



Libertarian Cross-Currents

By Walter E. Grinder

•The Libertarian Party held its 1976 national convention at Washington's Statler Hilton Hotel the weekend of 23-26 September. I must admit to being both pleasantly surprised and deeply impressed. Until this convention, I have wavered between lukewarm toleration and almost total disenchantment. My twin objection has been (1) distrust of politics in general and (2) distaste for the abnormal number of assorted nuts, cranks, jerks, and crazies drawn, seemingly inexorably, toward any libertarian organization, but toward the Libertarian Party in particular. I remain suspicious of politics, but I am convinced that the LP is now and will for several years continue to be perhaps the single most effective libertarian mass educational tool in the country. (I hope and expect other parallel institutions to do at least equally well during the next decade or so.)

I was most heartened by the very small number of crazies in attendance at this year's convention. I was thoroughly impressed by the large number of young couples in their late twenties and thirties who obviously have their feet on the ground and are willing to put their shoulders to the wheel. These are dedicated, solid libertarians who are also what Murray Rothbard rightly calls "real people." I think it is safe to say that the appearance of such people is a very good indication that libertarianism is on the verge of laying the groundwork for a real mass movement.

The high points of the convention were speeches by Earl C. Ravanel, professor of American foreign policy

at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and by Roy A. Childs, Jr., long-time libertarian theoretician-activist. Both called for a strictly noninterventionist foreign policy.

There is simply no question but that the single largest cause of America's statism is the direct or indirect result of America's global interventionist foreign policy. It is marvelous indeed to see the LP shedding the last vestiges of mindless right-wing international adventurism and adopting the purely libertarian foreign policy of nonentangling alliances and defense only against direct continental attack. There must be a clear line drawn between conservatives (right-wing and social-democrat) and libertarians on this crucial issue. There is no place in the libertarian movement for international interventionists, for these interventionists are the most vicious and effective of all statists.

There is not space here to detail all of the other convention talks and panels, most of which were quite good. Especially good were the following: Ralph Raico's excellent "History of the Modern Libertarian Movement," Morton Halperin's "The CIA-FBI Threat to Privacy," a very high-level and informative panel on the Middle East by John Hagel III, Leonard P. Liggio and Stephen Halbrook, Nathaniel Branden's very useful "How to Communicate Political Ideas," a panel on Austrian economics by John Egger, myself, and Murray Rothbard, a rousing banquet speech by Roger MacBride, a further attempt

by Walter Block to "Defend the Undefendables," and a rip-roaring call to action by "Mr. Libertarian," Murray N. Rothbard, in his "Benediction." [All convention speeches and panels are available on cassette tapes. For more information, write Audio-Forum, 901 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Ed.]

My considered judgement is that the LP is professionally and well run and for the most part ideologically quite sound (although I am quite concerned about the policy of gradualism, as expressed by MacBride in a recent *Reason* interview. It is up to all of us to keep the pressure on the party to ensure its ideological purity; but I am satisfied that the party leadership of Ed Crane, Bob Meier, Bill Evers, and the others is aware of the problem and that they will do their best to correct any possible ideological deviations in the future. I think the party leadership deserves both the thanks and the support of all serious libertarians for their yeomanlike service to the cause of liberty. This is especially true for Roger Lea MacBride, the tireless expositor of the libertarian message throughout the country. Because of the party and MacBride, more people have heard about libertarianism this past year than heard about it in the previous three decades. Now, if only the rest of us will do half as much, the growth of the libertarian movement, while remaining a difficult task will surely continue.

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AN AFTERWORD FROM Readers, Authors, Reviewers

Libertarian Jihad

I was very disappointed with Roy Childs' review of *Theistic Objectivism: An Autopsy* by Michael Emerling [*LR*, Sept.-Oct. '76]. Aside from Roy's snide and unwarranted reference to me—which, coming as it does from the chameleon of the libertarian movement, is not that surprising—the review fails to fulfill even the minimum requirement for a satisfactory review: it fails to tell us anything significant about the piece being reviewed. We learn that it is a criticism of James Kiefer, and we learn that Roy does not like it—but surely it does not take a 500-word review to communicate these two points.

I have listened to the Kiefer lecture, and I am at a loss to understand Roy's allegation that Emerling "missed the point entirely." "Emerling's statement of [Kiefer's] views," claims Roy, "is simply unrecognizable to me." This is especially strange, since Emerling's monograph rarely resorts to paraphrase, but relies instead on quoting long passages from Kiefer directly. Are these verbatim statements "unrecognizable" to Roy?

