

The Undercurrent

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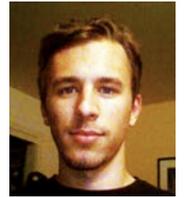
“It was as if an underground stream flowed through the country and broke out in sudden springs that shot to the surface at random, in unpredictable places.” Ayn Rand



SELF BEFORE COUNTRY

The dangerous moral premise underlying the call for national service

The recent debate on government budget cuts has resurfaced discussion about an enduring subject: national service. In a prominent example in *Newsweek* magazine, General Stanley McChrystal presents his vision of the role national service should take in American culture. He writes:



by Jonathan Akin

We have let the concept of service become dangerously narrow, often associated only with the military. This allows most Americans to avoid the sense of responsibility essential for us to care for our nation—and for each other. We expect and demand less of ourselves than we should.

The solution, we are told, is to work towards a culture in which selfless sacrifice for the nation is expected. On this view, the pursuit of our personal interests, like starting a business, building a dream house, or simply pursuing a successful career, takes a backseat to “America’s need.” In essence, this is a philosophy of “country before self.”

This idea raises important questions. Why are our individual concerns subordinate to those of the nation? What does it mean for “the nation” to have needs? What is it about a nation that holds a claim on our time and effort?

One argument is that the privilege of living in America should require something in return, that with individual rights come collective duties. As McChrystal puts it:

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OBJECTIVISM

The Undercurrent’s cultural commentary is based on Ayn Rand’s philosophy, Objectivism. Objectivism, which animates Ayn Rand’s fiction, is a systematic philosophy of life. It holds that the universe is orderly and comprehensible, that man survives by reason, that his life and happiness comprise his highest moral purpose, and that he flourishes only in a society that protects his individual rights. In these pages we hope to defend these values. To learn more about the ideas behind them, you can begin by reading Ayn Rand’s books, such as

The Fountainhead and *Atlas Shrugged*, or by visiting AynRand.org.

INTRODUCING THIS ISSUE

Ideas impact everyone. From the small, seemingly insignificant choices we make every day to the biggest issues facing our nation, the ideas we hold as individuals and as a culture serve to direct our actions—for better or worse. But it is arguably the young who have the most at stake, because they're still in the process of forming their view of life and have a lifetime to benefit (or suffer) from the conclusions they reach.

Yet navigating the world of ideas seems increasingly challenging. In past eras, the normal concerns of growing up consisted of learning a trade, entering into a lifetime of manual labor, and earning enough to support a family—the idea of a “world of opportunity” was often a foreign concept. Today, the gains of modernization have created a world with far more possible avenues and outcomes. Adolescents are faced not only with a daunting array of career options, but also a wide range of intellectual issues to digest—all in addition to the standard challenges of life.

In this issue, we examine several topics and offer a clarifying perspective that can help in navigating the sometimes overwhelming world of ideas.

For example, college is often thought of as a rite of passage into adulthood and a final step to self-sufficiency. Yet record numbers of students are failing once they arrive, or floundering after they leave—despite the fact that going to college is perhaps the most prepared-for event in our young lives. We argue that what's needed is a fundamental reexamination of the way we view the value of college both as individuals and as a culture. (See Noah Stahl's “College, Because They Said So”).

If it's common wisdom to “be successful,” so is the idea that we should dedicate ourselves to “national service”, in which we put our individual concerns on hold to work for the benefit of the community. This presents a paradox: parents, teachers, and leaders seemingly encourage us to do what's best for ourselves, while simultaneously stressing the need to do what's best for others. We argue that self-interest is legitimate and moral, and that one's individual aspirations should never be sacrificed on altruistic grounds. (See Jonathan Akin's “Self Before Country”).

Despite facing these basic questions, young people also find themselves in the middle of a wider struggle over their educational system. Economic conditions have created strains on budgets and prompted rethinking of national priorities. We argue that education should be thought of instead as an *individual* priority, one best left to the decisions of consumers in a free market. (See Alexander Hrin's “Let the Free Market Guide Choices in Higher Education”).

In addition to finding themselves in the spotlight as budgetary burdens, the young are also constantly reminded of their alleged burden on the planet, and taught that “green” energy sources like solar power are the solution to a prosperous future. We argue that such proposals are rooted in thinking that is counter to the foundation of prosperity. (See Alexander Hrin's “Solar Energy: A Path to Prosperity?”).

