



Houston Objectivism Society

Vol.4, No. 3 July 1991 Newsletter

"A Point of Law" at July Meeting

At the next HOS meeting, attorney Michael Mazzone will give a talk and lead discussion on the "rule against perpetuities," a rule of real estate law. This rule provides that property may not be taken out of commerce (i.e., may not be restricted such that it cannot be sold) for longer than a period of approximately 21 years after the death of the originator of a legal holding. The most common example of this principle concerns limiting disposition of property in a will, i.e., the "handing down" of property in perpetuity.

Michael will also be presenting this topic in a panel discussion at the Jefferson School in San Diego in August.

His presentation will include a formal statement of the rule, its stated purpose(s) and philosophical arguments for and against it. The evening promises to be interesting and lively and will begin at 7:30 pm, Friday, July 26 at the Wallingford Apartments club house at 2750 Wallingford Drive. Wallingford intersects Westheimer two blocks west of Sam Houston beltway(8), in front of a Ninfa's mexican restaurant. The club house is approximately one block south of Westheimer on the west side of Wallingford.

May Meeting Features Music Workshop

At the last HOS meeting, Anna Franco presented a workshop, featuring some music fundamentals, a review of Ayn Rand's comments on the aesthetics of music and an examination of Deryck Cooke's aesthetic theory of music.

Objectivists are familiar with the ancient, yet contemporary, false alternative between idealism and materialism--the soul/body dichotomy. Readily seen in countless areas, it is no surprise to find it in music criticism. What is rare, however, is to see a mod-

ern, non-Objectivist thinker identifying an application of the soul/body dichotomy. From Cooke's *The Language of Music*: "The writer on musical matters is expected to ignore or only hint at what the composer had to say, and to concentrate entirely on how he said it. Or, to put it in the contemporary way, he is expected to concentrate entirely on the 'form', which is not regarded as 'saying' anything at all. Thus the two inseparable aspects of an expressive art are separated, and one is utterly neglected--much to the detriment of our understanding of the other."

Cooke's rejection of this dichotomy lead him to begin the task of identifying the language of music. He noted that, over the centuries, tonal composers have often used simple melodic phrases that have the same or similar interval sequences to express similar emotions in their work. Cooke sought to classify certain types of phrases with certain classes of emotion and thereby establish the basic elements of objective music understanding and analysis.

Anna provided demonstrations of these various elements, relating them to emotions evoked. Further topics relating to music were addressed, followed by a wide-ranging question period.

Michael Sean Gersch Wins Fountainhead Contest

Each year, HOS sponsors a prize in the Houston area for *The Fountainhead* essay writing contest. Houston schools are informed of the national contest, sponsored by the Ayn Rand Institute, and of HOS's supplemental contest.

Mr. Gersch will be a senior this fall at Clear Lake High School. He was last year's captain on the debate team, on which he has been active for the last four years. In addition to our contest, Mr. Gersch won the Houston Bar Association Law Day contest with his

entry "Freedom Has a Name: The Bill of Rights."

The HOS award reception will be held August 23, in the Tejas room of the Student Center at the University of Houston at 7:30 pm.

Von Mises vs. Von Mises

by
Dwyane Hicks

Our last issue of this newsletter announced the formation of the local chapter of the Ludwig von Mises Institute. After examining the national organization, however, we regret having to say that we cannot endorse it. The von Mises Institute not only fails to live up to that great name, it uses it as a front for advocating Libertarian (primarily)/Christian positions, supposedly in support of the free market.

While frauds of this kind are nothing new to Objectivists familiar with Murray Rothbard, fans of von Mises should be the first to reject this "lemon" for the real thing.

The von Mises Institute is the creation of Rothbard and Llewellyn Rockwell, associates of the Center for Libertarian Studies and editors of the *Rothbard--Rockwell Report*, the Center's newsletter.

In the first issue of the *Report*(April, 1990), Rothbard and Rockwell inform us that libertarian magazines are folding, that the movement is "floundering, played out, getting nowhere." The movement has been connected "with an adolescent hippie-druggie culture that scorns people of competence who earn a regular paycheck..." Rothbard tells us that we're dealing "not with a group of rational people but with virtually a religious

See von Mises on page 2.

INSIDE	
Mail bag	3
Announcements	4

von Mises from page 1: cult," with the nation's biggest outpatient clinic."

