it. There's no chicken, a one-time staple of Cuban cuisine, because Russian

planners convinced Cuban planners that it made more sense to mass-produce the birds in the Soviet Union.

The country is actually on the ragged edge of starvation; most Cubans I saw seemed to suffer from malnutrition. The government made a real effort to lay out the red carpet for my group, but no traditional Cuban dishes were served at our banquets, because there's no pork, beef, or chicken to make them with. Instead, we had seafood, I guess because it's impossible to effectively socialize the ocean. At the island's few nightclubs, the bargirls aren't looking for strangers to buy them drinks. The price of their company is a good, square meal.

My party met an assortment of ministers, including the president of the central bank. They impressed me as sincere and thoughtful, but troubled. It can't be much fun to realize you've devoted your entire life to an abysmal, terminal failure. Naturally, they don't care to see it that way, preferring to focus on the Revolution's alleged advances in education, medicine, and social welfare. But even these "successes" are starting to go down the drain.

It's true that almost everyone in Cuba can now read and write and has access to higher education — a vast improvement from the Batista days. As Abe Lincoln demonstrated, it's possible to get an education without much in the way of books, pencils, and paper. But it's suboptimal in this high-tech era. Cuban education is further compromised when the curriculum is suffused with Marxism and the teachers are cut off from the outside world. And the kids can't learn very much when they're hungry and malnourished.

Medical care has improved for the average person, if only because the regime cranked out tens of thousands of doctors. But the doctors have very little medicine and almost no equipment. Nonetheless, aside from the malnutrition, the average Cuban seems quite healthy — not because of the medical system, but because of their low-calorie, low-fat diet and lots of exercise. There's definitely something we can learn from them in this area, but it's not the lesson Billary seems to be taking to heart.

In any event, Cuban doctors are now making only $2 to $3 a month. As the economy opens further, the doctors will emigrate, delivering a final coup de grace to the myth of socialist medicine.

Socialism's other supposed victory was to rectify pre-Castro Cuba's calcified class structure — light-skinned people on top, dark-skinned ones on the bottom. In fact, almost all the officials we met were light-skinned. Things hadn't changed much on this score either, as far as I could tell.

Altogether, 35 years of socialism have brought only marginal, probably ephemeral gains in a few areas, with wholesale devastation everywhere else. And it was Soviet subsidies, not Cuban socialism, that accounted for the successes there were.

Most Cubans still deny that their problems stem from the nature of socialism itself. They're wrong. Entirely apart from

Careening Toward Crony Capitalism

Fidel Castro's resignation as president of Cuba on February 19 was the biggest non-event since the Y2K scare.

Much of the American media seem to think that institutions and the rule of law govern Cuba. Nothing could be further from the truth. Cuban presidents have come and gone under Fidel, but Fidel has always wielded the real power, with or without a title or office. As long as he's alive, no successor will rule and no changes will be implemented without his benediction.

Nonetheless, the nose of change stuck one snorting nostril under Cuba's tent over a year ago, when Fidel, because of his incapacitation due to complications of acute diverticulitis, was forced to relinquish real power to his brother Raul.

As head of the armed forces, Raul runs all the tourist concessions in Cuba. Since these are the source of nearly all the island's foreign exchange, Raul has inadvertently acquired a school-of-hard-knocks appreciation for economic realities. As reported in an earlier Reflection (December 2007), Raul has begun to explore some potentially island shaking changes. The latest, involving Dubai Ports World, is arguably the second nostril.

Last year, when the U.S. Congress rebuffed a bid by Dubai Ports World to operate six major U.S. ports, DPW didn't fold its hand. The partly state-owned company from the United Arab Emirates started trying to slip in the back door, with the help of that guardian of inchoate capitalism, Cuba. According to The Economist, DPW and the Cuban ministries in charge of foreign investment have, after protracted negotiations, commissioned a formal feasibility study of the possibility of investing $250 million to convert the port of Mariel — site of the 1980 refugee boat lift — into a modern shipping container facility.

While Fidel Castro's death — certainly *not* his resignation, as made perfectly clear by President Bush — or a new, Democrat administration (whichever comes first) might presage a lifting of the U.S. embargo, the Cuba-DPW deal isn't about supplying Cubans with consumer goods. It's about access to U.S. markets.

Most big U.S. ports are running close to capacity, and environmental restrictions make any proposed expansions unlikely. In a post-embargo world, Mariel would be a well-positioned hub for down-loading container ships from all over the world and redistributing cargo onto smaller vessels for distribution to dozens of harbors around the southeastern United States. Doubtless a middleman's commission would be appropriate.

One way or another, Cuba's leaders are rubbing their hands over the prospect of wading into a capitalist hot tub, post-embargo. They're also putting out the word that proposals for super-yacht marinas, theme parks, golf courses, and a raft of luxury projects are welcome. The projects, if they go through, will have big collateral effects on all parties, including the lowly Cuban consumer.

Shades of Castro's predecessor, Fulgencio Batista? *Plus ça change.* — Robert H. Miller

philosophical objections, it is economically impossible for a planned economy to survive because it's impossible for planners to calculate prices rationally. With prices fixed by fiat, people inevitably wind up consuming two, three, or ten units of capital to produce something that's worth only one unit. The Cubans still don't understand that, and as long as their schools teach Marx instead of Mises, they won't.

Ask the average Cuban why things have gone bad, and he'll tell you that (1) the Soviets screwed up (which is true enough, as far as it goes), and (2) the country is held back by the U.S. embargo. The second excuse is mostly nonsense; Cuba has always been able to get what it wants from scores of other countries. (Of course, complaints about the embargo are a tacit admission of socialism's failure: trading with capitalists should be anathema to real Communists.)

The embargo has hurt American businessmen, however, who've lost out as Canadians, Europeans, Asians, and Latins have cherry-picked opportunities in the last few years. The major effect of the embargo seems to be to prolong socialism in Cuba, by giving Castro an all-purpose excuse for his continual failures. Apparently, Washington is willing to shoot its own people in the foot just to take action against a perceived enemy. The "at least we're doing something" mentality strikes again.

My Dinner With Fidel

The highlight of my Cuban trips was a surprise meeting with Fidel Castro. My group was having a state-sponsored dinner party at one of Havana's "protocol houses," beautiful residences confiscated from the politically incorrect in the early '60s and now used to host foreign dignitaries, a group I suppose includes me. All of a sudden, there was the Bearded One. We gathered 'round, shook hands, and spent the next hour having an informal Q & A.

Fidel was dressed in his signature starched fatigues and appeared to be in excellent health and humor. He conducted his conversation through a translator, not so much because he doesn't speak English, but because he is somewhat linguistically nationalistic — and because he doesn't want to inadvertently say something that isn't quite what he meant. I was impressed by the give-and-take: Fidel was genuinely interacting with us, not just speaking to the peanut gallery.

In all, I must admit the man was far more impressive than Bill Clinton. Fidel has actually had a life. He believes in things. He takes ideas seriously. He's a man of character and charisma, and he isn't "slick." Clinton, by contrast, has done nothing but work for the government his whole life.

One trivial observation: you'd expect Castro to wear spit-shined combat boots to complement his fatigues. But Fidel sported black zip-up dingo boots from around 1975. Maybe they're more comfortable.

More interestingly, Fidel absolutely exudes the presence of Karl Hess — or at least he did during my visit. The same physique, the same physiognomy, the same physical presence, the same charisma. (I'm sorry I didn't get a chance to tell Karl this before his death. He would have understood completely, and had a real giggle.)

My one mistake was spending the whole hour with Fidel when I should have logged more time with Carlo Lahé, who arrived with him. Lahé is actually in charge of Cuba today; Fidel is really just the chairman of the board.

One of my hobbies is chatting to Third World leaders (who are remarkably easy to meet) about how they can transform their basket-case economies into exaggerated versions of Hong Kong, in the process making themselves domestically loved, internationally famous, and legitimately wealthy. Cuba would be an ideal prospect for free-market anomaly because Castro needs a way to exit gracefully into the sunset. He could declare that the Revolution has succeeded, and that it is now possible to grant "power to the people" directly through a Marxist "withering away of the state," providing an ideal — and ideologically defensible — end-run around disaster.

In any event, I gave both Castro and Lahé copies of my recent book, "Crisis Investing for the Rest of the '90s," and encouraged them to read the chapter on free-market anarchism. When I return to Cuba, I hope to discuss the concept with Lahé.

Counterrevolution?

That said, Cuba isn't very likely to adopt free markets any time soon. More likely, the government will fight a rear-guard action against outside influences, even as the genie gets out of the bottle.

But things are changing. Two principles, both based in Marxist dogma and central to Cuban bureaucrats' thinking, are gradually being undermined. One is that large parcels of land aren't to be sold to foreigners; that's already being subverted by the long-term leases needed to attract foreign capital.

The other is the notion that the state should be the only employer, which has resulted in a perverse piece of doublethink. When a foreign company hires the services of a worker for $600 a month, its contract is with the Cuban government. The state gives the worker the $600 — only in pesos, at the official exchange rate, which means about $3 in the real world. So, under the pretense of keeping the foreigners from exploiting the workers and peasants, the government does the exploiting.

continued on page 41

Thinking About War

by George H. Smith

Of all moral issues, war is perhaps the most difficult, and most important. What would a specifically libertarian response to this issue be?

Wars are fought once on battlefields of blood, only to be fought again on the battlefield of ideas. These replays vary in their degrees of abstraction. Some, such as debates over strategy, tactics, and the competency of generals, are relatively concrete and fall largely within the province of military historians. Others, such as debates over the justice of a war and how it was fought, require the application of fundamental moral principles to the subject of war. This latter enterprise is called "just war theory."

I

Relatively little has been done to develop a specifically libertarian version of just war theory. An effort in this direction was undertaken by Murray Rothbard, who linked his discussion of war to an isolationist foreign policy. Since Rothbard's influence on the modern libertarian movement was perhaps second only to that of Ayn Rand, I shall begin this discussion of just war theory by taking a brief look at his views.

According to Rothbard, when one country invades another country, two evils are bound to occur. The first is the killing of innocent people; this means that war "is mass murder, and this massive invasion of the right to life, of self-ownership, of numbers of people is not only a crime but, for the libertarian, the ultimate crime." The second evil is the inevitable increase in taxation that will be required to finance the war. Rothbard concludes: "For both reasons — because inter-State wars inevitably involve both mass murder and an increase in tax-coercion, the libertarian opposes war. Period."[1]

It turns out that this "period" is not as definitive as it may first appear, for Rothbard then says, "It was not always thus." He continues with a romanticized account of medieval warfare, an era when low-tech weaponry permitted armies to confine their violence to rival armies — something they "often did," Rothbard notes, apparently hoping that the Crusades and the sacking of entire cities (which entailed the wholesale slaughter of their inhabitants) will be viewed as exceptions to the rule.

Rothbard was no pacifist, and he seems to object not to war as such but rather to wars conducted by governments that presume to act on behalf of entire nation-states. He presumably would not object, in principle, to private wars, so long as these

were waged in legitimate self-defense and strictly avoided the killing of innocent people. Rothbard concludes:

> Apart from the small band of Tolstoyan anarchists, then, the libertarian foreign policy is *not* a pacifist policy. We do not hold, as do the pacifists, that no individual has the right to use violence in defending himself against violent attack. What we *do* hold is that no one has the right to conscript, tax, or murder others, or to use violence against others in order to defend himself. Since all States exist and have their being in aggression against their subjects and in the acquiring of their present territory, and since inter-State war slaughters innocent civilians, such wars are always unjust — although some may be more unjust than others.[2]

Although it is true that modern wars have generally been waged by nation-states against other nation-states (a model that has become less applicable with the rise of al Qaeda and other nonstate terrorist organizations), this needn't be the case; we can easily imagine a private protection agency in Rothbard's ideal anarchistic society waging war against another agency. Although the financing of war would be voluntary in this case, the problem of killing innocent people while exercising one's right of self-defense would remain. Even if we presume that *fewer* innocent people would be killed, the killing of even one innocent person would render that war unjust, if we accept Rothbard's reasoning.

It is important to distinguish actions that are unjust per se from actions that, though just in themselves, are rendered possible in a particular case by unjust means. For example, the apprehension of violent criminals is just, by libertarian standards, even if this activity is currently financed, and therefore made possible, by a coercive system of taxation that libertarians regard as unjust. Does this mean that libertarians should protest the apprehension of all violent criminals because this state activity is financed by coercive means? Few libertarians would answer "yes" to this question.

The killing of innocent people falls into a different category altogether, for (unlike the apprehension of violent criminals) Rothbard regards this as absolutely prohibited by the libertarian axiom of nonaggression. But if this is the case, then it matters not at all whether a war in which innocents are killed is waged by a nation-state, feudal barons, a private protection agency, guerrilla fighters (exemplifying a form of warfare to which Rothbard was favorably disposed), or individuals acting in their own self-defense. The relevant difference here is not the type of group or institution that does the fighting but the type of armaments it uses. Rocks, spears, arrows, and rifles can be aimed at particular individuals, but artillery shells and bombs (as well as more destructive weapons of mass destruction) target areas that may contain innocent bystanders.

Suppose a libertarian country is attacked with bombs. Does the principle of nonaggression mean that it may fight back only with rifles, in effect? Although Rothbard does not say this explicitly, he comes very close to it in his discussion of just war theory in "The Ethics of Liberty," where he argues that "the bow and arrow, and even the rifle, can be pinpointed, if the will be there, against actual criminals." On the other hand, "it is precisely the characteristic of modern weapons that they *cannot* be used selectively, cannot be used in a libertarian manner. Therefore, their very existence must be condemned. . . ."[3]

Suppose a libertarian country is attacked with bombs. Does the principle of nonaggression mean that it may fight back only with rifles, in effect?

My need to survive cannot eradicate, diminish, or otherwise affect the rights of innocent people who are in no way responsible for the situation in which I find myself. This is what Rothbard means in calling rights "absolute."

