
The Voluntaryist

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"If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."

April 1990

The Sin of the Intellectuals

by Carl Watner

"We have only two sources of information about the character of the people around us; we judge them by what they do and by what they say (particularly the first)."—Ayn Rand

Do most intellectuals have feet of clay? Paul Johnson in his new book, *INTELLECTUALS*, clearly thinks so. In the book's Index, under the heading "intellectual characteristics," are the following entries:

anger and aggressiveness;	cowardice;
deceitfulness, dishonesty;	cruelty;
egocentricity, egotism;	genius for self-publicity;
hypocrisy;	ingratitude, rudeness;
intolerance, misanthropy;	manipulativeness;
quarrelsomeness;	self-deception, gullibility;
self-pity, paranoia;	self-righteousness;
shiftlessness, sponging;	snobbery;
vanity.	

Does Johnson prove his case by examining the lives of twenty, left-wing intellectuals, or is his apparent success the result of bias and selectivity? Do the intellectuals who argue the case for the free market merit Johnson's scorn, too? How do an Ayn Rand or a Bob LeFevre measure up? Is it possible to discredit the political philosophy and social ideas of a thinker by examining his or her personal life? What do the actions of a person tell us about the validity and possible success of that person's prescriptions for a better world? What relationship is there between a moral theory and its success or failure (in practice)? Using *INTELLECTUALS* as a convenient starting point, I hope to be able to address these questions from a voluntaryist standpoint.

The word 'intellectual' has a number of meanings. Centuries ago it designated a person who was able to write. Thus, it came to connote a man of letters. Today it more generally refers to a person concerned with ideas and ideals of general social interest. The term is intended to imply that its subjects possess enlightened judgment and opinion, since the Latin root of the word means perceiving or discerning. Johnson uses the word primarily in the sense of those who act as social critics of the institutions and practices of their time.

There are a number of characteristics which Johnson says are shared by the group of intellectuals he profiles. (The more well-known of the group are: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Leo Tolstoy, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Bertrand Russell, and Norman Mailer.) They all believed that they could diagnose the ills of society and cure them, if only people would follow their solutions. Most led lives marked by the absence of familial love, honor, friendship, honesty, and the other virtues they trumpeted in public. Instead, most were petty, malicious, near the edge of psychosis, and mistreated their family and friends. Many were unfaithful to their spouses, had illegitimate children, were moochers and opportunists, poor money-managers, and last, but not least, often not even logical thinkers. Aided by their superior intellects, as a group, they excelled at rationalizing their own misbehavior.

If unbecoming conduct and absurdly bad judgment in the real world were the only accusations that could be hurled at these intellectuals, they might look no worse than some other exemplars we might find at any bar or brothel. The real sin of the intellectual, the 'deformation professionelle,' as Johnson labels it in another place, is their appetite for violence in the pursuit and realization of their ideas. *"It is not the formulation*

of ideas, however misguided, but the desire to impose them on others, that is the deadly sin of the intellectual." As Johnson adds,

The progressive intellectual habitually entertains Walter Mitty visions of exercising power. ...Precisely, perhaps, because they lead sedentary lives, intellectuals have a curious passion for violence, at any rate in the abstract. ... Consider, for instance, the repeated expression of admiration by (the) intellectuals (he speaks of) for ruthless men of action, and their long succession of violent heroes: Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, Castro, Ho Chi Minh—...

While the armchair men of violence in the West applauded and condoned, intellectuals elsewhere participated and often directed the great slaughters of modern time. Large numbers of them helped to create the Cheka, the progenitor of Stalin's OGPU and the present KGB. Intellectuals were prominent at all stages in the events leading up to the Nazi holocaust. ...

Wherever men and regimes seek to impose ideas on people, whenever the inhuman process of social engineering is set in motion—shoveling flesh and blood around as though it were soil or concrete—there you will find intellectuals in plenty. Pushing people around is the characteristic activity of all forms of socialism, whether Soviet socialism, or German National Socialism, or for instance, the peculiar form of ethnic socialism, known as apartheid....

This social engineering simply reflects the delusion that humanity's perennial problems can be solved by systems based on principles which spring forth from the brains of the intellectuals. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the problem is not the formulation of ideas, however right or wrong they might be. What makes intellectuals dangerous (at least some of the time) is their attitude toward violence, and their oft-times vicious intent to impose their ideas on others. When people do not readily take to the solutions of these intellectuals, they are first ignored, brushed aside, or dismissed. But when the intellectual or his followers have the power to impose Their Answer, people soon get treated as obstructors and enemies of the State. This leads the way for the imposition of the Final Solution (as we have seen in Russia, Nazi Germany, China, and Cambodia, for example).

It should be noted that Johnson qualifies the opening statement of the foregoing quote by referring to "progressive" intellectuals who seek power. This desire to "push" people around qualifies them as authoritarians, as opposed to people that are satisfied with practicing the arts of voluntary persuasion. So when Johnson concludes that one of the lessons of our century is that intellectuals should be kept away from the levers of power, he is really referring to his "progressive" or—what I am labelling—authoritarian intellectuals. Since he is not a voluntaryist, he fails to note that if the "levers of power" did not exist, then authoritarian intellectuals would be far less a threat to humanity.