Bear in mind that this is "Mr. Libertarian" speaking, the primary architect of the Libertarian movement over the past twenty years, the master theorist and strategist. This is the man who, more than any other, set the terms of Libertarianism as being not pro-individual rights but anti-state(both domestically and internationally), not pro-egoism but officially amoral, claiming that all moral systems result in championing liberty. After characterizing Abraham Lincoln as a mass murderer, celebrating the collapse of South Vietnam, proclaiming the PLO champions of private property and defending the Soviet Union as a victim of U.S. imperialism, among other things, Rothbard complains that a bunch of loonies have messed up his movement.

While Ayn Rand repudiated Libertarianism from its inception and while Peter Schwartz brilliantly exposed Libertarianism as anti-intellectual, subjectivist and nihilist in *The Intellectual Activist*(Vol. No. 19-22, 1985; also *The Voice of Reason*, NAL, 1988); Rothbard bizarrely asserts that *Objectivism* is the source of irrationality in Libertarianism!(See "Ayn Rand is Dead", *National Review*, May 28, 1990.)

What Rothbard now scorns, he says, is his own creation, the child of his own premises. This captain is not only jumping ship as it flounders and blaming the passengers for its wayward course, he also blames those who chose not to sail with him and warned the passengers that the captain was crazy.

Llewellyn Rockwell

As to Rothbard's latest ally, Llewellyn Rockwell, the president of the von Mises Institute; his pamphlet, *An Anti-Environmental Manifesto*, is illuminating. On page 6, he condemns socialism and environmentalism as "atheistic religion[s]." Two pages later, we are told that environmentalism adds to ancient beliefs "a hatred of man and [of] the Western *religious* tradition that places him at the center of *creation*" [emphasis added].

"Environmentalism also has roots in deism--the practical atheism of the Enlightenment--which denied the Incar-

nation and made obeisance to nature."

It is not often that one encounters, in the same sentence, a denunciation of environmentalism and the rationality of the founding fathers, among others, who brought us out of the Middle Ages. Apparently Rockwell finds equally repugnant those who mindlessly worship nature, for being non-man-made, and those who obey metaphysical nature, for the sake of man, in the sense of Bacon: "Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed."

The rest of Rockwell's pamphlet continues in the same vein: a spirited attack on environmentalism laced with the only argument he has as an opposing view: "nature was created for our dominion."

In this way, Rockwell continues the Conservative tradition of losing intellectual battles by opposing the intellect, and thereby paving the road for the success of intellectual opponents.

In answer to environmentalism's claim that man is no more deserving of rights and life than bugs, Rockwell gives us the equivalent of the bumper sticker: "God said it, I believe it and that's all there is to it."(For a startling contrast in analysis, depth, scope and the offering of a positive alternative, see Dr. George Reisman's *The Toxicity of Environmentalism*, available from Warren Ross.)

This Rothbard-Rockwell alliance between Libertarianism and religion may seem strange--like mixing the worst of MTV with the Pope--but the two sides are united in their opposition to man's mind in guiding his life. The only difference is that subjectivists urge the individual to follow his own whims; the religionists urge that he follow the whims of the supernatural.

And make no mistake: Rothbard is still a Libertarian. His premises and "values" have not changed. His newly discovered intellectual fastidious is only the result of his attempt to form yet another united front, this time with advocates of a religion, whom he simultaneously attacks. (Recall his remark, quoted earlier, characterizing Libertarianism as a religious cult. In addition, Rothbard has often used "religious" as an epithet.) Thus, Rothbard wants to eat and have both his Libertarian irrationalism and his religious

irrationalism.

It is obvious that both are incompatible with Objectivism, but, more pertinently, here, they are incompatible with the premises of any scientist, particularly an economist who provides an economic defense of capitalism, viz, Ludwig von Mises.

The task of von Mises was to identify the nature of social interaction in the production of goods and services. As a scientist, his first premise was the law of causality: that everything acts in accordance with its nature, that immutable laws of nature, not the whims of God or of politicians, govern the actions of all entities and their derivative processes.

Thus, price controls and/or socialism are shown to be ineffective in bringing about any productive purpose, despite the wishes of a Nixon, the Puritans or the Soviets.