Rothbard is understandably concerned with the "ultimate crime of mass murder" that would result from the use of nuclear weapons, but he applies his libertarian prohibition to rockets and other modern weapons whose destructive effects cannot reasonably be confined to specific aggressors. This condemnation results from his conviction that the prohibition against killing innocent people is absolute, that it can *never* be justified even when such killing is the unintentional byproduct of legitimate self-defense:

> Suppose that . . . Jones finds that he or his property is being aggressed against by Smith. It is legitimate, as we have seen, for Jones to repel this invasion by the use of defensive violence. But, now we must ask: is it within the right of Jones to commit aggressive violence against innocent third parties in the course of his legitimate defense against Smith? Clearly the answer must be, No. For the rule prohibiting violence against the persons or property of innocent men is absolute; it holds regardless of the subjective *motives* for the aggression. It is wrong, and criminal, to violate the property or person of another, even if one is a Robin Hood, or starving, or is defending oneself against a third man's attack.[4]

Although no libertarian will take issue with Rothbard's claim that "we should try to reduce the scope of assault against innocent civilians as much as possible" during war, this maxim does not presuppose an absolute moral prohibition against the killing of innocents during a just war. It is curious that Rothbard, who cites many Thomistic philosophers in "The Ethics of Liberty," does not even consider their position on this issue. Thomas Aquinas and later scholastics

defended what is known as the "principle of double effect." The Thomistic philosopher Vernon J. Bourke summarizes this principle as follows:

> [W]here a moral action results in two consequences, one evil and the other good, the action *may be done morally*, if the good is in some reasonable proportion to the evil, if the good cannot be attained without the evil, if the two consequences are concomitant, and if the good is directly intended and the evil only permitted.[5]

Another Thomist, Thomas J. Higgins, applies the principle of double effect to the killing of innocents during war:

> It is a legitimate act of war to bomb directly any military target. The term, military target, includes not only military personnel and purely military installations, but roads, railways, every kind of communication and transportation, factories, warehouses, government buildings — anything which directly subserves a military purpose. Killing noncombatants in air raids may never be directly willed but only permitted according to the principle of double effect. To bomb a purely civilian area for the sake of terrorizing the enemy into subjection is merely mass murder.[6]

This principle has been used by many philosophers of war to justify the killing of innocents, so long as such killing is not directly intended but is the unavoidable byproduct of an action that is required for self-defense. Rothbard rejects this principle, if only implicitly, when he maintains that the rights of person and property are "absolute" and hold "regardless of the subjective *motives* for the aggression." My need to survive, however real and urgent, cannot eradicate, diminish, or otherwise affect the rights of innocent people who are in no way responsible for the situation in which I find myself. This is what Rothbard means in calling rights "absolute."

This is a reasonable position. To claim that innocent people lose their rights whenever they prove inconvenient for me would throw a libertarian theory of rights into a whirlwind of subjectivity. On the other hand, motives are surely relevant to our *moral* evaluation of an action. Rothbard seems to admit as much when he says that we "may understand and sympathize with the motives" in those "extreme situations" where killing an innocent person is required for one's self-defense — but if the killing of innocents is always and everywhere unjustifiable murder, pure and simple, then it is difficult to understand the reason for this sympathy.

Moreover, it is not only the right to self-ownership that is absolute, according to Rothbard, but also the right to external property. Hence Rothbard's position on war, if consistently applied, would mean that even minor violations of property rights could never be justified by appealing to self-defense. If, while fleeing from an aggressor who intends to kill me, I find it necessary to trespass on the land of another person without his permission, then my action would qualify as a violation of the owner's property rights. Would Rothbard insist that I should therefore stand my ground and permit myself to be killed rather than commit this unjust act? Many such examples could be given, and they give a sense of unreality to Rothbard's position.

There is a way of out this dilemma, one that Rothbard does not consider, namely, that it may sometimes be *morally* justifiable to violate the rights of innocent people. Rights, in this view, specify conditions in which force may legitimately be used against others. They pertain to the *external* aspects of human action and are not directly concerned with subjective motives. The motives for violating a right may be good or bad, moral or immoral, but it is the *objective* characteristics of an action that will ultimately determine whether or not a right has been violated, and to what extent.

In this view, Rothbard is correct to maintain that to use force against innocent people, even in the course of legitimate self-defense, would constitute a violation of their rights. But it may be *morally* justifiable, under strictly defined circumstances, to violate the rights of innocent people. And in such cases one's motives — or, more precisely, one's *intentions* — play a major role in evaluating the action in question. (This issue, which pertains to the *ethics of emergencies*, requires more attention than I can give it here.)

II

Whatever the problems with Rothbard's approach may be, it at least addresses in a serious way the complicated and disturbing problems raised by just war theory. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of a recent article by Yaron Brook and Alex Epstein, "'Just War Theory' vs. American Self-Defense," which appears in The Objectivist Standard.[7] The article is significant because Mr. Brook, as president and executive director of the Ayn Rand Institute, may be taken to express the "official" Objectivist position on just war theory.

This raises the interesting question of whether Rand would have agreed with Brook and Epstein. Although this is obviously a matter of conjecture, I think there is considerable evidence to indicate that she would have endorsed their major theoretical conclusions. But this raises the more difficult question of whether Rand's statements about war (many of which were given off the cuff, as verbal responses to questions) are consistent with her own theory of individual rights and her application of methodological individualism to moral reasoning. Since Brook and Epstein do not even consider the possibility that Rand failed to apply her principles consistently, I shall not explore this problem further, except where it is pertinent to a particular argument.

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The lengthy article by Brook and Epstein is an ambitious mixture of policy analysis, historical interpretation, and political theory. Such articles will necessarily contain claims that cannot be defended in detail, so it is a relatively simple matter for a critic to attack isolated remarks and focus on them

at the expense of more significant points. I will do my best to avoid this kind of picayune criticism and deal instead with basic themes. I will concentrate on the wholesale repudiation of "just war theory" by Brook and Epstein.

The authors were not satisfied with presenting their version of just war theory and its application to the ongoing conflict with what they describe (correctly, I think) as "Islamic Totalitarianism." Perhaps in the hope of adding a dramatic punch to their presentation, they decided to attack "just war theory" root and branch, and much of their article is devoted to this criticism. It seems that the failures of the Bush administration in dealing with terrorism are owing to its adherence to the principles of just war theory, which have imposed altruistic restraints on measures that are required for the defense of the United States and other innocent nations:

> Just War Theory, in the final analysis, is anti-self-defense and anti-justice. By preaching self-sacrifice to the needs of others, Just War Theory has led to the sacrifice of the civilized for the sake of the barbarous, the sacrifice of victims of aggression for the sake of its perpetrators, the sacrifice of noble Americans for the sake of ignoble Iraqis — the sacrifice of the greatest nation in history for the sake of the worst nations today.

The subtext here is one that we often find with Objectivist writers: not until Ayn Rand developed her ethics of rational egoism was it possible to slay the dragon of altruism that had hitherto vitiated every just war theory.

The subtext here is one that we often find with Objectivist writers: everyone got it wrong until Ayn Rand happened on the scene. Not until she developed her ethics of rational egoism was it possible to slay the dragon of altruism that had hitherto vitiated every just war theory, so we have virtually nothing to learn from this long and rich tradition.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the article is the ambiguity that attends its critique of "just war theory." At times the authors seem to mean contemporary just war theory, as represented chiefly by Michael Walzer's influential book, "Just and Unjust Wars" (1977). At other times they use "just war theory" as a generic label, one that encompasses every just war theory from Augustine (in the early 5th century) to the present day.

Brook and Epstein appear not to have read Walzer's book very carefully. Consider their objection to the requirement that war be waged as a "last resort," i.e., only after peaceful alternatives have been exhausted. This supposedly means that "a nation cannot go to war immediately even when there is an objective threat — that is, when another nation has shown the willingness to initiate aggression against it." The "last resort" requirement is therefore "inimical to the requirements of self-defense, which demand that serious threats be stopped as soon as possible."

According to Brook and Epstein, Walzer is among those (otherwise unnamed) just war philosophers who do not regard objective threats as legitimate grounds for war, and they quote a remark he made to the New York Times to illustrate their point: "we don't have to wait to be attacked; that's true. But you do have to wait until you are about to be attacked."

If Brook and Epstein had consulted Chapter 5 ("Anticipations") of "Just and Unjust Wars," they would have learned that Walzer does not hold the position they attribute to him. On the contrary, he emphatically maintains that an objective threat can justify a preemptive war, e.g., of the sort that Israel fought during the "Six-Day War" in 1967:

> The line between legitimate and illegitimate first strikes is not going to be drawn at the point of imminent attack but at the point of sufficient threat. That phrase is necessarily vague. I mean it to cover three things: a manifest intent to injure, a degree of active participation that makes that intent a positive danger, and a general situation in which waiting, or doing anything other than fighting, greatly magnifies the risk.[8]

Like many just war philosophers, Walzer distinguishes between a subjective fear and an objective threat. Fear alone is not enough to justify a preemptive strike, but the same is not true of a legitimate threat (or what Francis Bacon called "just fear"). Walzer argues that "we need an objective standard" to determine when the fear we feel is based on a real threat — and when this determination has been made, we may use force in self-defense.

Brook and Epstein's interpretation of Walzer pales in comparison to their outrageous handling of just war theory in the broader sense. The authors claim that just war theorists, despite their many differences, "all hold one fundamental idea in common." The moral premise of just war theory — not merely this or that version, mind you, but *all* historical forms of just war theory — is "the altruistic notion that justice means selfless service to the needs of others." In short: "Just War Theory . . . is the application of the morality of altruism to war."

This remarkably silly claim is the foundation for a wholesale repudiation of just war theory by Brook and Epstein, whose argument may be summarized as follows:

It is both imperative and just that we fight against "Islamic Totalitarianism" until that movement no longer threatens us. This requires that we be willing to take the drastic actions (which they repeatedly describe as "Sherman-like," after the harsh Civil War actions of General Sherman) that are required to achieve this end. But these actions are inconsistent with "a certain moral theory of war" called just war theory, so to "the extent that Just War Theory is followed, it is a prescription for suicide for innocent nations." This shows that just war theory is "neither practical nor moral"; on the contrary, it is "a profoundly unjust code," one rooted in altruism. In forbidding us to take actions necessary for our very survival, just war theory effectively nullifies our right of self-defense and demands that we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others.

There is an unfortunate tendency among some Objectivists to map out a short and easy route through the history of ideas that will take them to a predetermined destination. The

destination, more often than not, is "altruism" — an evil that lurks behind every bush and under every rock in the history of philosophy. More pernicious still, according to these Objectivists, are the seeds of altruism that, once planted, can lie dormant and undetected in the soil of seemingly benign theories, only to emerge decades or even centuries later as full-blown doctrines of self-sacrifice. In their early stages, these seeds can be so subtle and elusive as to be perceptible only to dedicated altruism hunters.

According to Brook and Epstein, all roads in the history of just war theory lead to Augustine, altruist-extraordinaire:

> Although advocates of Just War Theory differ on many specifics about the nature of morality, they all hold one fundamental idea in common. To zero in on this idea, let us turn to the origins of Just War Theory: the writings of the Christian theologian Saint Augustine on the proper use of violence by individuals.

Our authors now tell a story, much of it fictional, of how Augustine packed altruism into just war theory at its point of origin and thereby tainted it forever. The first peculiar thing about this story is where it starts. One can only guess where Brook and Epstein came by the idea that the "origins" of just war theory are to be found in the writings of Augustine.

Augustine has been called the first *Christian* just war theorist (though even this label has been characterized as "misleading" by the Cambridge editors of his "Political Writings"), but he was centuries too late to qualify as an originator of just war theory per se. Many Greek and Roman philosophers, historians, and statesmen had discussed just war theory long before Augustine came along. The discussion in Cicero's "Republic" (to which Augustine refers on several occasions) is but one example. Moreover, Augustine clearly had an earlier tradition of just war theory in mind when he endorsed the following view: "A just war is customarily defined as one which avenges injuries, as when a nation or a state deserves to be punished because it has neglected either to put right the wrongs done by its people or to restore what it has unjustly seized."[9]

Brook and Epstein correctly point out that Augustine had a significant impact on later just war theory; they also call attention to the strong current of altruism in Augustine's ethics. Aside from these general points, however, their account is highly inaccurate.

Augustine set out to refute those pacifists who had argued that Christians should not serve in the Roman military. In the course of doing so, he conceded that Christians, when acting in their private capacity as Roman citizens, should be willing to die rather than use force in self-defense. But he also maintained that these selfsame Christians, when acting in their *public* capacity as soldiers, have a *duty* to use force when a war has been authorized by a legitimate political ruler.

Just war theory is a big tent in which a wide range of policies can find shelter.

There is a definite strain of altruism here, insofar as Augustine maintains that the use of violence is justifiable only when it furthers the common good instead of one's personal interests; but, contrary to the suggestion of Brook and Epstein, this did not lead Augustine to conclude that "humanitarian" wars fought on behalf of other countries are morally superior to wars fought in defense of one's own country. This was not his point at all.

Brook and Epstein argue that it is both imperative and just that we fight against "Islamic Totalitarianism" until that movement no longer threatens us. This requires that we be willing to take "Sherman-like" actions.

Now, to deny the personal right of self-defense while insisting that Christians have a duty to defend their country was obviously an untenable position, but Augustine's authority in the Catholic church was such that it took centuries before his position on self-defense was decisively overthrown. This was largely the accomplishment of Thomas Aquinas, who (writing in the 13th century) defended the personal right of self-defense in no uncertain terms. To the question of whether one may "kill someone in self-defense,"

> Aquinas replies that it is morally proper to "to repel force by force," and that it is not "necessary to salvation that a man refrain from an act of moderate self-defense in order to avoid killing another man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than another's."[10]

Even the most dedicated altruism hunter would have difficulty locating his prey in these remarks. And it was Aquinas' views on self-defense, not those of Augustine, that would dominate Catholic thinking on just war theory in the following centuries. Indeed, the maxim that we should value our own lives more than the lives of other people (within the boundaries of justice, of course) would henceforth play a major role in just war theory. For example, in the early 16th century, Francisco de Vitoria (the most influential just war philosopher of his era) wrote that "free men . . . do not live for the convenience of others, but for themselves"; and he followed the lead of Aquinas rather than Augustine in maintaining that "every man has the power and right of self-defense by natural law."[11]

Although Aquinas quoted Augustine extensively in his discussion of just war theory, he did so for the purpose of supporting the position that "the care of the commonwealth is entrusted to princes," and that "it pertains to them to protect the commonwealth of the city or kingdom or province subject

to them." This includes not only the obligation to punish domestic criminals but also the obligation "to use the sword of war to protect the commonwealth against enemies from without."[12]

In sum, Aquinas invoked the authority of Augustine to support the following principles: (1) A just war can be waged only by a legitimate political authority. (2) A just cause is required; that is to say, "those against whom war is to be waged must deserve to have war waged against them because of some wrongdoing." (3) It is necessary that "those who wage war should have a righteous intent; that is, they should intend either to promote a good cause or avert an evil."[13] In none of these principles — all of which were defended by both Augustine and Aquinas — do we find anything that could remotely be described as "altruistic."

Brook and Epstein have little choice but to acknowledge that later just war theories were grounded in the right of self-defense, but even here our intrepid altruism hunters claim to have found the evil for which they were searching.