A Rand, a Rothbard, and even a Spooner may have been guilty of trying to solve the world's problems by constructing systems based on their own mental constructs, but they never attempted to forcefully impose their answers on anyone else. On the other hand, the authoritarian intellectual really loses the claim to remain an intellectual once violence is endorsed. Hence, the term—authoritarian intellectual—is oxymoronic. The resort to violence is really a confession of failure because coercion is not an intellectual argument. It is simply an attempt by those having sufficient might (political power) to appear right in face of their failure to logically convince. Thus the intellectual who does not

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Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

1. "The Libertarian Idea"

"For the libertarian, the lives of individual people are the trees, and the danger of political life is to be so busy looking at the forest that one fails to notice these trees of which, after all, it ultimately consists. But people are not in fact trees, and one cannot go thinning out a few over here so as to improve the look of that lot over there. Many and sometimes all trees will do better if we have an occasional look at the forest, to be sure. The necessity to do so is increasingly frequent in modern times. Nevertheless, those who undertake to be forest rangers do so at the behest of and for the sake of particular maples, spruces, and the rest of it. One does not assure responsiveness to this by securing one's office via a majority vote of the rest of the trees. One might even recall that forests flourished from time immemorial with no caretakers at all! Fundamentally, trees take care of themselves. People are even better equipped for this, being rational animals. Turning them loose and wishing them good luck may be the best prescription for any number of ills."

—Jan Narveson, "Concluding Note" to *THE LIBERTARIAN IDEA*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988, pp. 335-336.

2. "A Scottish Blessing"

If there is righteousness in the heart there will be beauty in the character.

If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.

If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.

If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

3. "Motor Voter Bills"

INSIGHT Magazine (August 21, 1989) reports that several federal laws are being studied which "would automatically register voters when they renew their driver's licenses." Nicknamed "motor voter" bills, the plan would not start until 1992, and would help register about 90% of the nation's eligible voters.

4. "The Census"

I am opposed to the 1990 Census on moral and practical grounds. No political government has any moral justification for being so long as it resorts to coercion, one form of which is the compulsory collection of information every ten years. If there is a demand for such information, I am sure it can be collected more inexpensively by private agencies, who would not dare threaten a fine of \$100 for the refusal to answer any question. More likely, private agencies would be inclined to offer bonuses and coupons for the provision of information.

The Census Bureau has also been known to provide sensitive information both to the Army and the Internal Revenue Service. In 1942, it "provided the Army with a list of exactly how many Japanese-Americans lived in given neighborhoods, making it easy to round them up for internment during World War II. ...The IRS in 1983 attempted (largely unsuccessfully) to combine census data with private mailing lists in order to track down people who don't file income taxes."

As James Bovard, the author of the foregoing quote concludes, "The more information the government collects on people, the

more control the government will have over people." ("Honesty May Not Be Your Best Census Policy," *WALL STREET JOURNAL*, August 8, 1989, p. A-10)

5. "Tax-exempt Organizations Are Fundamentally Unlike Government Bureaucracies"

Non-profit agencies, such as the more than one million charitable organizations that exist in this country, are not the same as government agencies, even though their purposes might seem to be the same. "Government agencies are financed by compulsion (taxation) while charity is financed by competition for voluntary gifts, donation, and by earned income. Strategies for obtaining revenues through compulsion are quite different from those that are applicable in a competitive market.

"Furthermore, tax-exempt organizations can go bankrupt and close down. (Of course, perhaps classic bankruptcy laws should apply to governmental agencies with sloppy financial management, even if their ultimate purpose is to help the poor.) This demands a discipline which makes the tax-exempt more like a business than a government agency."

—Herrington J. Bryce,

"Answering the President's Call to Public Service"
WALL STREET JOURNAL, July 10, 1989, p. A-10.

6. The Amish

Donald Kraybill's recent book, *THE RIDDLE OF AMISH CULTURE* contains many insights, two of which are worth pointing out. First, in light of my article on the voluntary development of time zones ("The Noiseless Revolution" in *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Whole No. 13), it is interesting to see how the Amish have dealt with standard time.

The Amish have separated themselves from the pace of modernity by adjusting their clocks in two ways. In the first part of the 20th Century it was customary for Amish families to set their clocks a half hour ahead of standard time. This 'fast time' was a symbolic reminder to both the insider and outsider of the boundaries between the Amish and modern culture. Some older families continue the practice. Second, the Amish did not join the popular switch to daylight savings time but have continued to follow standard time. Because of the increased interaction with the outside world today, Amish families involved in business often change their clocks in the spring and fall to comply with daylight saving time. Other families still follow standard time as a symbolic practice of separation from the world. Church services, of course, always follow standard time. (p. 43)

The second point involves the voluntaryist view of means and ends. Kraybill writes that, "Because of their desire to remain separate from government programs, the Amish have refused to participate in a public program designed to preserve farmland in Lancaster County (Pa.). Yet, ironically, they are doing more than any other group to preserve farmland because they rarely sell their farms for development." (p. 192) The Amish by placing emphasis on voluntary means are achieving the end sought by coercive government practices.

7. "Why Russia Can't Feed Itself"

"The hallmark of collectivization is central planning. ...[The individual farmer] 'cannot show initiative or talent. This makes the farmer indifferent to the land. It's unnatural to farm in a prison.' In private agriculture, the rhythm of work is determined by sunshine, rainfall, and the requirements of the land. In the Soviet Union, what matters is the plan. ...To assure that commands are carried out, there are three million supervisors in the countryside, one for every ten farmers. Farms must be filled out to move animals, haul loads, and sow crops. ...Besides forcing farmers to plant inappropriate crops, the plan dictates deadlines for sowing and harvesting. As long as the farm chairman meets them, he will not be held responsible for what happens to the harvest. Thus, if the plan says it is time to plow, the fields will be plowed even if the ground is so wet that tractors sink to their axles. If the plan says it is time to reap the crops, they will be cut, ready or not."

—David Satter, *READER'S DIGEST*, October 1989.