In the introduction to *Human Action*, von Mises notes that "The 'practical' man boasts of his contempt for economics and his ignorance of the teachings of 'armchair' economists. The economic policies of the last decades have been the outcome of a mentality that scoffs at any variety of sound economic theory and glorifies the spurious doctrines of its detractors. What is called 'orthodox' economics is in most countries barred from the universities and is virtually unknown to the leading statesmen, politicians, and writers."

If von Mises has been barred from the universities because of "a mentality that scoffs at any variety of sound economic theory," where will he be when *universities* are barred because of a mentality that scoffs at any variety of sound political or ethical theory? Will universities survive a Libertarian age of "private" gangs carrying bazookas or the wide-spread subjectivism which would make them possible? In such an age, will any entrepreneur be able to plan five days in advance, much less five years?

Similarly, what would be the fate of von Mises in a new religious age? Von Mises notes that "It was the ideas of the classical economists that removed the checks imposed by age-old laws, customs, and prejudices upon technological improvement and freed the genius of reformers and innovators

from the straitjackets of the guilds, government tutelage and social pressure of various kinds." What was the source of these restrictions if not the moral authority and precepts of the church, especially the idea that man's life on earth is of secondary or no consequence?

The Local Chapter

The organizers of the local chapter of the von Mises Institute are relatively new to politics of the Right. They are the chief victims of this fraud, but the influence of Rothbard is already apparent. The two local meetings we attended had the following characteristics:

The works of von Mises were rarely cited, his ideas rarer still; Rothbard and others predominated.

Hatred of the state predominated over any discussion of individual rights or even economics.

Any action of the U.S., particularly military action, outside its borders was condemned as "interventionism", without discussion. (See Peter Schwartz, op. cit., for an explanation of how this term has been stolen from free-market economists.)

There was a tendency to "explain" events in terms of personalities and motives, not ideas. Politicians were said to favor government intervention while in power but the market when out of office. The relative burden of taxation was said to depend merely on the number of voters in respective income brackets.

Ideas were often dealt with cavalierly and in an intellectually superficial fashion. For example, when the subject of "progressive" and "regressive" taxation was brought up, dealing with concepts invented by the Left as packaged-deals, the implications of these terms were passively accepted. Plato's view of epistemology, brought up by an HOS visitor as a possible source of power lust, was dismissed out-of-hand, as having nothing to do with the growth of statism. The person who dismissed this view felt no need to justify his position. In presenting an historical overview of the rise of taxation in the U.S., the fact that this country was born in a tax revolt supported by intellectuals, politicians and the general populace should be ample evidence that the

fundamental ideas of the country have changed. Today, of course, all but the populace almost automatically urge further taxation, and even they can find no alternative when pressed. How can such a historical switch in government policy and in the evaluation of that policy be examined without reference to fundamental ideas?

At one meeting, an attendee announced that he could prove the holocaust never happened; he was told only that his point was irrelevant. The Libertarian "openness" to any position, whether justified with reason or not, is apparently a part of this local chapter.

An organization dedicated to the study and presentation of the ideas of Ludwig von Mises would be a valuable asset in Houston. But this club's association with the von Mises Institute precludes that worthy goal. The national organization is a fraud, and its principles and efforts are harmful to the cause of liberty.



Taxes to Russia[Chronicle]:

I don't think that the American taxpayer should be sacrificed to support the Soviet government.

After all, this is the same government that still has hundreds of nuclear missiles pointed at our cities and still violates the rights of its citizens regularly.

Former President Reagan was right when he called the Soviet Union the "evil empire." The sooner it collapses, the better.

Timothy Bradford

Education[Chronicle: bracketed material was omitted.]

After reading the Outlook article titled "We can make a difference for Houston schools", I am even more worried about education in Houston and in this country. The so-called principles listed are mostly a rehash of the same ideas that created our educational crisis in the first place.

Before you can discuss how an

educational system should function, you must first answer: "What is the purpose of education?" Then you ask: "What is the proper curriculum?" Only then can you determine proper teaching methods and how schools should operate to fulfill the requirements. [If you think these fundamental questions are too obvious to mention, try answering them from the "principles" listed in the article.] The purpose of education is to create rational, thinking adults able to face the world with knowledge and confidence.