> The most significant development in Just War Theory since Augustine's time is that the theory has come to include an endorsement of what it calls a "right to self-defense." But because Just War Theory has maintained its Augustinian, altruistic roots, its alleged "right" to self-defense turns out to be no such thing.

The argument here is that the principles of just war theory, such as "proportionality" and "discrimination," so undercut the preconditions of legitimate self-defense as to effectively nullify this right during war. These principles are said to be altruistic because they supposedly demand that innocent people sacrifice their lives, or at least put them in significant danger, for the sake of other people.

The principle of proportionality is that retaliation should be proportional to the injury received. The principle of discrimination is that we should make a good-faith effort to restrict our use of force to those who are guilty of aggression and avoid targeting innocent people. While acknowledging that these principles are ambiguous and leave a good deal of room for interpretation, Brook and Epstein nonetheless insist that they amount to the imperative that a just war "be fought by unselfish, sacrificial means." For example, it is "commonly necessary in war to break the spirit of a foreign people whose nation has initiated aggression in which they are complicit," and this may call for the Sherman-like tactics of targeting civilians and razing entire cities. But just war theory "forbids such tactics."

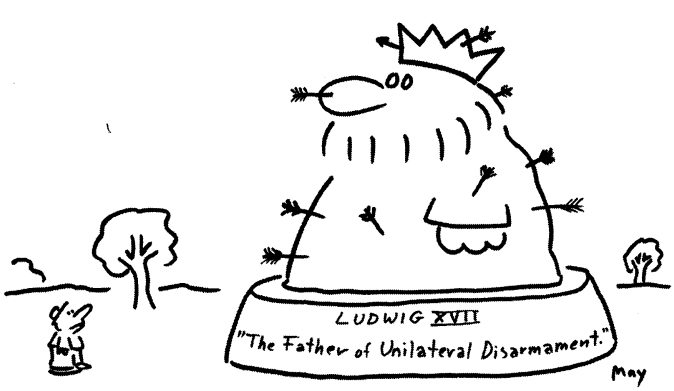
> A nation with "good intentions," practicing "proportionality" and "discrimination," cannot possibly raze a city as Sherman did. This is why, although Sherman's actions helped to end the Civil War, he is a reviled figure among Just War theorists: His goal was to preserve his side by inflicting unbearable misery on its enemy's civilian population — the opposite of "good intentions." Many Just War theorists hold — as by their standard they are obliged to hold — that the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 was immoral. America, they claim, should have valued Japanese civilians over the hundreds of thousands of GIs who would have died invading Japan.

It may come as a shock to Brook and Epstein to learn that Sherman-like tactics — including tactics that go beyond anything that they would endorse — have been advocated by some of the most influential proponents of just war theory. When our authors refer to "Just War theorists and their pacifist spiritual brothers," they labor under the misapprehension that just war theorists have been cousins to the pacifists who would take the fun out of war by concocting "new schemes for appeasement, or new fantasies that the enemy has reformed." Especially disturbing to Brook and Epstein is the apparent incompatibility of just war theory with the Sherman-like tactics of targeting civilian populations, burning cities and private estates, destroying crops and livestock, and so forth.

Here as elsewhere it is painfully evident that they have not read even the most prominent just war philosophers, such as Francisco de Vitoria, who is widely acknowledged as the founder of modern international law. His "On the Law of War" (a series of lectures delivered at the University of Salamanca in 1539) was the most systematic and extensive presentation of just war theory to date, and its influence on subsequent thinkers was immense.

Consider Vitoria's argument that we may "plunder" the "goods and property" that have been used against us in a war, even if these belong to innocent people. "Indeed, we may take the money of the innocent, or burn and ravage their crops or kill their livestock; all of these things are necessary to weaken the enemies' resources. There can be no argument about this." Moreover, "one may even enslave the innocent under just the same conditions as one may plunder them," i.e., when such measures are necessary to win a just war. As for prisoners of war, if they "would otherwise be combatants, for instance, if they have already borne arms against us, *they may be executed.*"[14]

Like many early just war theorists, Vitoria would put Brook and Epstein to shame in a contest to see who advocates the most severe tactics during war. Even John Locke (who greatly admired the writings of Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf, the two leading Protestant proponents of just war theory) defended the enslavement of those who participate in an unjust war. For centuries this line of reasoning was a standard justification for slavery among just war theorists; and though Brook and Epstein do not discuss this issue specifically, I assume that they do not advocate the mass enslave-



ment of Islamic fundamentalists whom they regard as posing "objective threats" to America.

Just war theory is a big tent in which a wide range of policies can find shelter. Brook and Epstein acknowledge this when they note that the guidelines of just war theory are "ambiguous," that "advocates of Just War Theory differ on many specifics," and that how one interprets principles like proportionality will ultimately depend on one's "basic view of morality." These are important insights, and if Brook and Epstein had followed up on them instead of pursuing the red herring of altruism, they might have produced a valuable contribution to just war theory.

Grotius saw a kind of madness in the death and destruction caused by wars, which were "justified" in myriad ways.

III

If the principles of just war theory are so elastic, having been used to defend not only the Sherman-like measures advocated by Brook and Epstein but also measures (such as enslavement) that even Sherman-lovers would reject, then of what value is this tradition to modern libertarians and Objectivists?

Just war philosophers, however much they may disagree over particulars, have shared a common concern with the ethics of war; they have attempted to apply objective moral principles knowable to reason (traditionally known as "natural laws") both to the cause of war (*jus ad bellum*) and to the conduct of war (*jus in bello*). These moral principles have varied to the extent that just war theories have reflected the moral standards of their time. What were regarded as relatively humane methods of warfare in one era sometimes came to be regarded as barbaric in a later one. The reverse has also occurred: many 18th-century advocates of "civilized war" would have reacted with horror at the 20th-century notion of "total war," which sanctioned the wholesale targeting of civilians.

Just war theory underwent a profound transformation during the 16th and 17th centuries, a period that witnessed the development of the modern theory of natural rights. In this profoundly individualistic approach to political theory, rights came to be seen as principles of moral jurisdiction that a person has over his body, his labor, and the fruits thereof. Throughout the literature of this period we see "force" and "fraud" listed as the two basic methods by which rights can be violated — a strong indicator of the similarity between this emerging theory and the conception of rights defended by modern Objectivists and libertarians.

Whereas earlier philosophers had typically used terms like "injury" to specify when a war is justified — a condition that permitted a broad range of interpretations — natural rights philosophers insisted that only a violation of *rights* can justify a war, and that these rights place moral restraints on what belligerents can properly do while fighting a war. As Hugo Grotius (the highly influential Dutch writer on international law and just war theory) put it in his seminal work, "The Rights of War and Peace" (1625):

> Least of all should that be admitted which some people imagine, that in war all [moral] laws are in abeyance. On the contrary, war ought not to be undertaken except for the enforcement of rights; when once undertaken, it should be carried on only within the bounds of law and good faith. [I]n order that wars may be justified, they must be carried on with not less scrupulousness than judicial processes are wont to be.[15]

Grotius saw a kind of madness in the death and destruction caused by wars, which were "justified" in myriad ways. He hoped (perhaps naively) that just war theory would bring the voice of reason to what was typically an irrational enterprise.

Grotius was the first philosopher to develop a *systematic* theory of individual rights to serve as the foundation for his just war theory. This project was continued by Samuel Pufendorf, whose massive work, "The Law of Nature and Nations" (1672), was praised by Locke as "the best book" on political theory ever written.[16] And this is precisely how the celebrated works by Grotius and Pufendorf should be classified: they are comprehensive treatments, first and foremost, of *political theory*, which apply the principles of this discipline to the problem of war. According to Locke, those who read the major works by Grotius and Pufendorf "will be instructed in the natural rights of men, and the original and foundations of society, and the duties resulting thence." These are "studies which a gentleman should not barely touch at, but constantly dwell upon, and never have done with."[17]

Grotius and Pufendorf were not liberal individualists; on the contrary, both reached conclusions that were favorable to absolutism in some respects. But (as Locke indicated) they presented a theory of natural rights that could be used to solve the fundamental problems of political philosophy. They provided a conceptual structure, an individualistic *methodology* or way of thinking about political problems — including the problem of war — that promised to bring system and coherence to this difficult discipline. They made just war theory a

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branch of political philosophy, and they achieved this integration by means of a theory of individual rights. The moral principles that should regulate the interaction of individuals within the same nation, they argued, are essentially identical to the moral principles that should regulate the interaction of individuals in different nations.

Grotius based his theory of rights on an ethics of rational self-interest. In the words of Richard Tuck (a leading authority in this field), Grotius "went back to the principles of the Stoics . . . in particular the Stoic claim that the primary force governing human affairs is the desire for self-preservation. But he interpreted this desire in *moral* terms, as the one and only *universal right*: no one could ever be blamed for protecting themselves. . . ."[18]

According to Grotius, reason enables man to formulate and act upon the general principles that set the foundation for a beneficial social order. Foremost among these conditions is the preservation of one's *suum*, i.e., moral jurisdiction and power over one's life, body, and liberty. For Grotius, these spheres of moral jurisdiction are expressed in terms of *rights*, which define and delimit the use of physical force in society. Grotius would have wholeheartedly agreed with Ayn Rand's statement that *"Individual rights are the means of subordinating society to moral law."*[19]

According to Grotius, people form *political* societies primarily for the individualistic purpose of protecting their rights from the violent invasions of others: "the end of society is to form a common and united aid to preserve to every one his own." Self-preservation is a fundamental right that is violated by the initiation of physical force, so self-defense is a right "which nature grants to every one."[20] Rights "do not prohibit all use of force, but only that use of force . . . which attempts to take away *the rights of another*."[21] The right of self-defense justifies the retaliatory use of force: "a person, if he has no other means of saving his life, is justified in using any forcible means of repelling an attack." This reasoning also applies to our conduct in a just war, which has as its purpose "the preservation of our lives and persons."[22]

Principles of just war theory are said to be altruistic because they supposedly demand that innocent people sacrifice their lives, or at least put them in significant danger, for the sake of other people.

If this approach can be called "egoistic," owing to its emphasis on the morality of self-interested actions, we must keep in mind that it is a *universalistic* egoism — a form of egoism in which every person has an equal right to pursue his self-interest within the boundaries of justice. Considered in terms of fundamentals, this approach is the same as that found in the ethical egoism of Ayn Rand. Unlike the egoism of (say) Max Stirner, Rand maintains that the pursuit of *rational* self-interest should take the rights of other people into account; indeed, the integration of self-interest and rights is perhaps the most impressive feature of her political theory. Nowhere does Rand suggest that respecting the rights of others is "altruistic."

Since even a just war will inevitably involve the killing of innocent people and other rights-violating actions, Grotius and his colleagues devoted considerable attention to this problem. Although they sometimes disagreed over particulars, the acceptance of a rights-based method of analysis permitted them to argue within the same conceptual framework. This framework, I maintain, is also the one best-suited for those modern libertarians and Objectivists who work from a theory of natural rights.

Just war philosophers have attempted to apply objective moral principles knowable to reason both to the cause of war and to the conduct of war.

Allow me to summarize some theoretical features of this approach, beginning with the notion of a state of nature.

A state of nature (or "natural society") is a society without government, i.e., a society without a common sovereign, or judge, who can adjudicate disputes between members of society. Described by John Locke as a condition of "pure anarchy," the state of nature was an extremely useful model that permitted philosophers to explore the extent of *natural* rights, i.e., those enforceable moral claims that individuals would possess in a "natural" society without a government.

Debates over the moral status of individuals in a state of nature played an indispensable role in just war theory, because sovereign nation-states were viewed as being in a state of nature vis-a-vis other nation-states. John Locke expressed the prevailing view of his contemporaries when he wrote:

> 'Tis often asked as a mighty Objection, *Where are*, or ever were, there any Men in such a State of Nature? To which it may suffice as an answer at present: that since all *Princes* and rulers of *Independent* Communities all through the world are in a State of Nature, 'tis plain the World never was, nor ever will be, without Numbers of Men in that state.[23]

As Emmerich de Vattel (an influential 18th-century just war theorist) put it, nations "may be regarded as so many free persons living together in a state of nature."[24]

This means that the reciprocal rights and duties that would apply to individuals in an anarchistic state of nature can also be applied to relationships between sovereign nation-states.

The approach rested on an analogy between self-sovereignty and state-sovereignty, which is why works like those

by Grotius and Pufendorf explored in considerable detail the meaning and implications of "sovereignty." This approach generated a number of serious theoretical problems, as we see in the contention of Pufendorf that states should be viewed as "moral persons" for the purpose of political analysis. (This view owed a good deal to Roman law.)

Such problems are one reason why 17th-century just war theory cannot be accepted "as is" by modern libertarians, whose views on state sovereignty differ from those of our predecessors. Considerable work remains to be done in this field, so I should again emphasize that my discussion of this tradition should not be construed as a blanket endorsement. I am recommending the *methodology* employed by these philosophers, not necessarily their specific conclusions and doctrines.

Closely related to the state of nature model was a way of looking at rights that I call *political reductionism.* This is the doctrine that all rights are ultimately the rights of individuals, and that all rights and powers claimed by a government must be reducible, in principle, to the rights and powers of individuals. As Locke put it, "no Body can transfer to another more power than he has in himself."[25]

Statements of political reductionism abound in the 17th century. Algernon Sidney, a hero to Thomas Jefferson and other revolutionary Americans, wrote that "whatsoever is done by delegated powers, must be referred to the principals; for none can give to any a power which they have not in themselves."[26] According to Gershom Carmichael (a seminal figure in the early Scottish Enlightenment who brought a Lockean perspective to his commentaries on Pufendorf), "civil power is in fact nothing but the right which belonged to individuals in the state of nature to claim what was their own or what was due to them, and which has been conferred upon the same ruler for the sake of civil peace."[27] And Thomas Jefferson affirmed political reductionism in no uncertain terms when he said that "the rights of the whole can be no more than the sum of the rights of individuals."[28] Hence when Ayn Rand stated that a "group can have no rights other than the rights of its individual members," and that "the expression 'individual rights' is a redundancy," she placed herself in a long and venerable tradition of political reductionism.[29]

The model of a state of nature, when combined with political reductionism, generated a method of reasoning about war that enabled philosophers to analyze complex moral issues in a systematic fashion. What rights (and corresponding duties) would individuals possess in a state of nature? It was by addressing this question that philosophers of war ascertained the rights and duties that one sovereign nation possesses vis-a-vis other sovereign nations in the anarchistic arena of international relationships.