The Sin of the Intellectuals

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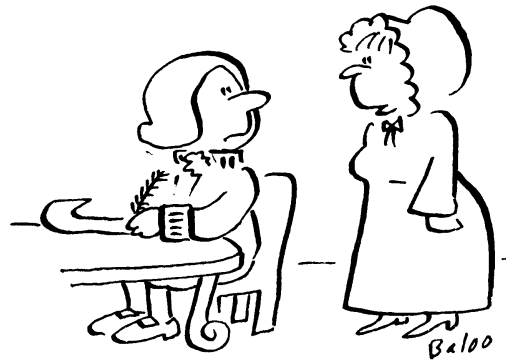
have his argument readily accepted (but demands that it be) is ready to advocate some form of authoritarianism in order to bring about its realization. This not only explains the predilection of authoritarian intellectuals for socialism (socialism is a means of imposing their ideas on others, whereas the free market implies free trade both in intellectual ideas, as well as commercial goods) but explains why the worst get on top. Where there is competition among those who endorse, advocate, or direct the use of violence, those who go the farthest in this direction (i.e., those most consistent in resorting to violence) are most likely to come out on top.

It must puzzle at least some readers of Johnson's book why he did not include a chapter on intellectuals like Ayn Rand or Nathaniel Branden. How do these two intellectuals measure up to Johnson's criticisms? The only time (to my knowledge) that Johnson mentioned Rand was in a WALL STREET JOURNAL article of January 5, 1987 ("The Heartless Lovers of Humankind," p. A-16). Referring to the fact that although there are some intellectuals "who d[o] not succumb to the desire to push others around," he asserts that such a desire can affect right-wing intellectuals. "Ayn Rand, the novelist-philosopher who championed the dignity of man and the individual's right to be free of control by others, humiliated and dominated many who came to know her privately." While true, this ignores the fact that the members of Rand's inner circle chose to voluntarily associate with her. She did not "dominate" them in the same sense that Stalin "dominated" the citizens of Russia.

Nevertheless, there are other similarities between the life of Ayn Rand and the biographies penned by Johnson in his book. Rand cuts just as pathetic and tragic a figure as any of Johnson's intellectuals. She and Branden were both unfaithful to their spouses, hypocritical, egocentric, and self-righteous. While intellectuals may be geniuses at reasoning, as Branden reveals in his memoir, JUDGMENT DAY, they are also geniuses at rationalizing. Rand, for example, had a knack for generating a chain of reasoning to justify almost any desire. Though she had a passionate and profound respect for the facts, she had a way of rationalizing them, too. Her most obvious failure was the refusal to recognize her husband's addiction to alcohol.

It seems that nearly all intellectuals (authoritarian or not) follow certain regular patterns of behavior. Regardless of how widely their ideas are accepted, they travel among a circle of acquaintances and friends, whose approval they need and value. While this may be true of all of us (intellectual and non-intellectuals alike), the intellectual often demands the dominant position. While observing corruption in the society around them, intellectuals like Tolstoy (and even Rand) failed to see it in the adulation, subservience, and flattery of those around them. Rand, like other intellectuals such as Freud and Lenin, preferred the subservient, second-rate supporter to the first-rate who might disagree. In this sense, the intellectual's circle becomes more like a cult or a church than a sharing in an objective search after the truth. Writing of Freud, Johnson states that "he could not believe that anyone who had come under his influence and then broken away, could be wholly sane. He thought heresiarchs needed psychiatric treatment." Shades of Rand and Branden!

So what are we to think of intellectuals in general? Are there intellectuals who merit our respect and whose ideas as well as deportment we should emulate? As Roy Childs asked in his review of Johnson's book, where are Adam Smith, Bastiat, Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, Albert Jay Nock, Mises, or Hayek? Or Lysander Spooner, Benjamin Tucker, Henry David Thoreau, or even Gandhi? While it is probably impossible to know the details (or the "dirt", if there is any) of the lives of some of these great thinkers, there is some basis for not dismissing all intellectuals out of hand. Some evidence to support this case is found in Brand Blanshard's book, FOUR REASONABLE MEN (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1984). Marcus Aurelius (Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher, 121-180 A.D.), John Stuart Mill (English philosopher and economist, 1806-1873), Ernest Renan (French philologist and historian, 1823-1890), and Henry Sidgwick (English philosopher and professor, 1838-1900) were all alike in sharing that rare trait celebrated in Blanshard's



"'Eternal Vigilance'?—Doesn't that sound a little paranoid?"

book—a "devotion to reasonableness in life and thought."

For all of them conformity to reason was more than a special interest and delight. It was an integral part of duty and honor. For all of them prejudice was close to sin. All of them shared an ethic of belief that made carelessness in conviction or statement, surrender to superstition, fanaticism of any kind, personal attack in argument, dogmatism, the misstatement of an opponent's case or the concealment of weakness in their own seem like stains on their integrity.

One parallel between Johnson's intellectuals and Blanshard's reasonable men is their experiences with the fairer sex. As Blanshard puts it, "Sex is an instinct far older and deeper in our nature than even the faint beginnings of reflective thought, and numberless men with a reputation for rocklike reasonableness have been reduced to fatuous adolescence under its power. ... It would make an interesting study in prejudice to list the persons of outstanding intellect and judgment who have made fools of themselves when challenged by this imperious impulse." Of Johnson's intellectuals, we can make some brief statements: Rousseau had five children, refused to raise them, and sent them to a foundling home. Jean-Paul Sartre was something of a sexual athlete, keeping four mistresses at home. Bertolt Brecht had a long succession of lovers. Tolstoy and his wife resorted to keeping diaries about one another's perfidies. Tolstoy kept his illegitimate son (the result of a liaison with a peasant woman) out of the schools he started to educate his serfs. Marx refused to acknowledge his illegitimate son, mothered by a long-time servant of the family.