[I also disagree with the assertion in the article that current teaching methods have survived unchanged since the early 1900's. It is precisely those methods and principles that we need to rediscover and reapply in our classrooms if we are ever to regain the quality in education that once existed. More accountability, more government intervention, and more tax dollars won't get the job done.]

Timothy Bradford

Priorities[Post: June 3, 1991]

I am probably the only space station engineer who understands why the Space Station Freedom needs to be canceled. It has to do with changing national priorities, and Rep. Bob Traxler and others on the House Appropriations Subcommittee have taken a bold step in recognizing them.

America, as seen by a few brave congressmen, is no longer a nation that wishes to achieve. The age of rugged individualism and productive success is past. We no longer desire the triumph of mankind's giant leaps, and it is therefore appropriate to curtail any effort which purports to do the same.

Some have mentioned the deficit and fiscal responsibility. After all, achievement can be very expensive. Congress has challenged and dismissed these concerns--like a modern Robin Hood, they will take from a rich productive orbiting science platform and give to people and programs who are poor and unproductive.

With so many problems in the present, we can no longer afford to consider the future. The youth of America must grow up for themselves, forget the childish vision of man con-

quering space and not expect inspiration from a generation unable to provide it.

However often it may happen, and even if political expediency is the hidden motive, it is always refreshing to witness a congressional committee with the courage to reject greatness.

Christopher Land

Yuks

He's not. *He is.*
I don't know how you can say that...he obviously is not and never has been--well, maybe, as a kid. *Are you crazy? If he isn't, then what is he?* ...I don't know, but Clarence Thomas is not black.

Putative conversation overheard at the NAACP Convention.

Announcements

- The Thomas Jefferson School takes place August 4-18. At least three Houstonians are attending. Included in its announcement is the following: "The Jefferson School has been created to advance and disseminate the philosophical and scientific knowledge that is necessary to the existence of a free society. Accordingly, the School's primary mission is the further development, application, and teaching of the ideas of the pro-reason, pro-individualist philosophers and the pro-freedom, pro-capitalist economists, and of compatible ideas in the field of psychology. All of its activities and programs feature the relevant doctrines of Objectivist and Aristotelian philosophy and of "Austrian" and Classical economics." The President of the School is Dr. George Reisman, an economist who studied with Ludwig von Mises.

- A nation-wide grass-roots effort by Objectivists to expose the man-hating irrationalism of environmentalism is underway. This involves reviewing approximately 100 of the most influential pro-environmentalism books and then publishing these reviews in book form. The project is being organized by Jean Moroney of Boston. Anyone interested in contributing a review should contact Brian Phillips at 668-0453.

- Excerpted from an announcement by Dr. Michael S. Berliner, Executive Director of the Ayn Rand Institute:

"The [Ayn Rand] Institute promotes a point of view which many believe to be extreme."

With those words, the Fountainhead Essay Contest was banned in Seattle. First in 1986 and again in 1988, our application was denied by the Contest Committee of the Seattle School District. Although we were advised not to bother applying again, we have done so for 1992. But we don't expect any change in the Seattle policy...[Update: The 1992 application was denied.]

Objectivists often suspect that philosophic opposition is the hidden agenda when they are given low grades on papers or even denied jobs. But there's no hidden agenda in Seattle: they took the rare--and surprising--step of admitting openly their actual reason for banning the contest. Note that the committee uses the anti-concept "extremist" to avoid naming the principles which the Institute consistently upholds. And they don't even make the claim themselves but revert to what they believe others believe...

Dr. Berliner went on to say that students are best reached through their teachers and that an especially effective way of reaching teachers is through the conventions of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). In 1991, however, the national NCTE convention is being held in...Seattle, Washington!

Thus, the Institute plans on having a major presence at this convention by presenting a large, prominent information booth, stocked with materials, and manned by Dr. Andrew Bernstein, author of the "Fountainhead Teachers Guide" and a philosophy teacher in the New York area.

HOS President *Warren S. Ross*
Editor: *Dwyane Hicks*

HOS Executive Committee:
C. J. Blackburn
Anna Franco
J. Brian Phillips
Warren S. Ross

The Houston Objectivism Society Newsletter supports Objectivism and the Ayn Rand Institute; however, we do not purport to represent or speak for the same. The Newsletter is published bimonthly for members, and membership dues are \$10 per year.