In other words, before philosophers in this tradition discuss what actions *nations* may properly undertake in self-defense, they first discuss what actions *individuals* in a state of nature could properly undertake. Some of these discussions are fascinating for the amount of detail they contain. For instance, in considering the old problem of whether one may kill a thief in self-defense, Grotius considers the distinction between "a thief who steals by day, and the robber, who commits the act by night." After noting that many previous philosophers had considered this problem, Grotius notes that "they differ about the reason for this distinction," while adding that they seem not to "have considered the question in its proper light" — which Grotius, of course, then proceeds to do.[30]

In a similar vein, Pufendorf considers problems like the following: suppose that, after a shipwreck, more men leap into a boat than it is capable of carrying, and that "no one has more Right than another to it." (Pufendorf suggests that they draw lots to determine "who shall be cast overboard"; and that if "any Man shall *refuse* to take his chance, he may be thrown overboard without any more ado.") Or suppose that we have a situation in which "*two* happen into imminent Danger of their Lives, where *both* must perish. . . ." (In this case, "one may . . . hasten the Death of the other, that he may save *himself.*" Pufendorf bases this conclusion on the premise that "every Man is allowed to be *most dear* to himself" — scarcely the kind of self-sacrificial maxim that permeates just war theory, according to Brook and Epstein.[31])

Such problems were not regarded as idle hypotheticals of the sort that might fascinate libertarians after a few beers. They were seen instead as essential to developing a comprehensive theory of the individual right of self-defense. Pufendorf even considers the problem of what right, if any, an aggressor has to self-defense; and, like Grotius before him, he explores in considerable detail the problem of threats.

This method of reasoning generated a bright-line test for both the justification of war and the actions taken during a war: If the actions undertaken by a government in the name of self-defense could never, in principle, be legitimate for an individual to undertake in self-defense, then those actions must be condemned as morally improper. Within the individualistic tradition of just war theory, this state of nature analysis may be called the moral paradigm of a just war.

There is one other theoretical problem that bears mentioning, namely, the problem of acting as judge in one's own case. When Aristotle pointed out that "people are generally bad judges where their own interests are involved,"[32] he was calling attention to a problem that would be widely discussed by later philosophers. Political philosophers, regardless of their views on the proper limits of governmental power, generally agreed that a government should at least provide a judicial authority to which subjects and citizens can appeal to resolve conflicts that might otherwise end in perpetual violence.

Grotius would have wholeheartedly agreed with Ayn Rand's statement that "Individual rights are the means of subordinating society to moral law."

This solution was not available in the realm of international affairs, since sovereign nations stand in a state of nature

relative to other nations. In response, some philosophers advocated a league of nations that would serve as a common judge; some even called for a world government of sorts. But these proposals never gained traction in the 17th century, and it is with good reason that contemporary libertarians and Objectivists regard the United Nations with a jaundiced eye as a jury that includes criminals of the worst sort.

Rand maintains that the pursuit of rational self-interest should take the rights of others into account. Nowhere does Rand suggest that respecting the rights of others is "altruistic."

There was another aspect to the solution proposed by Aristotle and other political philosophers to the problem of bias; this was the *rule of law,* entailing the formulation of general moral principles and their application to war. To formulate and justify such principles is exactly what just war theorists have attempted to do. But there is an aspect of this project that can easily be overlooked, namely, that the general principles of war (especially those that pertain to *jus in bello,* or *how* a war should be fought after it has begun) will apply to *all* belligerents in warfare. It would be pointless, for example, to formulate a rule according to which the good guys may target enemy civilians but the bad guys may not. This rule would be pointless because every side will see itself as the "good guys." Rules about the conduct of war are thus intended to apply across the board, to good guys and bad guys alike.

Some Objectivists will doubtless object to this procedure, claiming that it introduces "subjectivism" into just war theory. Why should an innocent nation be constrained by the same rules of warfare that a guilty nation should observe? What does it matter if an aggressor nation *believes* that it is acting justly? These are perfectly legitimate questions, but to provide satisfactory answers would require more consideration than I can give them here. Suffice it to say that just war theorists wished to limit the barbarism of warfare per se, by sparing innocents as much as possible. As students of both human nature and history, they understood how easily people can rationalize and convince themselves that they are fighting in a just cause, however implausible their reasons may appear to others. This is nothing other than the problem of acting as judge in one's own case on an international stage, with the result that judgments will exhibit a *national* bias.

In the absence of a common judge to resolve international disputes, just war theorists emphasized a code of rules that should be observed by *all* sides in war. This was seen as the international equivalent of the rule of law. Grotius, Pufendorf, and their colleagues would have strongly endorsed Rand's contention that even the *retaliatory* use of force should be regulated and restrained by "an *objective* code of rules."[33] What Rand regarded as essential for the preservation of peace, justice, and social order in the *national* sphere, Grotius regarded as equally essential in the *international* sphere.

Let's take a brief look at some of these rules.

IV

As Douglas Lackey puts it in his excellent introduction, the rules of *jus ad bellum* "determine *when* it is permissible or obligatory to begin a war," whereas the rules of *jus in bello* determine *"how* a war should be fought once it has begun."[34]

Brook and Epstein summarize some of the leading principles of just war theory as follows:

> Broadly speaking, Just War Theory holds that a nation can go to war only in response to the impetus of a "just cause," with force as a "last resort," after all other non-military options have been considered and tried — with its decision to go to war motivated by "good intentions," with the aim of bringing about a "good outcome." And it holds that a nation must wage war only by means that are "proportional" to the ends it seeks, and while practicing "discrimination" between combatants and non-combatants.

This is a fair and accurate account, one that might have heralded a valuable critique of just war principles from an Objectivist perspective, had these authors retained their own objectivity.

Good Intentions

Consider the principle that a just war must be waged with "good intentions." According to Brook and Epstein, "good"

> means "altruistic." According to Just War Theory, it is wrong for a nation to be exclusively concerned with its own well-being in deciding whether to go to war; it must demonstrate concern for the well-being of the world as a whole — including the well-being of the nation it is attacking. Only such a concern will yield a "good outcome" — that is, an altruistic outcome. . . . (This notion is, unsurprisingly, rooted in Augustine's religion, Christianity, which countenances [sic] us to love everyone . . .)

It is far easier to tangle ideas than to untangle them, and fully to untangle the ideas in this passage would require a good deal of space. The principle of good intentions can be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the ideological presuppositions of a given philosopher, but the essential core of the principle may be stated as follows: If we have a just reason for going to war, then, if we decide to wage war, this decision and the actions we take thereafter should be *motivated* by this reason. The just reason, in other words, should not be used as a *pretext* to disguise unjust motives, such as the desire for plunder or territorial conquest.

Here as elsewhere Brook and Epstein fasten the charge of "altruism" on a principle by insisting that the entire tradition of just war theory is rooted in Augustinian altruism. I have already discussed the absurdity of this allegation. But I would like to say a few words about Augustine's position on this subject.

According to Augustine, war should be waged "in order to obtain peace."[35] This was a common viewpoint, one that had been stated by Aristotle and later by Cicero, according to whom wars "ought to be undertaken for this purpose, that we may live in peace, without injustice."[36] But Augustine gave a peculiar twist to this good intention; he maintained that since peace is the foundation of social order, and since social

order benefits everyone, even the aggressors in war will benefit from their own defeat, provided a war is truly fought to secure peace.

This is the main avenue by which altruism enters Augustine's account of war. He argued that just wars, insofar as they aim at peace, should be concluded in a manner that benefits everyone, including the aggressors. Hence this altruism does not entail the sacrifice of the innocent for the sake of the guilty.

Augustine was principally concerned with eliminating the desire for revenge as a motivation for war. Hence: "just as you use force against the rebel or opponent, so you ought now to use mercy towards the defeated or the captive, and particularly so when there is no fear that peace will be disturbed."[37] He insisted that a just war must be motivated by the desire to restore and maintain a just peace — a goal that will benefit victor and vanquished alike.

It should be noted that Augustine's altruism had an especially ugly side to it — a theory of "righteous persecution," according to which people can be coerced for their own good. (I discuss this in my article, "Philosophies of Toleration."[38]) But when Augustine applied altruistic reasoning to the subject of war, he arrived at a principle of good intentions that sought to mitigate the savage retribution that was often inflicted on the losers. However we may evaluate the complex issues involved here, Augustine's position bears little resemblance to the account given by Brook and Epstein.

As I indicated previously, the principle of good intentions calls for a correspondence between reasons and motives: It says, in effect, that our justification for going to war should be sincere, that it should not serve as a pretext for ulterior motives. This is simply a call for moral integrity.

Last Resort

The principle of last resort states that nations, including those that have just cause to engage in war, should exhaust all peaceful alternatives to resolve their disputes before resorting to violence. Various qualifications attend this principle, which are captured by the stipulation that these alternatives must be *reasonable*; for example, the pursuit of a peaceful alternative must not significantly increase the danger facing a nation.

The most interesting thing about the principle of last resort, in view of the fact that it made the Brook and Epstein list of altruistic principles, is that it was frequently defended as a self-interested measure. Even a victorious nation will typically suffer a great deal of death and destruction during war, so a sovereign who has the welfare of his subjects at heart will not subject them needlessly to the horrors of war. As J.J. Burlamaqui (who popularized many of the ideas of Grotius and Pufendorf) explained:

> However just reason we may have to make war, yet as it inevitably brings along with it an incredible number of calamities, and oftentimes acts of injustice, it is certain that we ought not to proceed too easily to a dangerous extremity, which may perhaps prove fatal to the conqueror himself.[39]

Since the primary duty of a government is to protect its subjects, a sovereign is obligated to observe the principle of last resort "in consequence of the very nature and end of government."

> For as he ought to take particular care of the state, and of his subjects, he should not expose them to the evils with which war is attended, except in the last extremity, and when there is no other expedient left but that of arms. It is not therefore sufficient that the war be just in itself with respect to the enemy; it must also be so with respect to ourselves. . . .[40]

In the final analysis, every evil that accompanies a war — from an increase in taxes and a loss of civil liberties to the unintentional but foreseeable killing of innocent people — is an argument in favor of the principle of last resort.

Proportionality

Of all the traditional principles of just war theory, the rule of proportionality is the most troublesome. As explained by Grotius, it pertains to the relationship between means and ends. Thus conceived, it is a general principle of moral reasoning, not a principle that applies only to war.

In the most general terms, the rule of proportionality states that the good produced by an end must be greater than the evil produced by the means required to achieve that end. This rule applies both to *jus ad bellum* (when a war should be fought) and to *jus in bello* (how a war should be fought).

When Grotius and other individualists applied the rule of proportionality to *jus ad bellum,* they used it mainly as a rule of thumb to determine when a nation should engage in war as a matter of prudence, even if it has a just reason for doing so. If an innocent nation is threatened by an aggressor with far greater military might, such that the innocent nation has no realistic hope of victory, it might be wise for it to avoid war and negotiate with the aggressor instead, on the ground that this alternative will cause less harm to its citizens. Even if a nation has a reasonable chance of victory, the harm generated by a war may far outweigh the good that a victory will bring about.

This reasoning was based on a distinction between wars that are permissible versus wars that are obligatory. A just cause establishes the *right* to engage in war, but a right entails a moral *option,* not a moral *obligation,* to do something. Although we may have a right to engage in a particular war, it would be foolhardy to rush headlong into that war without first taking practical considerations into account. Individualists regarded the rule of proportionality, as applied to *jus ad bellum,* as a method of practical reasoning that would assist us in this kind of deliberation.

The model of a state of nature, when combined with political reductionism, generated a method of reasoning about war that enabled philosophers to analyze complex moral issues in a systematic fashion.

The rule of proportionality is also applied to *jus in bello*, where "proportionality" is viewed in terms of a given military strategy or tactic. Will the expected good produced by a given tactic (e.g., strategic bombing) outweigh the evil produced by this means (e.g., the killing of innocent people)? An early formulation of the principles of proportionality was given by Vitoria:

> [C]are must be taken to ensure that the evil effects of the war do not outweigh the possible benefits sought by waging it. If the storming of a fortress or town garrisoned by the enemy but full of innocent inhabitants is not of great importance for eventual victory in the war, it does not seem to be permissible to kill a large number of innocent people by indiscriminate bombardment in order to defeat a small number of enemy combatants.[41]

This application of the rule of proportionality has generated a good deal of criticism, and I freely concede that some of the objections raised by Brook and Epstein are well-taken (if we put aside the usual nonsense about "altruism"). For one thing, "proportionality" is a type of measurement, and this presupposes a uniform *standard* of measurement — and it is far from clear what this standard should be in time of war.

In the realm of *jus in bello*, individualists often invoked "necessity" rather than a rule of proportionality; they argued that those engaged in a just war should use only the amount of force necessary to win the war. Granted, a standard of "necessity" can be as vague and ambiguous as "proportionality," but the former does not entangle us in the same nest of theoretical problems about standards of measurement as the latter.

Individualists understood this problem, of course. They sometimes invoked Aristotle's dictum that moral reasoning does not yield the same degree of precision that we find in mathematics and other theoretical sciences. The judgments of moral reasoning depend a great deal on the "good faith" of the moral agent, i.e., on his sincere desire to apply moral standards to a given situation as conscientiously as possible. And this is where appeals to "conscience" were seen as especially important.

I have no short and easy answers to the problems raised by the rule of proportionality. It obviously has some merit — for example, it would be "disproportionate" to nuke an entire city in order to kill one terrorist — but it is difficult to see how this rule can effectively guide us in resolving closer calls. This is one of those areas in which libertarians and Objectivists may have much to contribute in the future.

Anticipation

The problem of anticipation pertains to when we may legitimately launch a preemptive strike in anticipation of an attack by an aggressor. This problem of "anticipatory self-defense," which has a long and fascinating history, generated two lines of thought, which historians have described as "humanist" and "scholastic."

According to the more hawkish humanist tradition (so-called because it was rooted in Roman thinking about war, which was revived by Renaissance "humanists"), force may be used against a nation solely because its power constitutes a potential threat to other nations. As a leading figure in this tradition, Alberico Gentili (1552–1608), put it: "One ought to provide not only against an offense which is being committed, but also against one which may possibly be committed."[42] This approach was popular among those "balance of power" statesmen who argued that a nation that becomes significantly more powerful than other nations may be attacked in self-defense in order to restore an equilibrium of power. (In this view, the United States would be seen as a standing threat to other nations merely in virtue of its unparalleled power, and so would qualify as a legitimate target for preemptive attacks.)

Individualists rejected the argument that "fear" alone is sufficient to justify a preemptive attack; they preferred the "scholastic" doctrine (so-called because of its association with Catholic "schoolmen," or university professors) that only a real threat can justify a preemptive attack. The arguments they used to distinguish between mere fear and an objective threat are quite detailed, but they boil down to the argument that a preemptive strike is justified only when we are *morally certain* that another party (a) possesses the means to injure us, (b) intends to injure us, and (c) has taken specific actions in which this intention is manifest.