Blanshard's reasonable men fare only a bit better. Marcus Aurelius was presented with twelve children by his wife, Faustina. Most of them died, but one that lived was one of the worst monsters to ever occupy a throne. It was often gossiped that Marcus' son, Commodus, was so unlike his father that he must have been sired by some gladiator. It was also rumored that Faustina was untrue to Marcus, but Marcus remained loyal to her till the end. John Stuart Mill stole another man's wife, and held her in such high esteem that he froze his mother and sisters out of his life, when they dared question her abilities. Ernest Renan experienced some of the unhappiest moments of his life, when he fell in love, because of the antagonism between his sister and bride-to-be. Only Henry Sidgwick escaped unruffled by his romance and marriage.

Very few of our intellectuals have clean slates in this respect. Many who were married had no children (Mill, Renan, Sidgwick, Rand, Branden), and those that raised families certainly conveyed nothing of their knowledge or wisdom to their offspring. Bertrand Russell stated plainly that "he had 'failed' as a parent." It is clear as Blanshard puts it, that "Romance and reality seldom go hand in hand." If we were to judge any of these intellectuals on the score of family life and raising children, it seems they all would fail. We would have to search far and wide to find an intellectual who was married happily and successfully raised a family.

How, in fact, are we to judge them? As the quote by Ayn Rand

at the beginning of this article indicates, people must be judged by what they do and what they say. "By their fruits, ye shall know them." But their "fruits" certainly include not only their public statements, ideas, and their writings, but their family life, their children, their ideals, and their behavior. The gist of Johnson's argument is that the personal lives of these intellectuals are important because they reveal fundamental misunderstandings about human nature and people. This undercuts their credibility as "intellectual" spokesmen to dispense advice to a world looking for answers. Few lives can withstand this type of scrutiny, but then few people claim to do what most intellectuals actually claim to do: to speak of better ways of living and to develop more just social institutions.

In the history of the philosophies of the world, there is a strange divergence of opinion in this matter. In the West, a philosopher's theories and beliefs can often be accepted as valid even though they remain entirely unrelated to his personal way of life, or for that matter, even if he shows no sense of refinement or judgment in his personal life. On the other hand, in the Eastern thought of Buddhism, mere theoretical notions are considered useless, representing sterile mental exercises. A man must live and act by what he has discovered to be true. The man who offers to teach others but does not practice what he teaches is at the very least a hypocrite. Is it wise to follow the advice of a financial adviser who has been unable to make a fortune following his own advice? Why should we follow his advice? The proof must be in the pudding!

More often than not, philosophers have failed to live up to their own dictums. The Stoics, who were held in high esteem by Bob LeFevre in his later years, are perhaps one group of thinkers that may be exempted from this harsh judgment (though we must take exception to Marcus Aurelius' political career). The object of Stoic teaching was to make the individual a better person, and their only general injunction was to act sensibly and justly. They believed that the highest wisdom was knowledge of how to live and behave. Zeno, who is largely credited with framing this school of thought, was primarily concerned with establishing principles to govern conduct and to show they were right by his own actual example. An Athenian resolution of 262 B.C., praised Zeno for following his own philosophy: "He made his life a pattern to all," declared the official decree, "for he followed his own teaching."

How much of a Stoic was LeFevre? Certainly his biography reveals he was no saint, but he did eventually learn from his mistakes. He also exemplifies the fact that next to love, religion is the area of life where reason is most easily swept away. His involvement with the "I Am" movement, coupled with his romances, made for an unsavory history during the first half of his life. Whatever it was, something caused him to turn over a new leaf during the latter half. He chose to adopt a new mistress—as he called it, the mistress of liberty. The line from Edmond Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac"—"Be admirable in all things,"—served as his new motto.

At the time of the break between Rand and Branden, Branden met with the NBI staff and stated: "A philosophy is not to be judged by the behavior or misbehavior of any of its exponents." Is this what Johnson is doing? Not really. One of the main themes of INTELLECTUALS is that the private lives and public postures of leading intellectuals cannot be separated. "We have examined their attitude to truth, the way in which they seek for and evaluate evidence, their response not just to humanity in general, but to human beings in particular: the way they treat their friends, colleagues, servants, and above all their own families." Johnson's conclusion, "beware intellectuals," is simply intended to convey the skepticism that we should hold against those who "tell us how to behave and conduct our affairs." The behavior or misbehavior of the exponents of any particular philosophy indicates more about the psychology and personality of those advocates,

than proving or disproving the philosophy itself. Ideas and theories must be judged on their own merits, otherwise we are in danger of committing the *ad hominem* fallacy, of judging the message by the messenger, rather than letting the message stand by itself.

Nevertheless, when a philosopher argues for a better world, but refuses to make himself a better person, one can only wonder if something is not amiss. If a person lives sloppily, he is likely to think sloppily. If the great thinkers and intellectuals of the world expect to get a hearing, they need to set a better personal example for the rest of us. We should admire people who live by their ideas and ideals. Such people are to be respected for their integrity, clarity of thought, and ability to abide by their own philosophy of life. The real sin of the intellectuals, regardless of their political ideologies, is the absence of harmony between thought and deed.

What I Don't Believe

Continued from page 8

fear of the consequences. If one were to await the possession of absolute truth, one must either be a fool or a mute.

Now I am ready:

I don't believe that either the believers in God or the disbelievers have established their case, for which reason I still continue to listen to both; I have come to my variety of disbelief after more than three decades of reading on the subject and nine years of intensive religious education, and many long dark hours of involvement in the most unprofitable activity ever undertaken by the race, thinking.

For forty years I have listened to people glibly and blandly asserting the existence of an *a priori* universal moral order in the world, a tactic usually employed when the objective is to cut short discussion on something or other. But from the same period of time spent in watching my fellow man in action all around the world, I have concluded exactly the reverse. A universal morality is an interesting premise and a fine topic on which to spend time when the weather is bad or there is nothing else to do. It may even exist. I am still waiting for evidence. From what I have been able to determine by my own observations, various kinds of behavior are prohibited not because they are wrong, but wrong because they are prohibited.