Roy's opinions may be interesting, but his review presents nothing but opinions, totally unsubstantiated. If he had pontificated less and confronted the issues more, he would have had the space necessary for at least one example, or clue, or hint—anything to lend credence to his rejection of the monograph. As it stands, however, the review is vacuous, and it is a discredit to Roy's fine talents as a reviewer.

GEORGE H. SMITH
Hollywood, Calif.

When I read Michael Emerling's *Theistic Objectivism: An Autopsy*, I was amazed to see that, although he quoted in full James Kiefer's most controversial (and, I think, most decisive) argument for the existence of God, he nowhere attempted to refute it. Rather, he grappled with no

fewer than six reconstructions of it, none of them accurate, and so revealed that he simply had not seen what the argument was. I was horrified when he quoted one of Kiefer's counter-arguments and omitted a key word, which omission permitted him to find an elementary "contradiction" in Kiefer's position. I was puzzled by his quoting most of the other important counter-arguments, excepting the most forceful one, which he doesn't even paraphrase, though he quotes or paraphrases surrounding material. And I was completely at a loss when, in his rebuttals to Kiefer's several objections to Branden's lecture, he time and time again missed the point and answered caricatures of the arguments. Roy Childs, then, was absolutely correct in his main criticism of the piece.

There were, however, some puzzling aspects to that review. I am one of the Washington-area libertarians converted to theism by Kiefer's Audio-Forum tape *Objectivism and Theism* (and later to Christianity, mostly under the influence of arguments presented by Jim Kiefer, albeit not included on his tape), and I am one of the two persons with whom, along with Jim Kiefer, Childs has had "long discussions." Roy and I have been close friends for a long time, and he knows that those of us who have thus become Christians are not "disciples" of James Kiefer, nor do we in any sense form a group "centering around the ideas and person of Mr. James Kiefer." To paraphrase Archbishop Ramsey, it is not Mr. Kiefer we are commending, but Jesus Christ, whose servants we are. Roy Childs knows this, and yet chose to depict us as a Kieferite cult of some sort.

From our long discussions, he knows that we are not asking a Kantian question, but rather a Brandenian question: What implications, if any, does the fact that consciousness is conscious have for theories of the origin of consciousness? I suppose that Roy has recast this question into its correct Kantian parallel, but he knows better than to depict us as Kantians. Even Michael Emerling did not make that mistake.

And why, from a jest which he knew to be a jest, he chose to impute a "canonization" of *Atlas Shrugged* onto us, I cannot

imagine.

On one other point the review is a puzzle. Roy seems, at the end of the review, to regard the issue of God's existence as unimportant. Roy Childs used to know better than that, too.

RONN NEFF
Alexandria, Va.

My tape, *Objectivism and Theism*, opens with a parallel between Dr. Branden's refutation of determinism and a refutation of atheism.

Summarizing Dr. Branden: Determinists claim that a man's thoughts are due to causal chains originating outside the man. But if this is so—"if the actions and content of his mind are determined by factors that may or may not have anything to do with reason"—then there is no reason why these thoughts should be true, except by happy accident. Our minds, with their thoughts determined by extraneous factors, are no more suitable guides to truth than tea leaves, with their patterns determined by extraneous factors. But the conclusion (that our thoughts are worthless) is absurd, therefore the premise (determinism) is false.

Summarizing the parallel argument: If atheism is true, then our having the sorts of minds we do, or having minds at all, is due to "factors that may or may not have anything to do with reason." It follows that our thoughts are worthless. Since the conclusion is absurd, the premise (atheism) is false.

I then examine several objections to the latter arguments, and reject each on the ground, among others, that if it were valid it would be a valid objection to Dr. Branden's argument as well. I conclude that no one can consistently accept Objectivism and reject theism. All this occupies about the first 39 minutes of the tape.

It is with some surprise that I have read Mr. Emerling's critique of my tape and discovered no reference whatever to Dr. Branden's argument!

Later, in discussing Dr. Branden's discussion of the First Cause Argument, I maintain that a statement like "The basement is flooded because it rained last night" implies that it makes sense to talk about what would have happened if it

had not rained last night. More generally, to say that A caused B is to say that without A we should not have B. Mr. Emerling interprets this to mean that I regard the flooding basement as a mysterious, uncaused event. He accuses me of believing that hydrogen and oxygen will sometimes produce water and sometimes Pepsi Cola, whereas my point is that hydrogen and oxygen produce water, but nitrogen and oxygen do not.