In essence, moral certainty — or "practical certainty," as we might call it today, in contrast to "theoretical certainty" — referred to the highest level of probability. It was generally agreed that only this very high level of probability can justify the drastic recourse to war. There were, however, variations even among individualists. Although all agreed that a mere subjective intention is insufficient, that it must be made manifest in some way, some philosophers advocated more rigorous standards of manifest intent than others. Again, this is one of the many areas in which more work remains to be done.

Conclusion

In suggesting that libertarians and Objectivists should take a closer look at their intellectual predecessors, I have not claimed that these just war theorists gave satisfactory solutions to all the problems generated by war. Nor do I claim to have solved these problems myself. Indeed, I would say that any person who is not deeply troubled by them has not given them serious thought, for they are among the most difficult problems in the entire discipline of ethics. I do think, however, that the natural rights foundation of modern libertarian thought holds great promise in working out reasonable solutions, and that a good place to begin is by examining the successes and failures of those philosophers who first attempted to apply a theory of individual rights to the problems of war. ❑

Notes

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2. *Ibid.* 286–7.
3. Murray N. Rothbard, "The Ethics of Liberty" (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982) 191.
4. *Ibid.* 189.
5. Vernon J. Bourke, "Ethics: A Textbook in Moral Philosophy" (New York: Macmillan, 1951) 353.
6. Thomas J. Higgins, "Man as Man: The Science and Art of Ethics" (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1948) 570.
7. http://www.theobjectivestandard.com/issues/2006-spring/just-war-theory.asp
8. Michael Walzer, "Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustration," 3rd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 81.
9. Quoted in "Aquinas: Political Writings," ed. and trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 240–1.
10. *Ibid.* 264.
11. "Francisco de Vitoria: Political Writings," ed. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy

Lawrance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 303, 11.
12. Aquinas 240.
13. *Ibid.* 240–1.
14. Vitoria 317–19.
15. Hugo Grotius, "Prolegomena to the Law of War and Peace," trans. Francis W. Kelsey (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957) 18.
16. John Locke, "Political Essays," ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 352.
17. *Ibid.* 349.
18. "The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700," ed. J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 506.
19. Ayn Rand, "Man's Rights," in "The Virtue of Selfishness" (New York: Signet Books, 1964) 92.
20. Hugo Grotius, "The Rights of War and Peace," trans. A.C. Campbell (Washington and London: M. Walter Dunne, 1901) 33, 291.
21. Quoted in Stephen Buckle, "Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 28.
22. Grotius, "Rights of War and Peace" 91.
23. John Locke, "Two Treatises of Government," 2nd ed., ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) II: §14.
24. Quoted in Richard Tuck, "The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 192.
25. Locke, "Two Treatises" II: §135.
26. Algernon Sidney, "Discourses Concerning Government," ed. Thomas G. West (1698; Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1990) 103.
27. Gershom Carmichael, "Supplements and Observations upon The Two Books of Samuel Pufendorf's 'On the Duty of Man and Citizen'" (1724), in "Natural Rights on the Threshold of the Scottish Enlightenment: The Writings of Gershom Carmichael," ed. James Moore and Michael Silverhorne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002) 158.
28. Letter to James Madison" (Sept. 6, 1789), in "The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson," ed. Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York: Random House, 1944) 489.
29. Ayn Rand, "Collectivized Rights," in "The Virtue of Selfishness" 101–2.
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31. Samuel Pufendorf, "The Whole Duty of Man, According to the Law of Nature," trans. Andrew Tooke (1691), ed. Ian Hunter and David Saunders (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003) 92, 81.
32. Aristotle, "The Politics," trans. T. A. Sinclair, rev. Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin Books, 1992) 1280a7 (p. 195).
33. Ayn Rand, "The Nature of Government," in "The Virtue of Selfishness" 109.
34. Douglas P. Lackey, "The Ethics of War and Peace" (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989) 29.
35. "Augustine: Political Writings," ed. E.M. Atkins and R.J. Dodaro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 217.
36. Cicero, "On Duties," ed. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 15.
37. "Augustine: Political Writings" 217.
38. See George H. Smith, "Atheism, Ayn Rand, and Other Heresies" (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991).
39. Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, "The Principles of Natural and Politic Law," trans. Thomas Nugent, ed. Petter Korkman (1748; Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006) 479.
40. *Ibid.* 480.
41. Vitoria 315–16.
42. Quoted in Tuck, "The Rights of War and Peace" 18. Tuck provides an excellent account of these two traditions.

Sun, Seegars, and Socialism, *from page 28*

Will the average Cuban get fed up with this kind of nonsense and revolt? I doubt it. There will be an evolution, not a revolution. The national mood is one of consternation, puzzlement, and bewilderment, not anger. The average citizen still has too many warm, fuzzy feelings about the Revolution to toss it on the garbage heap of history. The Cuban state will persist, but it will be quietly overwhelmed from ten million different directions.

The main source of problems will be the Cubans in Miami; those who are politically oriented seem (understandably) to have a chip on their shoulder. Even today, the hardcore anti-Communists protest any company that does any business on Fidel's island. I don't think they'll reintegrate easily with their countrymen on the island; the culture clash will be at least as great as that between East and West Germany. They surely won't gain the reigns of power. More likely, they'll be resented as uppity rich cousins, and frozen out for a long time to come.

Governments everywhere make it their business to subject the productive elements of society to all manner of inconvenience and harassment. The important thing here is that the trend has turned. Conditions will start to improve in Cuba, and its government, already toothless, will likely become increasingly irrelevant.

Tropical Desert

Is there nothing to be said for Cuba? There is, if you're a fan of good cigars. A top-notch Cuban cigar retails for upwards of $10 most places in the world; in Cuba, a Cohiba Elegante goes for $2, and I suspect the locals pay a lot less. Cigars are not in short supply in Cuba. And unlike here, it's considered sociable and politically correct to enjoy one.

But that's about it. Tropical Cuba has been frozen in time, and while its eventual rejuvenation is inevitable, right now it resembles nothing so much as an enormous ruin.

I can't help thinking of the state of affairs at a mining site I visited on the Island of Youth, a large island off Cuba's southern coast. The Russians operated a gold mine there for several years, but have left the scene — and it's a mess. The mill is a jerry-rigged, Rube Goldberg affair, cobbled together from old American equipment and bits and pieces of stuff gathered from the far reaches of the old Soviet Empire.

Nearby were hundreds of 55-gallon drums filled with ore concentrate, each containing perhaps $1,000 worth of unrefined gold. But they were just lying there, untouched for lack of an autoclave. Meanwhile, natural weathering was leeching the arsenic, antimony, and other tasty heavy metals into the water table. A giant warehouse, which served no useful purpose anyone could determine, lay half-built and deteriorating nearby. The shaft to the underground workings lay open, offering idle strollers a hundred-foot plunge.

Words like "safety," "efficiency," and "economy" apparently don't occur in the vocabulary of Russian engineers. This state of affairs is more or less typical of what the Russians have done everywhere, including at home. What's left at the mine site is basically a cleanup operation. In fact, the whole island is.

About 20,000 students, mostly from people's republics in Africa, were housed on the island to study politics and work in gigantic citrus plantations created by the "planners." Not surprisingly, the plantations were the agricultural equivalents of the mine. Scores of high-rise buildings are now abandoned and deteriorating; a few still hold students from garden spots like Equatorial Guinea and Angola, abandoned in Cuba by governments unwilling to repatriate them. Most of the citrus trees are afflicted with a deadly blight and have to be burned. The fruit of those still alive rots on the ground. There's no labor to pick it, and no means to market it.

As the old joke goes, if socialist planners took over the Sahara, they'd organize a shortage of sand. ❑

Comedy

No More Sofia!

by Jacques Delacroix

After a story told to the author by Lubo Krastev, a musician.

When I was growing up in Sofia, Bulgaria, the Russians were always presented to us as our big brothers, and doubly so: elder brothers in Slavism and Orthodox Christianity, first, but also our predecessors on the radiant path to communism. The kinship must have been real in some way because it is true that they treated Bulgaria better than other satellite countries. For one thing, they had extracted almost no price for the fact that we had been (sort of) on Hitler's side in World War II.

In spite of the lenient treatment, perhaps because of it, we Bulgarians felt less like younger siblings to the Soviets than like poor relations, or country cousins. We always felt that they saw us as somehow dispensable. In fact, when they allocated secret police tasks to the Sister Socialist Republics, they often gave us grotesque jobs such as stabbing dissidents with poisoned umbrellas. When they imposed their ill-fated multinational central planning scheme, COMECON, on Eastern Europe, the Czechs were assigned motorcycles and buses, the Hungarians heavy machinery, the East Germans optics and precision tools (of course!). Bulgaria ended up with a national specialization in ordinary cereals and minor manufactures.

Similarly, when the Red Army drew grand battle plans against a potential NATO invasion, it gave a significant role to the few East German divisions and a whole wing to Hungarian forces not much bigger than ours. It even did Poland the honor of taking precautionary measures against its turning its guns against the socialist "camp." The Bulgarian People's Army, by contrast, was kept mainly in a reserve role and treated hardly more honorably than the hapless Romanian military.

As the Soviet Union imploded and the Eastern Block fragmented, Bulgaria made as if to move away, but neither very far nor very fast. In the new, chaotic east Europe, the fate of Bulgaria did not change much, and nobody much noticed. The world press aimed its searchlights at the dramatic Russian travails, at the optimistic Polish transformation, and at the exemplary (if prissy) Czechoslovak "velvet

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Reviews

"The Slightest Philosophy," by Quee Nelson. Dogear Publishing, 2007, 296 pages.

Expanding on Rand

Warren Gibson

Fans of "Atlas Shrugged," 'fess up: when you came to Galt's speech, did you slog through it or did you skip ahead to see how the action turned out?

It's tempting to skip ahead. The speech is long, repetitive, loaded with invective, and therefore difficult to read solely for its philosophical content. Too bad, because Rand's philosophy of Objectivism deserves serious attention, and the speech does provide an outline of the entire philosophy: ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics.

Though Rand never wrote the full nonfiction exposition of Objectivism that she contemplated, a large body of Rand scholarship has emerged in recent years, much of it quite thoughtful and constructive, some of it a bit goofy. There are numerous books and articles on Rand's thought, a special interest section of the American Philosophical Association, and the Journal of Ayn Rand Studies. But still too many Rand fans remain intellectually isolated, unaware of or uninterested in writings that may be constructively critical or supportive of her work. An open-minded reading of the critics can only help: you may detect flaws or gaps, or you may find your convictions fortified.

Now out of nowhere comes a book that parallels and complements Rand considerably, without ever mentioning her name.

Quee Nelson self-published "The Slightest Philosophy" knowing that what you are supposed to do in academic publishing is submit a proposal to a mainline academic publisher, then wait by the telephone. While she would have preferred to publish a "respectable book . . . to dream that such would be granted to a laundress of no account would be naive."

So in the spirit of "a handful of crackpots [who] braved a howling wilderness for no good reason besides the fact they had a problem with getting permission," she just did it.

Now, self-publishing is the road taken by incompetents and idlers. But a little page-flipping through "The Slightest Philosophy" suggests a well-organized work with lots of citations. Then you settle down to read, and wonder of wonders: it's easy and pleasant. You have in your hands — well, let me just say it — a masterpiece.

The "laundress," as it happens, holds a graduate degree in philosophy and is a crackerjack writer. Shame on the respectable publishers.

Nelson's expressions of contempt for modern philosophy rival those of Rand. Postmodernism, the ascendant view nowadays, is quite simply "bullshit." Phrases like "Farewell to Truth" and "Madhouse Philosophy" could have flowed right from the Objectivist pen. And with Rand, she believes that ideas matter: "A Cambodian guerrilla deep in a steaming jungle carries a paperback copy of Rousseau, and the next thing you know, a million people are dead." Rand asked, "Philosophy — Who Needs It?" and answered that we all need a philosophy for living on earth. Nelson says pretty much the same: "Even [a person who] refused to embrace any belief besides the conventional wisdom, would not thereby escape from epistemology."

But their basic approaches, though they run parallel for a while, part company in the end.

Rand acknowledged no debt to any preceding philosopher but Aristotle. All the rest just had to go. Such a brush-off is tempting, says Nelson, but not tempting enough. "Laughter as a way to dispose of your opponent's arguments is

far more efficacious than it deserves to be." We didn't get into the present mess, she says, because postmodernists strayed from past masters. "The terrible truth is what happens when honest, intelligent people read the canonical philosophers and believe them." So her program is radical surgery. "The roots of postmodernism run so deep in philosophy that the condition can only be reversed by a radical surgery that cuts into the very heart of the canon to expose a shocking amount of diseased tissue." And so she sets out to defend "naive realism," a handy if loaded phrase that captures Rand's central idea, "existence exists." Taking her cue from Hume, whom she credits with the idea that "the slightest philosophy teaches us" that vulgar realism is untenable, Nelson lays out a thorough, tightly reasoned critique of idealism and its stepchild, skepticism, and a positive defense of naive realism.

The roots of postmodernism run so deep in philosophy that the condition can only be reversed by radical surgery.

Two short chapters introduce Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel. "I especially pick on Hume and Kant because they're the most influential," she explains. Nelson shows how Kant's disciple Fichte paved the way for the Nazis, a theme taken up by Leonard Peikoff in his underappreciated book "The Ominous Parallels." We get a taste of postmodern philosophers who, "like an honest mirror, embarrassed us by providing for the canonical tradition its necessary *reductio ad absurdum*."

With that we are ready for the real action, two chapters of sparkling dialogue between the Student and the Professor. Here's a sample from Chapter 3, "Seeing Things":

> PROFESSOR: Before there were speakers of the English language, there could not have been any quote-unquote "rocks," i.e., "rocks" as opposed to "boulders," which are bigger, or "pebbles," which are smaller. In other words, this whole ordinary ontology we have now, of "rocks," versus "boulders," versus "pebbles," is just an arbitrary classification scheme we've imposed upon the geological world. . . .
>
> STUDENT: Okay, but good God man, it isn't *just* that! If there were nothing more to rocks than linguistic fashion, then we could create diamonds just by saying certain words.
>
> PROFESSOR: Well yeah, that's right, we can. We can make diamonds out of pig's ears, just by changing our speech habits.
>
> STUDENT: Stop that! . . . There's a huge difference between saying there were no pebbles, rocks or boulders before there were English-speakers, and saying there were no *quote-unquote* "pebbles," "rocks," or "boulders," before there were English-speakers . . . *there were rocks*! And there were planets, and stars, and water, even if there weren't any *minds* around to notice them.