I don't believe that a social order that neglects and degrades its old people, brutalizes its small children and looks indulgently on the perpetration of cruel treatment to its animals has any future worth contemplating. In fact, I more or less judge all social orders by their performance in these three departments.

I don't believe that what people say is important; what they do is 99% of the picture, the way I look at things.

I don't believe that rectitude is determined in any human grouping by counting noses, and thereupon assuming it resides with the most numerous. I am inclined to support Ibsen's contention that the majority is always wrong.

I don't believe that life is properly spent on one's knees kissing the feet and posteriors of one's superiors; I prefer the advice of Saint Thomas a Kempis, "Fawn not upon the great."

I don't believe in trying to change the behavior of anyone old enough or well enough to reason; the only person I am interested in reorganizing is me.

I don't believe that there is a more challenging enterprise than the attack on one's own fearful, envious and greedy tendencies; with fear, envy and greed repelled, what other sins one may commit almost seem to have a redeeming side.

I don't believe in performing kindly or charitable acts which I first of all do not find are fun for me to do; there is nothing that sours the milk of human kindness quicker than doing superficially kind or charitable things out of a feeling of compulsion, while the recipient of such favors is actually poisoned.

I don't believe in the notion of duty; more outrageous atrocities and abominations have been perpetrated by people inflamed by this delusion than could possibly be calculated.

I don't believe that marriage originally was ever intended to

*"Sit he on never so high a throne,
a man still sits on his own bottom."*

—Attributed to Michel de Montaigne
(1533-1592)

provide for anything more than a division and specialization of labor to facilitate the raising of small children, in which capacity it knows no close rival whatever.

I don't believe that there is a viable substitute for learning to live on one's own psychic resources; we come into the world alone and we leave it alone and we spend a very large part of the time in between alone. Learning to enjoy one's own company is a large part of growing up.

I don't believe one can have respect for anyone if one does not first of all have respect for oneself.

I don't believe a person reveals himself for what he really is better than when he is dealing with the poor, the weak, the powerless and particularly those who can't possibly be of any use to him whatever.

I don't believe that a better definition of freedom than that of Kierkegaard exists in fewer words: "To be what one is by one's own act is freedom."

I don't believe anyone has ever calculated how many rogues, fools or charlatans it takes to make a public.

I don't believe it is civilized to indulge in malicious rejoicing at the misfortunes of others; when still a small child I was told the next bit of misery might very well fall on me.

I don't believe there is any such thing as involuntary servitude; all slavery is at bottom voluntary. One does not give anyone freedom, nor does one accept it; one takes it.

I don't believe any basic problem of the species is soluble through manipulation, magic or politics. For that reason I do not believe in reform which I have found usually takes two routes; either A, B, and D decide to force their will on C because they are more numerous than he is, or A and B decide to give what C owns to D on the grounds that D is more deserving. There might be a chance for reformers if only they recognized that the prime source of social evils is the principle of authority in human relations, and then promptly went out of business.

I don't believe in the common delusion of indispensability; the best cure for this is to dip your index finger in a bowl of water, then withdraw it and notice the hole you made. It will undoubtedly unhinge your ego, but its contribution to the sustenance of our sanity is bound to be immense.

I don't believe that money, power and fame are objectives worth devoting myself to for the reason that I have never been able to figure out how much is enough money, enough power and enough fame. I have three quite different objectives: to feel good every day; to try to do interesting things as much of the time as possible and to have fun.

I don't believe that one can explain one's convictions by rational means alone; a personal statement of belief is probably as much derived from what one feels as much as from what one thinks. The eloquent Voltairine de Cleyre maintained in her maturity that at bottom all convictions are due to temperament and therefore cannot be explained by reason.

I don't believe there is a better test of character than giving someone a little power and then watching how it is used. It is instructive to note how invariably the person of light weight insists on throwing it around.

I don't believe that, excluding charity, there are more than two ways to make a living; one either produces goods and services to exchange for others, or one takes them away from those who produce them. In view of the sustained popularity of making a living without working in this latter manner, it is unlikely that any of our major sins is likely to disappear very soon.

I don't believe in giving advice to people on personal or intimate matters. It is better that we all continue to make our own mistakes in such circumstances without outside help.

I don't believe there is a rule of conduct that can replace or substitute for that of total personal responsibility for one's acts.

I don't believe in equality. As far as I am concerned it is the differences and disparities of life that make it endurable. As Benjamin R. Tucker observed, "The moment we invade liberty to secure equality we enter upon a road which knows no stopping-place short of the annihilation of all that is best in the human race."

I don't believe anyone is ever going to legislate virtue.

I don't believe that my view of public affairs in my time has



ever been better stated than it was by Montaigne, and he said it nearly 400 years ago: "To be honored in a time like this is a disgrace."

I don't believe there is a better criterion by which to judge quality and substance in the area of values than to make note of what survives in the long run.

I don't believe that anyone can live by a rigid moral code over the long run and stay in the world; that may be why all the most popular, most ancient and surviving moral codes are riddled with loop holes, escape clauses, and flexible evasions, and why the most rigid ones are the guide lines of monastic cults or short-lived, tiny, inbred sects which tend to convert a relatively tolerable and endurable world into a grim and joyless nightmare.

I don't believe there is any significant value in the educational technique of trying to impress someone with the merit of something by pointing to the vast number of those who support it. In the words of Nietzsche, "The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently."

I don't believe a person can go on indefinitely giving lip service to one code of behavior and actually living by a contrary one; it is better to be at war with the whole world than to be at war with yourself.