Mr. Childs complains that Mr. Emerling has not taken sufficient time and care with the argument. This is over-harsh. It seems clear to me that he has devoted considerable time and care to his paper, and some of his incidental points are well-taken. I am all the more disappointed at not getting from him any analysis of my main arguments.

JAMES KIEFER
Bethesda, Md.

Roy Childs' review of *Theistic Objectivism: An Autopsy* leaves much to be desired—notably evidence, argument, and attempt to examine the contents of the pamphlet. The review, however, is not without significance. It is a striking example of a key epistemological principle, viz., the burden of proof.

Mr. Childs asserts that I neither grasp nor accurately state James Kiefer's argument for the existence of God. He offers no evidence or argument in support of this claim. He provides no examples of my alleged errors. Nor does he quote or paraphrase any part of the pamphlet in defense of his view. Roy simply makes a series of ex cathedra pronouncements regarding *Theistic Objectivism: An Autopsy*—and assumes that readers will take his word on the matter.

But intellectual issues are not decided by appeals to reputation or seeming authority. They are decided by means of evidence and argument. To paraphrase Etienne Gilson, "Reason always buries its undertakers."

Until Childs offers evidence for his opinions, they need not be taken seriously. As Nathaniel Branden has observed, "When a person makes an assertion for which no rational grounds are given, his statement is—epistemologically—without cognitive content. It is as though nothing

Letters from readers are welcome. Although only a selection can be published and none can be individually acknowledged, each will receive editorial consideration and may be passed on to reviewers and authors. Letters submitted for publication should be brief, typed, double spaced, and sent to LR, 901 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

movie, *The Incredible Bread Machine*, continues to grow in influence. The San Diego group has adapted the movie to a one-hour television special. According to *Advertising Age* (4 October 1976), World Research, Inc., is offering to TV stations free use of this hour-long special, which includes an opening statement by Secretary of the Treasury William E. Simon and closing discussion by Walter W. Heller, Milton Friedman, and Benjamin Rogge.

•The Mont Pelerin Society (an organization of international free market scholars and businessmen) held its 1976 meeting at St. Andrews, Scotland (St. Andrews University), 22-28 August. The entire meeting was devoted to the life, times, and ideas of Adam Smith. Sessions included papers and discussion by Professors R.H. Coase, George Stigler, Benjamin Rogge, Israel Kirzner, B.R. Shenoy, Armen Alchian, Gordon Tullock, James Buchanan, Milton Friedman, David Meiselman, Gerald P. O'Driscoll, F.A. Hayek, Donald Kemmerer, and Murray N. Rothbard.

•The week following the Mont Pelerin meeting, another very important symposium in Austrian economics took place at England's famous Windsor Castle. High-quality papers were delivered by, among others, Mario Rizzo of New York University, Gerald P. O'Driscoll of Iowa State University, John Egger of Goucher College, and Roger Garrison of the University of Virginia. Comments were offered by Professors Kirzner, Lachmann, Rothbard, and Spadaro.

•The growth of interest in and influence of Austrian economics has been truly amazing during the last two or three years. The Austrian programs developed and organized by the Institute for Humane Studies, the Charles G. Koch Foundation, and the William Koch Foundation clearly have been the major factors in this resurgence of interest. Hats off to all of those involved with these very successful programs.

•Reflecting this growing interest in the Austrian perspective are some recent announcements from Arlington House Publishers (165 Huguenot Street, New

Rochelle, NY 10801). Arlington is bringing back into print three classic works of Ludwig von Mises: *Omnipotent Government* (\$8.95), *Theory and History* (\$10), and *Bureaucracy* (\$6). Three titles will be available in late November.

In January Arlington House will publish *My Years with Ludwig von Mises*, the fascinating memoirs of the great economist's wife, Margit. Illustrated with many never-before-published photographs, this delightful volume will sell for \$9.95.

Even more exciting is the news that Arlington's Washington editor, *LR*'s own Karl Pfock, has acquired the English-language rights to the never-before-translated collection of Mises essays, *Critique of Interventionism*. The English-language translation was done for Arlington House by Professor Hans Sennholz. The Arlington edition of *Critique*, due for publication sometime next year, will contain six essays, including "The Nationalization of Credit" (which was left out of the original German edition because of an editorial error), and an introduction by Professor Sennholz.