And so it goes. The hapless Professor tries one argument after another and scores a point now and then but, in the end, loses every argument to the clever Student. Sometimes it makes you feel pity for the poor guy. Is Nelson a little too hard on him when she has him spouting this bit of groupthink?

> PROFESSOR: If you're going to cling so tenaciously to your naive, vulgar realism, then you're talking about rejecting so much of the philosophy canon that I'm not sure I can even see you as a person who is a part of the community of people who are practicing Philosophy.

Is this over the top? Perhaps not. Consider this from Donald Davidson, a leading contemporary philosopher:

> The ultimate source (not ground) of objectivity, is in my opinion, intersubjectivity. If we were not in communication with others, there would be nothing on which to base the idea of being wrong, or, therefore, of being right, either in what we say or in what we think.

Wow. So Robinson Crusoe, out of communication on his desert island, has no way to think through his predicament and decide whether it would be right for him to make a spear to catch fish? Or must we, in our advanced society, take a poll to decide whether it would be right or wrong to set fire to the philosophy department? If there is no objective truth and we must all stop thinking and fall back on group consensus, who goes first? Inevitably, the lead falls to the individual best skilled at stirring unthinking passions. Davidson's "intersubjectivity" is an open invitation to the Man on the White Horse.

Nelson's approach is called the "method of abduction" or "reasoning to the best explanation." So, for example, the Professor brings up a standard scenario in modern philosophy, the brain in the vat. We are to imagine a brain kept alive in a nutrient bath with electrodes connected to a supercomputer that provides lifelike sensuous inputs and processes motor output in response. How can the Student be sure he isn't just a brain in a vat? The Student argues that his mundane realist theory only requires that brains exist, whereas the vat story requires more: that brains can actually survive in a vat, that computers can generate convincing simulations, etc. The vat theory is not logically impossible, but it is so implausible as to be absurd. It is more vulnerable to failure because it requires piling on improbable assumptions, each of which reduces the probability that the theory works. The Student's mundane theory wins because it requires fewer assumptions and is therefore more robust.

Nelson's abduction would not sit well with Rand. The "best explanation" that abduction aims for would presumably exhibit correct reasoning, simplicity, and elegance, but this wouldn't reach far enough for her. She would very likely agree with nearly all the Student's criticisms of the Professor, yet

Must we take a poll to decide whether it would be right or wrong to set fire to the philosophy department?

she would surely say that he concedes too much and thereby relinquishes much of the certainty that she insisted her reasoning provided. For her, when an opponent falls into self-contradiction, it's all over.

One of Nelson's divergences from Rand appears in a little section titled "The Skeptic as Kamikaze." Both would agree on the self-contradiction of the skeptics. The Student tells us, "Skepticism says no belief regarding any matter of fact is a justified belief. If so then that can't be a justified belief either. Game over. You lose. I win."

Rand would leave it at that, but the Professor cautions the Student that he should compare the skeptic to a kamikaze pilot, and "you'd better be sure he can't sink your ship and take you down with him." The Student concedes that skepticism, though it defeats itself, could nevertheless have the power to disprove a particular philosophy on the way down by reducing it to absurdity. The Student notes that the skeptic's work is never done, and the Professor concurs. But the Student accepts the Professor's view of kamikaze skepticism and falls back on the argument that it is absurd to think that skepticism is "powerful and cogent enough to defeat every single [epistemology] from now until the end of time."

The Student, with Rand, has no use for pragmatism either. This is the philosophy that tells us to forget about objective truth and just go with what works, ignoring the fact that deciding what works requires an objective standard. "Your so-called Pragmatism does not and could not solve or overcome the fallacious skepticism that motivates it," says the Student. Yet the Student's method of abduction is unsettlingly similar to pragmatism. We are to reason to the best solution. What is the best solution? The one that works best? By what standard, and why?

Notwithstanding these misgivings, I believe that Nelson has achieved something rare and important. She has produced a book that offers top-notch scholarship, yet is written so that any intelligent person can read, understand, and enjoy it. Quee Nelson has lifted my spirits and re-ignited my personal interest in philosophy. "The Slightest Philosophy" has already entered my short list of all-time favorite books. ❑

"My Grandfather's Son," by Clarence Thomas. Harper, 2007, 289 pages.

Long Journey, Hard Road

J. H. Huebert

Clarence Thomas is many libertarians' favorite Supreme Court justice, and with good reason: his opinions hew more closely than those of any other current justice to the original meaning of the U.S. Constitution.

His dissenting opinion in *Raich* v. *Gonzalez* provides an outstanding example. In that case, the majority held that Congress could prohibit cultivation, sale, and use of medical marijuana, even if that activity occurs entirely within one state, under the Constitution's commerce clause. Justice Thomas attacked the majority view, writing: "If Congress can regulate this under the Commerce Clause, then it can regulate virtually anything — and the Federal Government is no longer one of limited and enumerated powers."

Dissenting from the notorious *Kelo* v. *City of New London* decision, Justice Thomas argued that the eminent-domain power was never intended to allow the government to take from one private party to give to another.

And in a dissent in *Lawrence* v. *Texas*, he argued that state laws prohibiting sodomy may be inappropriate restrictions on freedom — but should be repealed by state legislatures, not by a Supreme Court that presumes to answer controversial policy questions for the entire country.

The Constitution is far from perfect — after all, it has failed to stop the enormous growth of the federal government over the past century. But there can be no doubt that if four other justices (out of the nine) shared Thomas's views, government would become much smaller.

Of course, the majority of the country knows and cares nothing about originalist judicial philosophy. Their ideas about Clarence Thomas stem instead from Anita Hill's scandalous allegations at his televised confirmation hearings. And a certain segment of the country hates him for holding views on race and economics that are inimical to theirs.

For all these reasons, Justice Thomas' memoir, "My Grandfather's Son," is of interest.

The majority of the book covers the period of Justice Thomas' life before he was a household name — indeed, the book concludes on his first day at the Supreme Court.

Justice Thomas takes us back to his birthplace, Pin Point, Georgia, where he and his fellow blacks spoke Gullah, a version of creole dialect. Raised by his grandparents (hence the book's title) in nearby Savannah, the young Thomas learns something that is a theme in the biographies of virtually all highly successful people: *self-discipline*. His grandfather makes him put schoolwork first, work for the family fuel-oil business and farm second, and play last.

Explaining why he would not take government assistance, Thomas' grandfather told him, "Because it takes away your manhood. You do that and they can ask you questions about your life that are none of their business. They can come into your house when they want to, and they can tell you who else

can come and go in your house."

Thomas summarizes that for his grandfather real freedom meant independence from government intrusion, which in turn meant that you had to take responsibility for your own decisions. When the government assumes that responsibility, it takes away your freedom — and wasn't freedom the very thing for which blacks in America were fighting?

As Thomas grew up, he rebelled for a time, and resentment against race discrimination in the late 1960s drove him to radical politics. But his experiences with reality and the lessons learned from his grandfather made him question leftist rhetoric before long. A book by Thomas Sowell, "Race and Economics," and conversations with George Mason University economist Walter Williams helped shape his thinking, too, as did two novels by Ayn Rand, "The Fountainhead" and "Atlas Shrugged."

We could find things to criticize in Thomas' ideas and career. For example, in recent decisions, he has been far too willing to cede a disturbing amount of power to the executive branch of government.

In Thomas' time as chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission during the Reagan administration, he ran his office conservatively, doing his best to avoid baseless discrimination lawsuits and to bring his budget under control. But like the president who appointed him, he never pressed to have his office eliminated — which, of course, it should have been under his own limited-government constitutional philosophy.

The book shows how far enemies of liberty will go to stop someone who threatens their agenda.

Yet even his mild reforms in that office — combined with his statements that government handouts and preferences are not the solution to blacks' problems — caused the press and so-called civil rights groups to attack him viciously, long before anyone had heard of Anita Hill.

Thus, the book provides food for thought on whether it is advisable for an advocate of liberty to work within government. And, through the details of his EEOC tenure and especially his Supreme Court confirmation hearing, the book also shows how far enemies of liberty will go to stop someone they perceive as a threat to their agenda.

Unfortunately, Clarence Thomas is probably the best we will ever do on the Supreme Court. It seems unlikely that any president or senators will be inclined to appoint or confirm another nominee who would tell them that they cannot just do whatever they want. But while he is there, it is good to have Justice Thomas as a frequently dissenting voice, reminding those who are paying attention that there should be limits on government — and providing a far better example for poor young blacks than all of his venom-spewing critics combined. ❑

"Infidel," by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Free Press, 2007, 368 pages.
"Now They Call Me Infidel," by Nonie Darwish. Sentinel HC, 2007, 272 pages.

Double Infidelity

John Lalor

The life-journeys of these two authors represent a bravery and self-analysis beyond the comprehension of most in the West.

Both women renounced their Islamic faith, westernized, and spoke openly in criticism of Muslims. But first, they made a far braver step: they started to question their own cultures.

Hirsi Ali was a Somali refugee who became a member of parliament in the Netherlands. Her accounts of her earlier life — in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia — lack nothing as an exposé. However, the radicalization of Muslim youths in these countries is a relatively new problem — and one far more complex than Westerners would like to believe.

Not until the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Somalia during Hirsi Ali's childhood were strict dress codes and moral crusades common. From her own explanations, and examples of other strict adherents, we are shown that the *burqa* and *hijab* are not, in fact, symptoms of female oppression.

Remarkably, they are displays of strength and superiority over others. This will, of course, seem a self-evidently ridiculous statement, if you are not aware of what Islam can represent to the adherent. In The Wall Street Journal, Shelby Steele explained:

> [The Islamist's] group is God's archetype, the only authentic humanity, already complete and superior. No striving or self-reflection is necessary.

The wearing of hardline Islamist clothing is to the wearer what a muscle-bound Hercules is to a bunch of scrawny 90-pound weaklings: a condescending power display. The protagonist — but not necessarily the observer — is aware of the importance of the *burqa* and *hijab*. If there is to be any feeling for the

infidel, aside from intolerance and superiority, it is pity.

Both authors' accounts of the school curriculum, focused on dogmatic, unquestioned immersion in the Quran, and a vicious indoctrination of hatred towards Jews and Israel, are shocking and saddening. Hirsi Ali's description of reaching the Netherlands awakens the reader to what is occurring daily, not in far-off lands — but within Europe.

For a long time, the Dutch believed that the best way to help immigrants assimilate was to build them mini-Mogadishus.

Within the refugee centers, and, later, the community, Hirsi Ali could see the damage this caused: her compatriots remained in stasis, neither integrating nor seizing the opportunities the Netherlands offered. Hackneyed accusations of racism and prejudice were their connection to Europe.

One of Hirsi Ali's first acts as a member of parliament was to demand a police investigation to record precisely how many "honor killings" occur in the Netherlands each year. Such a heinous crime had been simply ignored by her adopted homeland. The uncovering of this and other activities in the Muslim communities forced Hirsi Ali into hiding, and, eventually, emigration to the U.S. Her atheism is seen as apostasy by the Islamists — punishable by death.

For weeks, between the assassination of Theo van Gogh, a filmmaker killed by a jihadist in 2004, and her immigration to America, Hirsi Ali remained under the strictest protection, on the run from the threat of a similar — and, indeed, promised — fate.

The life of Nonie Darwish was strongly influenced by the fate of her father, Lt. Gen. Mustafa Hafez, who in the 1950s was sent by Egyptian president Nasser to command Egyptian army intelligence in Gaza. There, he established the *fedayeen*, which launched attacks on southern Israel. Beloved by the Palestinians, Hafez was killed by the Israeli Defense Forces in 1956, when Nonie was only eight.

But certain things stuck in young Nonie's mind, other than the supposed glory of having a *shahid* (martyred) father. Like Hirsi Ali, throughout her childhood she displayed a constant curiosity about her surroundings. One issue bothered her especially: How could so many Egyptians be so poor? The reply was always the same fatalism: *insha-Allah* — "God willing."

A life spent following the Quran is a life spent doing God's will, but in today's world of satellite television and cheap air travel, the impoverished Arab youth is realizing that God's will delivers precisely the opposite of that which is enjoyed by the infidels of the West. The confused bitterness of these authors' fellow Muslims festers painfully.

Darwish describes Muslim society as rife with complex problems. Unstable relationships within the family — and especially those between men and women (who are seen, in *sharia* law, as basically chattel) — are initially created by a wife entering marriage with no power. Also, because of the perceived threat of a female friend stealing her husband, a woman cannot form solid friendships. Suspicion, insecurity, and an absence of love prevail.

Contemporary Islam and the Individual — a Collision Course?

"Life is better in Europe than it is in the Muslim world because human relations are better, and one reason human relations are better is that in the West, life on earth is valued in the here and now and individuals enjoy rights and freedoms that are recognized and protected by the state." ("Infidel," p.348)

It took centuries for the western world to travel from a society dominated by kings, social hierarchy, and religious intolerance to the Reformation, Enlightenment, the separation of the church and state, reason, and individual freedom. Ayaan Hirsi Ali's journey, as she relates it in this book, from the Muslim faith of her childhood, from a world in which women were subjugated and beaten into submission, to the world of reason and individual freedom, took only a few years.

Her story describes in vivid detail how the intolerance of Islam itself was responsible for the attacks of Muslims on "non-believers" — among others, for the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie in 1989 for his "Satanic Verses," for the planes flown into New York's World Trade Center in 2001, for the violence that erupted over the publication in 2005 in Denmark of cartoons depicting Muhammad, for van Gogh's assassination in Holland in 2004, and for the threats against Ayaan herself.

After the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, people often said: "It's so weird, isn't it, all these people saying this has to do with Islam?" To this Ayaan responded: "Not frustration, poverty, colonialism, or Israel: it was about religious belief, a one-way ticket Heaven. . . . It *is* about Islam."

"Videotapes of old interviews with Osama Bin Laden began running on CNN and Al-Jazeera. They were filled with justification for total war on America, which, together with the Jews, he perceived as leading a new Crusade on Islam."

Bin Laden's quotes from the Quran resonated in the young Ayaan's mind: "When you meet the unbelievers, strike them in the neck . . . . kill them, seize them, besiege them, ambush them. . . . The Hour [of Judgment] will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them."

A new kind of Islam was on the march. It was much deeper, much clearer and stronger — much closer to the source of the religion. It was not a passive, mostly ignorant, acceptance of the rules: "God wills it." It was about studying the Quran, really learning about it, getting to the heart of the nature of the Prophet's message. It was a huge evangelical sect backed massively by Saudi Arabian oil wealth and Iranian martyr propaganda. It was militant, and it was growing. — Bettina Bien Greaves

Twenty Years of Liberty

Our Editors Conferences are beloved by speakers and attendees alike. If you haven't joined us at one of these intellectual feasts, or if you want to experience them again, now is the time! Liberty turns 20 this year, but these panels and talks are perennially informative and fascinating. Discover the fun, camaraderie, and intellectual stimulation our conferences offer!