I don't believe there is a more profound condemnation of all governments than the 5th commandment of the Hebrew Decalogue, "Thou shalt not kill" and I don't believe any government in history has ever paid any attention to it, either.

I don't believe there is a more pernicious educational technique than crushing the will of a young child, but fully as pernicious is the policy of submitting to it.

I don't believe anything has done more to contribute to the triumph of the modern State than mass literacy and the ensuing herd-conditioning programs followed out by control of press, radio, cinema and the lock-step mass school. Better permit private heresies than mass-produce public scoundrels.

I don't believe that I can commit myself to behaving in the future with one hand tied behind my back regardless of what may come up in the future, and call my position free at the same time; I am paralyzed to the degree I have compromised my freedom of choice. An objective spook of behavior is as impossible to attain as an objective economics. I cannot commit myself to any rigid behavior pattern in the future any more than I can commit myself to never buying or eating bananas on Thursday.

I don't believe what is known as the State will ever wither away and I am convinced that expecting it to do so is in the same class with expecting the oceans to turn into lemonade. One lives with the State in one's own time, puts up with that part of it which is unavoidable, and escapes the remainder the best way one learns how. If the curve of State growth and rapacity continues to parallel the curve of technical innovation and production increase it would seem reasonable to predict that we are in for Statism in the time ahead on a scale and dimension which ought to make one get dizzy just contemplating it.

Voluntary Musings A Column of Iconoclasm

By Charles Curley

*"Nothing can defeat an idea
--except a better one."
--Eric Frank Russell*

Expertise: "I was Mayor [of Boston] during three depressions, the third being the most severe in history, yet I left office at the end of my third term with a lower tax rate than when I assumed office, and with every obligation of the city paid. All this despite the fact that welfare expenditures had increased over ten million dollars annually."

James Michael Curley, I'D DO IT AGAIN

And Ronald Reagan is proud of how he "got the government off our backs", is he?

Protection Racket: While the Communist countries are discovering the joys (and woes) of a free economy (albeit in bits and pieces), the U.S. seems to continue to stumble in the opposite direction. Mrs. Carla Hills, the chief trade negotiator for the Bush administration, has been handed a folio of countries with "unfair" trade practices, and been told to sic 'em. While she is negotiating, the U.S. will continue to impose "retaliatory" measures against the offenders. This sounds to me like a sneaky way to have your protection racket and disavow it too.

The new buzz word is "trade policy", which has replaced "managed trade" (just as "recession" replaced "depression", which replaced "panic"). Trade policy means having to get permission from the government or pay a massive tariff before one may import something. Trade policies would be negotiated between the governments of the respective traders, rather than have trade negotiated between the traders. Trade policy does for international trade what Gosplan does for internal trade.

Japan bashing is 'in', of course. There seems to be something "un-American" about buying a Japanese product these days, and the yahoos who drive 1968 Chevy Novas with stickers saying "Buy American" have their noses up in the air. I seem to recall a more blatant form of racism in 1940, but it is still racist to decree that the slant of a man's eyes should determine whether one should buy his products.

Trade policy will mean in practice that U.S. manufacturers will determine how many of their products they think Japanese consumers should be buying, and then the U.S. government will bully the Japanese government into forcing that number down the throats of the Japanese consumers.

Going in the other direction, it means more of those "Voluntary" Restraint Agreements (VRAs), such as the ones under which you paid an extra \$500 to \$2000 for each car—regardless of origin—you have bought since 1981. Incidentally, the VRAs have done nothing to reduce the trade deficit, something that another band of yahoos, the one on Capitol Hill, has failed to notice. However, if there were a fall in the trade deficit due to VRAs, it would be because the dollar declines against the yen, thereby restricting exports. Oops.

What would help the trade deficit would be two things: a reduction of the Federal deficit, and an increase in savings. Either of these two reforms can be accomplished by Congress, except that it hasn't got the spine to take the bull by the tail and face the situation.

The only things that will do the trick are 1) a Sherman's March Through the Budget, slashing and burning as they go; 2) a similar mass destruction of federal, state and local regulations and laws, thereby giving people productive enterprises in which they may invest (read: save); and, made possible by the first two, 3) a massive reduction in taxes. In a word: perestroika. In another word, voluntarism.

Instead of this, Congress's Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations, is of the opinion that what should be done is to tell Japan to boost its domestic demand. Right. Sure. When you committee critters get the U.S.'s growth in domestic demand

up over Japan's 6% a year, you can tell them how.

Meanwhile, THE ECONOMIST put it just right: "The only satisfactory trade policy is no trade policy at all."

As for me, I'm sick and tired of paying protection money.

Ahem: "... (B)ut I am every day more convinced that we women, if we are to be good women, feminine and amiable and domestic, are not fitted to reign..."

Queen Victoria

Letter to King Leopold, 1852

Is that why they call Margaret Thatcher "Attila the Hen"? And, are men any more "fitted to reign"?

Alternatives to the Welfare State: One of the things that killed off the big city political machines in the U.S. was the rise of the federal welfare system. By reducing the ward bosses' control of jobs and handouts for the indigent, the Roosevelt administration destroyed the basis for the ward boss system. With no reason to be loyal to the ward boss come election time, the poor of the big cities found them and their mayoral candidates increasingly irrelevant. Hence the demise of the machines such as those of Tammany Hall and Jimmy Walker in New York, Richard Daly in Chicago, and James Michael Curley in Boston.