•I am convinced that the renaissance in Austrian economics is just beginning and will continue to grow in the months and years ahead. The graduate program at New York University, where Israel Kirzner, Ludwig Lachmann, and Mario Rizzo teach, is one of the most exciting in the country. The students there include some of the brightest and most dedicated libertarian scholars I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. They include: Richard Ebeling, Richard Fink, Jack High, John Kunze, and Donald Lavoie.

•Carl Watner is one of the best independent scholars in the libertarian movement. His work on Benjamin Tucker and Lysander Spooner is generally recognized to be excellent by all. Watner now has written and published a very useful pamphlet, *Towards A Proprietary Theory of Justice*. The 47-page work is worth far more than its \$3 price. Please address all orders, inquiries, and correspondence to: Carl Watner, 7250 Washington Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21227.

•Professor John Hospers is giving several important addresses over the next several months: (1) "A Defense of Minimal Government" will be delivered at the annual meeting of the Society for the Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy at Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, 5-6 November 1976. The entire session will be devoted to the Nozick thesis, and Hospers will be one of the very few there to defend against the redistributionists. (2) "Is Free Enterprise Compatible with Social Justice?" will be delivered at a symposium on social philosophy at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 12-13 November 1976. (3) "The Ethics of Retributivism" is an address that will be delivered at a conference organized and directed by the Center for Libertarian Studies (200 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003) and held at the Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4-7 March 1977. The symposium is entitled "Crime and Punishment: Restitution, Retribution and the Law." This conference is the first on this topic to be organized and directed by a libertarian scholarly institution, and thus the Center for Libertarian Studies is breaking new ground on a very important subject.

•Gentle reader, the success of this column depends entirely upon you. "Libertarian Cross-Currents" cannot serve as a clearing house of libertarian scholarship and action unless you give me your input. Please help me help you by sending me information (c/o *Libertarian Review*, 901 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314) on academic activities, recommended reading, new publications, organizational activities, speakers, and so on. And remember, *LR* is a bimonthly publication. When you send along information about meetings, talks, conferences, and the like, be sure to give me at least six weeks lead-time before the cover date of the issue in which you want your announcement to appear (e.g., for the January-February '77 issue the deadline was 18 November).

has been said." From this perspective, Roy's review is remarkably silent.

MICHAEL EMERLING
Tucson, Ariz.

Childs Elucidates

My little review of Michael Emerling's *Theistic Objectivism* seems to have stirred up a hornet's nest. Let me take another crack at the problem as I see it.

James Kiefer delivered a couple of lectures in the Washington, D.C., area on Objectivism and theism, in which he maintained that Objectivism leads to theism. So far as I have been able to determine, only a few dozen people, at best, have heard the arguments, and only two or three have been converted to theism by them. It is this situation which Michael Emerling has responded to by writing and privately publishing his lengthy rejoinder. My point is that if he was authentically concerned to rebut the arguments, he should have best done this in private correspondence—or at least shown the pamphlet to the principals in the dispute before publication. He did not. The result is that in my judgment, and in the judgments of Ronn Neff and James Kiefer, Michael Emerling missed the point of the arguments, instead wrestling with several alternative constructions. This does no one any good.

I agree that I was a bit sarcastic in my review of *Theistic Objectivism*, but that is my right. Mr. Kiefer suggests that I am "over-harsh," but I disagree totally. Mr. Emerling's pamphlet is rude, insulting towards Mr. Kiefer and those who believe in God; Mr. Emerling shows off his refutational prowess like a flashy boy Objectivist even while, as he often does, caricaturing Kiefer's arguments. He spits contempt, postures melodramatically, and constantly engages in silly rhetorical flourishes. This is his right, and I am entitled to ridicule it.

If I did not discuss the arguments in my initial review, it is because I didn't have the space in a 400-word review, and because I thought it was pointless. I advised that those who are interested in the issue listen to Mr. Kiefer's tape and read Mr. Emerling's pamphlet and make up their own minds. As for whether Mr. Emerling

did in fact miss the point, well, George Smith and I have had lengthy telephone conversations about that question, and we still disagree: he thinks Emerling's comments were on the mark, and I think not. Again, the reader will have to decide for himself.

I certainly did not mean to take a swipe at George Smith in my review. In my view, his *Atheism: The Case Against God* is a magnificent book, worthy of standing alongside such works as Flew's *God and Philosophy* and Blanshard's *Masterly Reason and Belief*. I was more intending to ridicule Michael Emerling's intellectual horizons, which I take to be very narrow, to put it charitably.