1999

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Does the Libertarian Party have a Future? • *R.W. Bradford* makes a powerful case that the LP is failing to advance freedom, and suggests a controversial new approach that could lead to a political breakthrough. (CD: A-408, Cassette: B-408, VHS: V-408)

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Selling Liberty in an Illiberal World • *Fred Smith* offers a revolutionary approach to spreading libertarian ideas and explains how to frame issues for maximum appeal. (CD: A-410, Cassette: B-410, VHS: V-410)

Contracts and the Net • The internet will reshape contract law, argues *David Friedman,* at the expense of judicial power. (CD: A-411, Cassette: B-411, VHS: V-411)

How to Write Op-Eds and Get Them Published • Professional journalists *Jane Shaw, Alan Bock,* and *Bruce Ramsey* tell how to write opinion pieces that will see print. Hear the one phrase that is taboo at a major newspaper. (CD: A-412, Cassette: B-412, VHS: V-412)

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Urban Sprawl, Liberty, and the State • Learn why environmentalists want you caged in cities, and how they plan to do it — with *Jane Shaw, Richard Stroup, Fred Smith,* and *Randal O'Toole.* (CD: A-414, Cassette: B-414, VHS: V-414)

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Using the First Amendment to Smash the State • *Durk Pearson* and *Sandy Shaw* tell how they've used the First Amendment to wage total war against the government. Learn how they brought the FDA to its knees! (CD: A-417, Cassette: B-417, VHS: V-417)

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End the Drug War or Forget About Freedom • *Alan Bock* journeys to the heart of darkness in America's failed effort at drug prohibition. The casualties of the war, says Bock, are a lot of harmless people and your civil rights. (CD: A-419, Cassette: B-419, VHS: V-419)

Juries, Justice, and the Law • Fully informed jury activist *Larry Dodge* explains the history and the importance of jury nullification. (CD: A-420, Cassette: B-420, VHS: V-420)

2004

Liberty: What's Right vs. What Works • *Charles Murray, David Friedman, R.W. Bradford,* and *David Boaz* examine how we argue for liberty — and why we're really for it. (CD: A-601, Cassette: B-601)

Anarchy vs. Limited Government • The same all-star panel of *David Boaz, Charles Murray, David Friedman,* and *R.W. Bradford* reinvigorate the debate between radically smaller government and no government at all. (CD: A-602, Cassette: B-602)

Big Government Is Bipartisan: What You Can Do About It • *David Boaz* looks at how both parties expand government power and trample on your rights, and explains how you can fight back. (CD: A-603, Cassette: B-603)

What's Wrong With Libertarianism • *R.W. Bradford* exposes what's wrong with libertarianism and with libertarians — from a libertarian point of view. (CD: A-604, Cassette: B-604)

Isabel Paterson and the Founding of Modern Libertarianism • *Stephen Cox* looks at the life and work of the political philosopher who was Ayn Rand's mentor. (CD: A-605, Cassette: B-605)

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Under conditions of polygamy, Darwish shows, better-connected men have a better choice of women. As a consequence, there remain large numbers of poor, uneducated men who have no available partners. This does not produce a harmonious society.

Secretly, Hirsi Ali destroyed her own ability, as it were, to remain ignorant enough to suffer a Somali marriage. She had read countless trashy women's novels from the United States. She had been corrupted. But, more honestly, she had seen the dynamics of a fruitful, romantic relationship.

To many in the West, the life-threatening work done by Hirsi Ali and Darwish means little. But these women have lifted the veil on Muslim culture — most importantly, from within. ❑

"No Country for Old Men," directed by Ethan Coen and Joel Coen. Miramax, 2007, 122 minutes.

Can't Stop What's Coming

Jo Ann Skousen

We've all run into strangers who raised the hair at the nape of our necks. Something about the eyes, at once vacant and intense, calm and inscrutable, just gives us the willies and makes us want to get the hell out of there. Javier Bardem plays such a stranger in the Coen brothers' Oscar-winning "No Country for Old Men," a bad guy so bad that he seems to embody evil itself.

As the film opens, Anton Chigurh (Bardem) has just been arrested while carrying an ominous device that looks like a cross between a milk can and a pesticide sprayer. We don't know what it is, but we know it has to be bad, just by the look of its user — the weird hear-no-evil hairstyle, the crazed intensity about the eyes, the remote stillness about his movements. As the self-satisfied deputy proudly calls the sheriff to report Chigurh's arrest, we barely notice Chigurh handcuffed on the bench behind him in a distant, out-of-focus shot, almost incidental to the scene. Still out of focus, the deputy still gloating, Chigurh leans quickly backward, his legs reach up, and his cuffed arms reach around and over his feet. Suddenly he is looming over the deputy, his handcuffs now a weapon. There is no stopping him.

While Chigurh is strangling the deputy with his handcuffs, the camera focuses not on the fight but on the scuff-marks being created by the deputy's shoes. Not another sound is heard. By the time the scene ends the floor is covered in violent black marks, a testament to the intensity of the struggle, and a detail I would never have considered if the Coens hadn't presented it.

Later, Chigurh menaces a character who is bargaining for life. The camera's point of view moves outside, across the sunny street, and we see Chigurh exit the front door. We haven't heard a shot; we don't know how the bargaining ended; perhaps he let this victim go. And then Chigurh looks at the sole of his shoe and calmly wipes it on the mat. Oh. Blood.

Camera work like this is what sets the Coens apart. They are brilliant storytellers, composing their shots with the care and attention of a Georges Seurat assembling his characters at La Grande Jatte. Let the likes of Spielberg and Scorsese show off their skill at recreating gristly, realistic amputations and shots to the head; I'll take the more subtle thrill of horror created by the Coens any day.

The story, based on a book by Cormac McCarthy, is imbued with a mythic quality, its characters iconic symbols of greed, temptation, and relentless evil. If Chigurh is the arch-villain, Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin) is the tragic hero, motivated by good intentions but possessing a fatal flaw: he can't pass up $2 million when it falls into his lap. Greed is his downfall.

While hunting antelope one day, Moss stumbles across the aftermath of a drug deal gone bad. Bodies litter the ground. Even the dogs have been shot. The drugs are still there, and the money is still there. Who's to know if he takes it? Like a dog protecting his bone, Moss will stop at nothing to protect his stash. But he hadn't reckoned on the unstoppable Chigurh, and the two of them play a tense game of cat-and-mouse for most of the film.

A classic tale is not complete without a Chorus, here embodied by Sheriff Ed Tom Bell (Tommy Lee Jones), a third-generation lawman who narrates the film. Like the Chorus, he evaluates the community and establishes a moral guideline. He's a calm sheriff with a droll wit who realizes that nothing makes sense any more. An old-school gentleman, at one point he laments, "It starts when you begin to overlook bad manners. Anytime you quit hearing 'sir' and 'ma'am,' the end is pretty much in sight."

Chigurh looks at the sole of his shoe and calmly wipes it on the mat. Oh. Blood.

Bell's opening narration compares the New West with the Old West and explains why this new world is "no country for old men":

> Some of the old-time sheriffs never even wore a gun. . . . Can't help but wonder how they'd've operated these times. There was this boy I sent to the 'lectric chair at Huntsville here a while back. . . . He killt a 14-year-old girl. Papers said it was a crime of passion but he told me there wasn't any passion to it. Told me that he'd been planning to kill somebody for about as long as he could remember. Said that if they turned him out he'd do it again. Said he knew he was going to hell. Be there in about 15 minutes. I don't know what to make of that. I surely don't. The crime you see now, it's hard to even take its measure. It's not that I'm afraid of it. I always knew you had to be willing to die to even do this job. But, I don't want to push my chips forward and go out and meet something I don't understand. A man would have to put his soul at hazard. He'd have to say, "Okay, I'll be part of this world."

Bell can choose not to be part of this world, but he can't keep that world at bay. No matter what, Chigurh just keeps coming, like the Terminator rising from the rubble of the destroyed Cyberdyne building. In this sense Chigurh is not just a man but a representation of relentless evil that has pervaded this generation. Nor is Llewelyn Moss just a man who stumbles across a satchel full of money, but a representation of the greed that ensnares men when they are tempted with more money than they have ever hoped to see. As another old-time lawman tells Bell, "You can't stop what's coming. It ain't all waiting on you." ❑

Notes on Contributors

Baloo is a *nom de plume* of Rex F. May.

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Doug Casey is a contributing editor of Liberty.

Scott Chambers is a cartoonist living in California.

Michael Christian is in early semi-retirement in a semi-paradisaical corner of California.

Stephen Cox is a professor at UC San Diego. His most recent book is *The New Testament and Literature*.

Jacques Delacroix is a sociologist by training. He wrote the entry "Capitalism" in the new edition of the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. He lives in Santa Cruz, with his wife, the artist Krishna Delacroix.

Warren Gibson teaches economics at San Jose State University and mechanical engineering at Santa Clara University.

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Jim Walsh is an assistant editor of *Liberty*.

Leland B. Yeager is Ludwig von Mises Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Economics at Auburn University.

Medianotes

Simple charm — "The Band's Visit" (directed by Eran Kolirin; Sony Classics, 2007, 85 minutes).

Many years ago, my husband and I boarded a train from Paris to Rouen to visit the hallowed beaches of Normandy. The irony of that statement will not be lost on readers who know that Normandy is near Caen, not Rouen. Misled by the guttural "r" of spoken French and thinking we were smart enough to know it when we didn't actually hear it, we went to the wrong town, ending up over 100 miles from our intended destination.

Mark has always wanted to see the beaches of Normandy. It was the reason we had stayed an extra day in Paris. But there wasn't time to correct our error that day. This could have turned into one of those vacation tales of bitter argument and recrimination. We could have fumed all the way back to Paris.

Instead, we decided not to compound one mistake with another. (When in Rouen, do as the Rouen tourists do.) So we strolled through the charming medieval portion of the city, shuddered at the sight of bullet holes left by World War II bombardments, contemplated the site where Jeanne d'Arc was burned at the stake, and photographed the famed Cathedral of Rouen, which the French impressionist Claude Monet painted in many different seasons and times of day to demonstrate that what we see is the light reflected from an object, and not the object itself. It was a lovely day. We have yet to see the beaches of Normandy.

A similar mistake forms the premise of "The Band's Visit" (*Bikur Ha-Tizmoret*), a charming little Israeli film about what happens when the Alexandria Ceremonial Orchestra, a band of Egyptian policemen, gets lost on its way to perform at the Arab Culture Center in Petah Tikva, Israel.

They end up instead at Bet Hatikva, a tiny town not much more than a bus stop in the middle of the desert. In an impromptu cultural exchange, the Egyptian police are reluctantly invited to spend the night with local Israelis until another bus comes the next day. The result is a charming slice of life as citizens of two bitter political enemies mingle and connect with one another when they interact face to face.

How do Egyptians and Israelis communicate with one another? In English, of course. And because it's filmed mostly in English, you'll laugh when you see the subtitles "translating" the dialogue for you at the bottom of the screen. But you'll appreciate those subtitles when you hear the actors' thick accents.

Directed with the same deadpan humor and visual surprises as

"Napoleon Dynamite," the film is slow-paced with moments of explosive laughter.

The scene at a roller rink, where the dreamboat Egyptian policeman (Saleh Bakri) teaches an Israeli yokel (Shlomi Avraham) how to court his girl, is delightful. Watch for this endearing film to come to your local art house.

— Jo Ann Skousen

Culture of the fittest —

"Kansas vs. Darwin" (directed by Jeff Tamblyn; Unconditional Films, 2007, 82 minutes) provides an in-depth view of a major skirmish in the feud over whether evolution should be taught in U.S. public schools — the Kansas board of education hearings of May, 2005.

One might not expect much in the way of objectivity, given the nature of the subject. In some pudgy hands, one of the sides would be given short shrift, allowed to speak only to put foot in mouth or to set up a devastating retort, deftly inserted in such a way as to obscure that it was actually uttered long after (or well before) the set-up. To my surprise, the film is quite even-handed.

Make no mistake, there is no evidence that the director shied away from allowing individuals to display their ignorance, or their arrogance. The primary characters — those on each side — provide plenty of fodder. The Intelligent Design (ID) supporters, in an interesting twist, include not only the least educated, but also the most highly educated individuals involved. This is because the scientists invited to speak in support of Darwinian Evolution opted to honor a boycott of the hearings, since questions of science, after all, are not settled by popular vote.

The invited scientists who support ID (yes, some of them are "scientists," but some are — maybe, possibly — legitimate scientists, speaking only to their area of expertise) opted to testify, since the hearings were not, after all, about settling any question of science.

This film scrupulously avoids taking a stance on whether or not ID is a legitimate scientific theory. (It is not.) It underscores the passion with which each camp holds its view.

Unsurprisingly, not one person inside or outside the hearings gave any indication of seeing the most promising path to a cessation of hostilities. Were there no libertarians in Kansas to point them to the answer? Has the idea of letting people make and finance their own decisions regarding their children become so abhorrent it cannot even be considered? — Mark Rand

Political RomCom? —

"Definitely, Maybe" (directed by Adam Brooks; Universal, 2008, 105 minutes) offers a new twist to the boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-gets-girl formula: which of the girls he loses is the mother of his daughter? As the film begins, the "boy," Will Hayes (Ryan Reynolds), is a political consultant who has just been served with a final divorce decree. Perversely, that night his precocious 10-year-old daughter Maya (Abigail Breslin) demands to know the story of how her parents met and fell in love. (I don't think that's how I would spend the first night of a divorce!)

Borrowing a bit from the concept of the TV show "How I Met Your Mother," Dad agrees to tell her not just that story, but the stories of all three of the broken romances of his life, changing the names so she has to guess which one was her mother. The concept works, largely thanks to a good cast, a good script, and three very different girlfriends representing three very different types of relationships: Emily (Elizabeth Banks) is the college sweetheart, pretty and practical — maybe too practical? Summer (Rachel Weisz) is the avant-garde New Yorker — maybe not practical enough? And April (Isla Fisher) is the quirky sprite who marches to her own drummer — and already has a boyfriend. Which is Maya's mother?

Liberty readers will especially enjoy the film's ironic jabs at the Clinton dynasty. In the first of his three love stories, Will goes to New York to work as a young, idealistic intern for the first Clinton campaign. Clinton becomes a continuing motif throughout the film, contributing to Will's growing disillusionment. He sees clips of Clinton proclaiming, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Ms. Lewinski," and later waffling on "It all depends on what 'is' is." Later still, Clinton snubs Will as he tries to shake hands when they pass each other in Central Park.