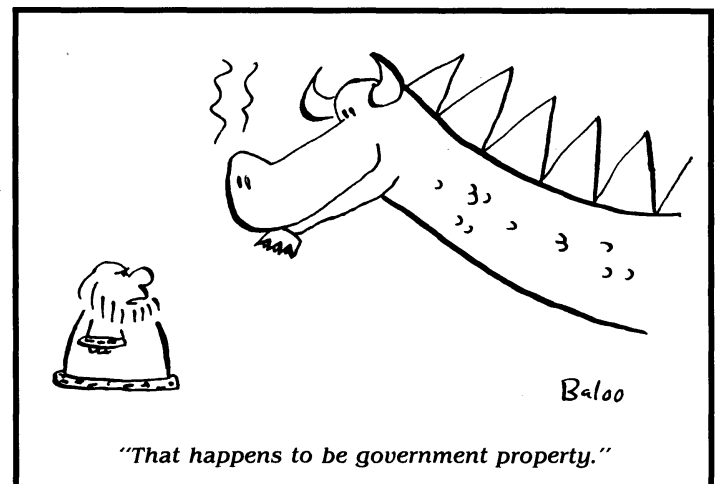
The federal welfare system supplanted an informal but all-encompassing system which at least has its charms. Curley, in office or out, had open hours at his home. Anyone with a problem could walk into Curley's home and walk out again with some money, a job, or some sort of relief. I'd like to see some of the modern advocates of "open government" or "power to the people" keep similar hours. It had the virtue (compared to the federal system) of being local. But the system was based on the powers to tax and regulate, and upon corruption and political "squeeze".

The voluntarist would prefer a non-coercive system. Many readers of this publication no doubt contribute to their churches, or to such organizations as they deem suitable.

Is it possible to do social work and make a profit? Apparently so, since the world's largest and most successful industrial co-operative is doing just that. In 1988, the Mondragon Group, in Guipuzcoa, in the Basque country, did Ptas 205 billion (\$1.8 billion) in sales. Between 1987 and 1988, cash flow increased by 22%. The cooperative has a work force of 22,000, and accounts for 4% of the region's GDP.

Mondragon came from the reforming zeal of a priest, Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta, in the 1940s. It was set up not to earn dividends for shareholders but to provide jobs, social security and education. In short, to provide the things that are commonly provided by the welfare state, in a time when the government was less than sympathetic to welfare or to the poor at all. That it has done.

In the ten years to 1976, Mondragon increased its employment by over 15% a year, twice the average rate in Spain. Since then, the group added 4,200 jobs while the Basque region as a whole



shed 150,000. Mondragon also provides employees with unemployment benefits, pensions, health care and adult education.

Curiously, Mondragon now faces the same threat that the American party bosses did. The fascist government under Franco has been replaced with a democracy, and in a democracy people are bribed with their own and other peoples' money to vote for the biggest spender. So under several Socialist governments, the welfare system has grown apace.

The group also faces a threat the American party bosses never did: competition. As Spain joins the EEC, the barriers against European competition go down. This will mean that Spanish companies will have to reduce costs. Between the unemployment in the Basque country, competition, and Madrid's taxes, Mondragon's social charter has expanded while its resources must inevitably shrink. The group is forming alliances to handle the foreign competition, and is even expanding into a joint venture in Mexico which will produce white goods.

But management, including Mr. Jose Maria Ormaechea, one of the founding fathers, is optimistic. They proudly point out that Mondragon is a lower cost provider of social benefits than the state. And it's better than living off of taxes.

Quote: "People turn into robots when they accept enough nonsequiturs to nullify their ability to reason about values."

—Alan Furman

Railroaded: A train passenger in Britain is roughly one-twentieth as likely to die in a crash as a car passenger travelling the same distance. Yet, notice all the hue and cry whenever there is a train wreck. Notice also, how little squawk there is when there is a car crash.

He Should Know: "It isn't what a politician says, but what he whispers that gives a slight clue to what he is thinking."

James Michael Curley

At it Again: Ah well, last year it was pit bulls. This year's California Folly is assault rifles. Some bozo takes his AK-47 into a school in Stockton, and kills a bunch of children, so the politicians' response is to ban assault rifles. Huh?

First of all, notice that Mr. Patrick Purdy was at least not so stupid as to try the same stunt in, say, Long Beach or Oakland, where chances are reasonable that the students would have returned fire.

Second, we have in this country an absurd theory which says that while a child is in the hands of school authorities, the authorities stand *in loco parentis* (in the place of the parents). We also have another patently false theory that the government is supposed to protect us from maniacs with AK-47s, among other, more serious threats. However, as long as those theories are held, why are the Stockton school authorities not being pilloried for failure "to protect and serve" their charges? If any effort has been made to remove those people from office or to recover damages for malpractice, I have missed it.

Third, why assault rifles?

The National Rifle Association (NRA) bases its "pro gun" arguments on two theories: one, the Second Amendment to the Constitution; and two, the rights of hunters.

The handgun prohibitionists were recently greatly embarrassed by Mr. Carl Rowan, who opposed handguns in his columns and used one in defense of his Washington, D.C. swimming pool. These people are beginning to notice the fact that a lot of people are buying guns (mostly handguns) not for sport but for self-protection. (What do they hunt in East L.A.? Cockroaches?) The prohibitionists are beginning to wake up and smell the coffee.

So AK-47s make an interesting change of target for them. When it comes to hunting, an assault weapon is hardly sporting. So the NRA is trapped on that one. So long as the NRA clings to its hunting argument, it will be voted down on the assault rifles every time. Besides, not everybody hunts. Should only hunters have the right to own weapons?

Also, there are problems with the NRA's other main argument: the NRA is soft on gun control. First, the Second Amendment

could be repealed tomorrow. Then what? Then the NRA would be left standing around mumbling and muttering under its breath. Second, the Second Amendment argument begs the question: *why* do people have the right to bear arms?