If I have been overly harsh towards Michael Emerling, then I apologize, but I do not think I have been. For whatever reason, a great many highly intelligent followers of Ayn Rand have, in my view, simply become self-exiles from the great public debates of our time. They seem to prefer to be big fish in fishbowls rather than small fish where it really counts and might affect the course of events. They become narrow, constricted, shallow. I have seen this happen again and again over the last ten or twelve years: the falling off from intellectual concerns of people who might make a difference in our time, because of sectarian concerns. It does no one any good to disregard this fact, one of the preeminent reasons for the all-too-slow progress of Liberty as well as its rational philosophical and ideological base. I am not immune to such criticisms myself.

This was really the point of my review. There is a sense in which Ronn Neff is wrong: I do regard the issue of God's existence as unimportant, because God does not exist. What is important is the belief which many people have in God, and in other religious matters. But Neff is wrong when he reads that into my review. What my review expressed was my view that Emerling's pamphlet was unimportant. I stand by that.

As for Kiefer's argument, all that I can say here is that his dichotomy between "design" and "accident" as alternative explanations for the origin of man's consciousness is rather loosely defined. "Accident" is not a concept that applies

to the way things act in the world. Moreover, Mr. Kiefer rejects natural explanations of the origins of consciousness without anything other than a cursory analysis, mostly of Darwinian explanations. Yet there is much more to the natural postulates than is contained in the works and traditions of Darwin. Note, for example, D. O. Hebb's *The Organization of Behavior*, F. A. Hayek's *The Sensory Order*, and the first two volumes of Suzanne Langer's *Mind: An Essay in Human Feeling*. But those only scratch the surface.

In conclusion, then, I view Mr. Kiefer's arguments as being spurious, and Mr. Emerling's pamphlet as having missed their force anyway. I remain an atheist, and for the life of me, I cannot see how, asking themselves the Kantian-type question "How is the fidelity of consciousness to fact possible?" Mr. Kiefer, Mr. Neff, and others have reasoned their way into the Trinity, chastity, and Sunday mass. As someone who respects the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, and who respects Rand, I see the efficacy of consciousness as axiomatic, and the explanations of its origin to lie in natural science. This is not intended as a rebuttal, but merely an indication of my own point of view. For interested readers, I urge consideration of the works I have cited, including the Kiefer and Emerling works.

ROY CHILDS, JR.
Brooklyn, N.Y.

On Target

My appreciation to *Libertarian Review* and to Reginald Bretnor for the kind words and stirring resuscitation of my *To Keep and Bear Arms* in Mr. Bretnor's gun-control piece for September-October.

The piece was excellent, and I believe typifies not only the libertarian thinking on guns but also what genuine liberals, of that vanishing school, should be thinking.

Best regards.

BILL DAVIDSON
Alamosa, Col.

Kudos

This note is simply to compliment you on your recent reviews of *Against Our*

Will (by Myra Friedman) and *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* (by Regina Hugo). [Both in the Jul.-Aug. '76 *LR* -Ed.]

Ms Friedman not only wrote an informed review, but she managed to capture in it some of the difficulties someone like myself would have to face in dealing with the book. That Brownmiller writes well and spots some of the indecencies men have exhibited in their relations with women simply cannot be denied. Since she writes in part as spokeswoman for a movement, her overstatements, her emotionalism (cast in imaginative and prosaic language), and her determination tend to prompt tolerance for her ignorance and sheer idiocy. However much I would like to be above it, given my knowledge of the indecency of men against women—for example, in my experiences in the U.S. Air Force, where the general attitude my fellow airmen expressed toward all women, including their lovers or wives, simply baffled and often disgusted me—I found it difficult to protest the Brownmiller approach. Frankly, I am intimidated. My sense of justice (i.e., objectivity) is difficult to assert in the face of the statistics. But Ms Friedman did a commendable job of moderation in the face of Brownmiller's seductive style. I wish I could have managed such a courageous feat.

With Ms Hugo's review I can do little more than express my heartfelt thanks. Professor Langer's book(s) have been a source of philosophical joy to me, and I have thought of doing her work justice in a review, but never dared. Ms Hugo managed to convey the richness of this philosopher's work without attempting to cover the territory Professor Langer alone travelled so diligently and well. May I simply reaffirm that *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* is breathtaking and brilliant—but not meant for those who wish for philosophy to reap its fruits exactly at 9:00 AM tomorrow. (I am fearful that the impatience some libertarians exhibit toward certain intellectual endeavors will be the death of liberty!) Thanks, then, again.

TIBOR R. MACHAN
Senior Editor, *Reason*
Fedonia, N.Y.