Opening just after Super Tuesday, when Hillary's star was beginning to tarnish, the film's serendipitous reminder of her husband's arrogance, infidelity, and lying has to have her seething. I almost feel sorry for her.

Definitely. Maybe. *Not.*

— Jo Ann Skousen

Letters, *from page 6*

labeled "one-quarter ounce" or "one-half ounce" silver, then trading them would have been a barter deal; it would not then have meant offering payment in anything like "legal tender" dollars.

The government itself did a similar stupid thing in the 1980s when it offered to the public a number of gold medallions weighing about one ounce each. They were about the size and weight of the old $20 gold pieces. But the government didn't make the mistake of offering them to the public for the $20 people may have assumed they would cost. Rather the government offered them to buyers at a price that fluctuated, depending on the price of gold, between $350 and $400.

Similarly, in 1992, the U.S. Mint at West Point issued a gold coin which was "genuine, legal tender," weighed just under one-quarter ounce, and was labeled Five Dollars. However, no one could expect to obtain one of these Five Dollar coins for a Five Dollar legal tender Federal Reserve Note. According to recent newspaper ads these Five Dollar gold coins are now being offered to collectors (maximum three coins per customer) for just $200 each.

The government should wise up! A dollar is a dollar is a dollar still. But Twenty Dollars are no longer worth anywhere near an ounce of gold. That age ended 75 years ago, in 1933.

Bettina Bien Greaves
Hickory, NC

Letters to the editor

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No More Sofia!, *from page 42*

revolution." Of course, the international media loved above all the extra-judicial executions of the fallen tyrants in ever-melodramatic Rumania. Our own arduous reforms were almost completely ignored, as if here again, we did not count.

Years before the great thaw, growing up in Sofia, I became a good classical musician, a clarinetist. In my twenties and thirties, I enjoyed as good a career as a Communist country could offer — that is, not much. In my early forties, shortly before the collapse of the Bulgarian Communist regime, I managed to make my way to the U.S. through an organized concert tour. I jumped ship in California's Silicon Valley, with another Bulgarian, a bassoonist.

In the interludes left by the recitation of the American president's amorous liabilities, there was news about Russia and the former Soviet republics almost every day. It was mostly bad to very bad news.

Both of us quickly found manual jobs in the booming local economy (after carefully doctoring our résumés to conceal our middle-class status). The social downward slide was easy to accept since we were earning more in one day than we could have made in one month in Bulgaria, while still having time for music. The most difficult part of our adaptation was language: neither of us had much more than junior high school English, and we had never really spoken the language. To make matters worse, only one of our co-workers was a native English speaker, and he appeared borderline retarded. The rest were immigrants, in majority Mexican, some recently arrived, others in the country for several years, but none fluent in conventional English.

There was also a sprinkling of other Eastern Europeans (Slovaks, Hungarians) which did me no good except that we would exchange a few words in Russian once in a while. (Proficiency in Russian: the only favorable outcome of 50 years of communism.) There were also a number of Asians whose provenance was difficult for me to guess, although I learned that some were Vietnamese. One of them was my direct supervisor, fortyish, excitable Mrs. Thui. She talked loudly or half-screamed all the time, not necessarily in an unfriendly manner, and I rarely understood a thing she said, except, "Yes, YES!" and "No, NO, NO!" Fortunately, the work was pretty self-explanatory.

In the fluid labor market of Silicon Valley, employees came and went quickly and I did not bother to learn my fellow workers' many strange-sounding names. Sometimes I had beer with the few permanent workers in my department; that was about all. But mostly I spent a lot of time staying in touch with friends and family back in Sofia through the internet, accessible from the boss' office computer, which he allowed me to use after daytime hours. All the while, my lack of ease with the English language and my near-complete inability to read it cut me off from the regular fare of news that educated people take for granted.

Although a university graduate, I was as ill informed as any illiterate person. I watched CNN and tried to decipher the spoken news, but anything about Bulgaria was essentially non-existent. By way of compensation, in the interludes left by the recitation of the American president's amorous liabilities, there was news about Russia and the former Soviet republics almost every day. It was mostly bad to very bad news.

Neither my Bulgarian buddy nor I could quite forget the 40 or so years we had spent under the permanently overcast skies of communism or in the tremendous, creeping disorder of its collapse. Pessimistic and knowledgeable as only satellite-countries-educated individuals can be, we watched with growing concern the deliquescence of the Russian army. We were acutely aware of its thousands of rusty, leaky, falling-apart nuclear devices guarded by famished, often drunken, terrorized teenage conscripts. We knew our big brothers too well to sleep easy, thousands of miles away, realizing that our relatives were only a stone-throw from them. I thought of Bulgarians as helpless children sharing a backyard with a mangy attack dog, half-crazed by hunger and neglect, and restrained by a single, thin, rusty chain. I pictured Sofia, my hometown, as a fragile bowl in the monster's path.

One morning, as I arrived at work, before I could reach my station, Mrs.Thui intercepted me, all red in the face, shaking with indignation and barely contained fury. She was escorted by a half-dozen co-workers, all lamenting in their diversely pitched voices. Mrs.Thui walked straight at me and my heart rose into my throat. Her first words confirmed my worst fears. "Sofia no more!" she screamed.

So the Beast had done it! Deep down, I knew something like this was bound to happen: At the end of their rope, the Russians had obliterated an expendable big city to show the West how far they were willing to go to extort economic relief through nuclear blackmail. I shoved the boss aside and took possession of his computer. Nothing on CNN, nothing I could find anywhere else on the other networks. Nothing, anywhere on the internet. But Mrs. Thui kept yelling in my ear, "Sophia Hernandez not come more. Bitch quits! YOU do her work now!" ❑

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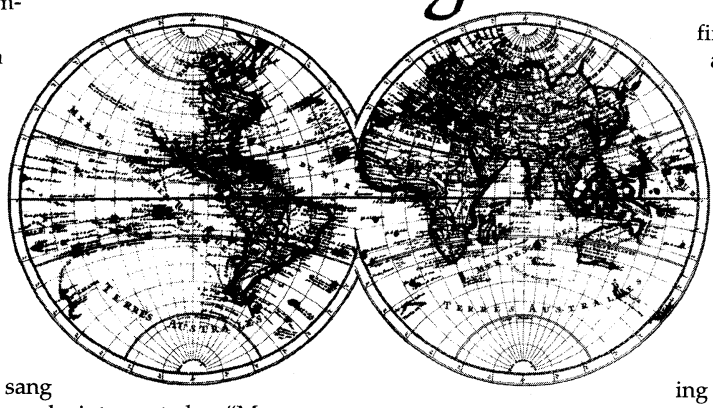
Terra Incognita



Springfield, Ore.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, from the *Oregonian*:

> For guys who park in front of the TV during college basketball's March Madness, the Oregon Urology Institute has a suggestion: Why not use that time to recover from a vasectomy? Institute Administrator Terry FitzPatrick said men need two to four days to recover from the procedure — but not all take the time.
>
> The sports radio station broadcasting the clinic's ads promises to send each patient a recovery kit of sports magazines, free pizza delivery and a bag of frozen peas: "The frozen peas are malleable enough that you can get them right in there and get the swelling down," FitzPatrick said.

London, England

Cultural exchange, overheard by *BBC Sport*:

> Before the European Championship qualifying match between England and Croatia at Wembley Stadium, English opera singer Tony Henry belted out a version of the Croat anthem before the 80,000 crowd. But he made a blunder at the end.
>
> He should have sung "Mila kuda si planina" (which roughly means "You know my dear how we love your mountains"). Instead he sang "Mila kura si planina," which can be interpreted as "My dear, my penis is a mountain."

New York City

Hitting bottom in the 21st century, described in the *New York Post*:

> The kinky college professor who was almost strangled during an S&M session at a Midtown club told the Post he's deeply ashamed and is finally through with the double life he's lived since he was kid.
>
> Robert Benjamin, 67, said he's desperately trying to break his addiction. "It's like when you crave a turkey," he said. "You eat it and you eat it and you eat it, but you still want it. But now I've had enough. I don't want turkey anymore. I'm full."

Ybor City, Fla.

Be fruitful and multiply, indeed. From the *Orlando Sentinel*:

> A Florida church issued a challenge for its married members on Sunday: Have sex every day.
>
> Relevant Church head pastor Paul Wirth said the 50% divorce rate was the catalyst for The 30-Day Sex Challenge. Church member Tim Jones and his fiancee agreed to take on the challenge, though he acknowledges it'll be a tough month. But he added: "I think it's worth trying to find out other things about each other."

Port Townsend, Wash.

The wheels of justice grind exceeding fine, from the *Peninsula Daily News*:

> Police arrested a suspect less than half an hour after a bank robbery in Port Townsend thanks to witnesses who pointed to the apartment building a block away where he fled.
>
> Police arrested the 40-year-old man in his apartment building and recovered money taken from the Kitsap Bank branch. Sgt. Ed Green says witnesses thought it was odd when they watched the man pull a stocking over his head before the heist. And a half-dozen people pointed to the apartment building and said, "He went there."

San Antonio

New ammunition for William Jennings Bryan, from the *McAllen* (Texas) *Monitor*:

> An appeals court has affirmed that nine chimpanzees and monkeys brought to a San Antonio primates sanctuary in 2006 don't have a legal right to sue. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals had sought to gain legal standing for the primates transferred from Ohio State University to the sanctuary after they were retired.
>
> PETA said it was considering whether to appeal.

England

Novel reminder of Christ's temptation in the desert, from the *Liverpool Echo*:

> Two of the Church of England's most senior Bishops are urging people to cut their carbon rather than give up chocolate this Lent.
>
> Bishop of Liverpool and Vice President of Tearfund, James Jones and Bishop of London, Dr Richard Chartres, are calling for a cut in personal carbon use for each of the 40 days of Lent.
>
> The Carbon Fast is a 40 day journey through Lent, towards a lighter carbon footprint, with a simple energy saving action per day. Participants are asked to begin the Carbon Fast by removing one light bulb from a prominent place in the home and live without it for 40 days as a constant visual reminder during Lent of the need to cut energy.

New York City

The thick blue line separating society from chaos, detailed in the *New York Post*:

> He weighs more than 500 pounds, but that wasn't enough to tip the scales of justice for ex-cop Paul Soto.
>
> The rotund retiree lost his legal argument that it was a line-of-duty fall outside a doctor's office that cost him his NYPD career. A judge says it was actually his "morbid obesity."

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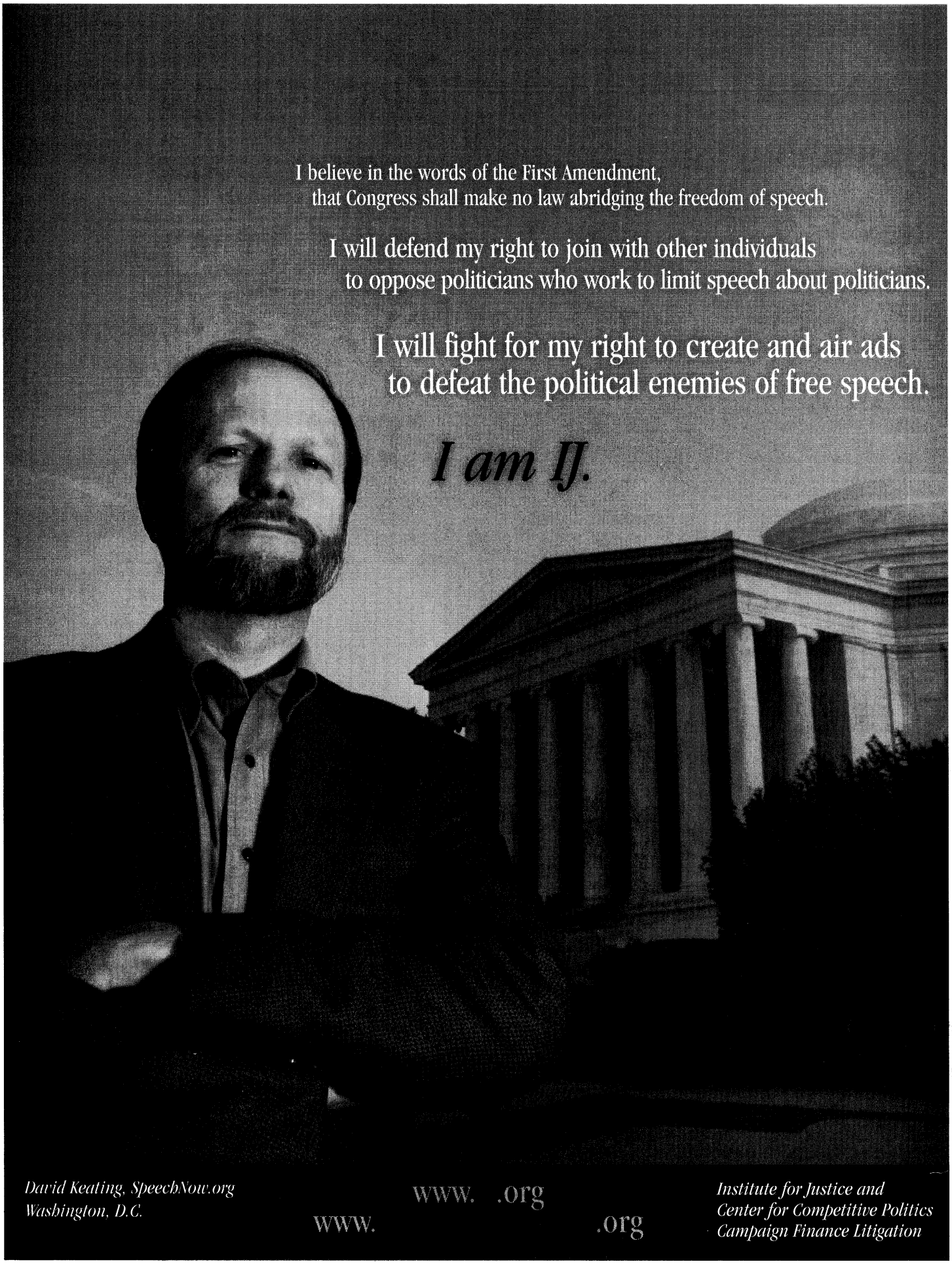
(Readers are invited to forward news clippings or other items for publication in Terra Incognita, or email to terraincognita@libertyunbound.com.)


I believe in the words of the First Amendment,
that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech.
I will defend my right to join with other individuals
to oppose politicians who work to limit speech about politicians.
I will fight for my right to create and air ads
to defeat the political enemies of free speech.
I am IJ.
David Keating, SpeechNow.org
Washington, D.C.
www. .org
www. .org
Institute for Justice and
Center for Competitive Politics
Campaign Finance Litigation