There is one argument that the NRA could make that is self-consistent, begs no questions, and would do wonders to get the NRA new members in urban areas. I propose that those who would defend weapon ownership adopt the following:

The right to own weapons is based on the right to self-defense. Any thinking being has the right to self-ownership. He, she, or it has the right to own that which he produces, and that which he acquires in voluntary, non-fraudulent trade. To deny that he has the right to defend himself, those he volunteers to defend, and his justly acquired property is to negate those rights, to make of them an absurdity, a mockery. Each thinking being is best placed to determine his own methods of defense, and any laws or judgments on the matter, in general or in specific, are second guesses at best, and deleterious to that right of self-defense.

The NRA and gun owners in general are on the defensive precisely because they have no principles with which to defend themselves. This argument is principled, clear, and self-consistent. Further, it puts the prohibitionists on the defensive: why do they want to deprive people of an important means to self-defense?

Further, this argument makes clear the class and racial discrimination of weapons prohibition. As Voltaire remarked, the law in its majesty prohibits both the rich and the poor from sleeping under the bridges over the Seine. The rich can hide from rapists and murderers behind their burglar alarms, their kevlar padded Mercedes, their electrified fences and their Bel Aire Patrols. The poor cannot.

You can defend yourself two ways: with weapons, or with words. If you must use weapons, then words have failed. This is true dealing with rapists, and it is true dealing with the gun prohibitionists. If the NRA continues to act without principles, to beg the question of why one has the right to own arms, its arguments will fail, and its members will find themselves faced with the dilemma of having to give up their guns or die using their guns to defend them. If the NRA adopts a principled argument, that will prevail, and the membership will not be faced with that horrible dilemma.

Ahem: "The market economy's facility for change and development and therefore economic growth has done more to eliminate poverty and 'the exploitation of the working class' than any political intervention in the market's system of distribution."

Mr. Kjell-Olof Feldt
Finance Minister, Sweden

This in a country where taxes are 56% of GDP. Mr. Feldt has proposed reducing the basic rate of income tax from 50% to 30%, and the top marginal rate from 75% to 60%. Not bad for a Social Democrat in power.

Oath of Fealty: In the Middle Ages, obligations ran both up and down the social ladder. One's obligations to one's lord were clearly spelled out, usually by custom, and were well-known. So also a noble's obligations to his vassals were clearly spelled out. Quite often, for example, the nobility agreed that they couldn't keep the serfs in arms during planting or harvest seasons. This tended to limit wars, and to keep levied troops pretty close to the locality where they were raised.

This sort of thing was sworn to by both sides when a new noble assumed office, in an oath called the Oath of Fealty. It was witnessed by the Church, and failure to abide by it was considered grounds for legal rebellion (see, e.g., *Magna Carta*). The following is the oath which subjects of the kings of Aragon used to pledge to their kings. Compare it to the Pledge of Allegiance, which American "taxpayers" are spoon-fed in their "public" schools!

We who are as good as you swear to you who are no better than we, to accept you as our king and sovereign lord, provided you observe all our liberties and laws; but if not, not.

What I Don't Believe

By James J. Martin

The reason this discourse is structured in the negative is not one of accident or novelty. During my almost 25 years in teaching and related pursuits I have increasingly become known as a "no" man.

It is a former student's remark that I like best of all the commentaries I've yet encountered concerning what I prefer to call my wasted life. One night at dinner at Deep Springs, where the black hats gathered at my table during the six years I held forth there, and where I believe more effective teaching was done than in all my classrooms, he remarked in a lull in the intellectual brawling, "Nobody says 'NO' like you, Doc." I've never been so delighted with a compliment before or since.

I have been saying "NO" in other arenas than the academic world. I have been saying it on subjects in the field of historical and politico-economic studies for some twenty years to the extent that the timid middle-of-the-roaders of my acquaintance have long felt that I have committed professional suicide, and though they read what I write I have the feeling that they sneak out into the back yard and bury it as soon as they can, so that none of their associates who adhere to the orthodox conventional totalitarianism of our time may suspect their infection. And I must say the whole business is a source of amusement and much gratification to me; furthermore, I feel relieved at being spared the task of getting myself involved with an element with whom I am incompatible both in temperament and basic convictions.

Years ago I ran across an anonymous bit of writing which contained the following:

To shout NO is to be free. He who does so may suffer, he may even die. But his voice would have been heard in defiance. And because we are but men, that is all we can hope for.

I still like the sound of that.

It is in the spirit of this kind of negativism that I have put

together what is being presented. Saint Francis de Sales tells us, "Good advice ought to be well received, whether steeped in vinegar or preserved in honey." I must admit that most of mine to students has been of the former kind, and when I have been coyly reminded by certain colleagues whom I call nice old ladies of both sexes that one can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, my only response has been that I haven't the faintest interest in catching flies.

I have tried out something in the nature of this disorganized collection of opinions, ruminations, declarations and unanswered questions once before, at a religious service where I was invited to present the equivalent of the sermon. Undoubtedly there were several reverent and pious souls present who shivered in delicious horror, waiting to hear what frightful message would be forthcoming from an isolated, bitter-tongued loner with a widely advertised dim respect for organized religion, which was made worse by my known long exposure to its study. Perhaps they thought they would get some wild exhortation to pillage and burn the cathedrals, plus the recommendation that they do in their grandmother and use her knuckle bones for soup. What they got was essentially what I have recast for this evening's diversion.

I will begin with two texts: The first is from Lucian (120-200 A.D.), a Greek writer in Rome during the second century of the Christian era;

He that will freely speak and write must be forever no slave, under no prince of law, but lay out the matter truly as it is, not caring what anyone will like or dislike.

The second is from the famous Mexican artist Jose Clemente Orozco who died in 1949, and like Lucian in his time, managed to become a success despite his persistence as a critic:

Errors and exaggerations do not matter. What matters is boldness in thinking, in speaking out about things as one feels them in the moment of speaking; to having the temerity to proclaim what one believes to be true without

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