Even as one tries to weigh the merit of conflicting viewpoints in these debates, we also hear that there is a problem with conflict itself: the intellectual climate is too “polarized”, critics say. They argue that the solution in any disagreement is not to determine who's right, but to somehow find a middle ground. We argue that this approach can't lead to solutions, because “polarization” is exactly what's needed to clarify the basic questions involved. (See Valery Publius' “To Cultivate Civil Discourse, Encourage Intellectual ‘Polarization’”).

None of these issues is simple—each requires careful thought. With all that competes for our attention, this can be a difficult task. But the benefits of clearer thinking and objectivity far outweigh the effort required to achieve them.

We invite you to join us in this effort.

THE UNDERCURRENT

The Undercurrent is a campus newspaper. It is written for and distributed by college students at campuses across North America. All inquiries regarding contributing, distributing, and advertising should be directed to contact@the-undercurrent.info. For more information on *The Undercurrent*, back issues, additional resources, and further commentary, visit our website at www.the-undercurrent.info.

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SELF BEFORE COUNTRY

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As important as those inalienable rights are, there are also inalienable responsibilities that we must accept and fulfill. Those responsibilities are wider than are often perceived or accepted. Just as we have allowed the term “service member” to apply solely to the military, we have allowed the obligations of citizenship to narrow.

The idea that citizenship involves duties to one’s country has long been considered. In 1967 philosopher Ayn Rand addressed the notion that “rights impose obligations.” She asks:

Obligations, to whom?—and imposed, by whom? Ideologically, that notion is worse than the evil it attempts to justify: it implies that rights are a gift from the state, and that a man has to buy them by offering something (his life) in return. Logically, that notion is a contradiction: since the only proper function of a government is to protect man’s rights, it cannot claim title to his life in exchange for that protection.

In order to establish the first nation in history founded on rights, the American revolutionaries needed to create a society that rejected obligations foisted upon its citizens by popes and kings in the name of duty. They recognized that rights exist to protect life and values, not to extort them, and that we properly enter into obligations by choice, not by birth. The idea of “country before self” rests on a contradiction because rights exist to free us from the burden of unchosen obligations, not to impose them.

Besides, sacrificial obligations are counter to a healthy, wealthy society. Acting on self-interested motives, most Americans are brimming with productive endeavors and passionately chosen values—values borne not out of duty or arbitrary responsibility, but from their importance to the people who pursue them. Going to college, building a career, saving up for a new car, or even watching a movie are rightfully done because they fulfill our individual goals and desires. And yet, these personal endeavors very often have a positive and wider impact. We need not justify pursuing our values by the benefit they confer on others, but these actions frequently do benefit others.

Many believe that a culture of people seeking their own interests is characterized by neglect and deterioration. But this ignores the enormous and amazing things Americans have accomplished precisely by being the most self-interested people in the history of the world.

Consider the phenomenal success of Apple and the contribution it has brought to the lives of so many Americans. Steve Jobs was not primarily motivated to serve his country or community when transforming Apple into a multi-billion dollar company. Rather, Jobs was interested

in creating innovative and life-enhancing technology—and earning a massive paycheck to boot. And yet, his efforts have created billions of dollars of wealth in the economy, made it possible for millions of Americans to purchase iPods and iPhones, and spawned an entire industry of competitors offering even more choices. Had Jobs sacrificed his vision and instead enlisted in the Peace Corps, much of the technology we take for granted today would have remained a fantasy of science-fiction.

“Acting on self-interested motives, most Americans are brimming with productive endeavors and passionately chosen values—values borne not out of duty or arbitrary responsibility, but from their importance to the people who pursue them.”

Steve Jobs accomplished something on a tremendous scale, but something we are all capable of. One does not need to become a billionaire to pursue one’s happiness and provide value to others in the process. Every day, electricians, soldiers, musicians, and countless others make possible our modern economy and all the relative luxuries it affords. And yet, the most successful among their ranks pursue their careers from personal, self-interested motives—not because they’re willing to toil for decades out of a duty to their nation. Had those millions of passionate individuals renounced their self-interested goals in order to put country first, we’d be missing out on the countless values created through their passion. Those who selfishly pursue their chosen endeavors, not those dedicating themselves to a vague “national service,” are truly responsible for building a thriving country in which we all live richer lives.

Country does not come before self. Our pursuit of happiness is an inalienable right and requires no sacrifice in return—indeed, it’s a contradiction to say that we should sacrifice our happiness to earn our right to pursue it. America thrives as a society of self-interest, not sacrifice. In the end, the greatest service we can do for our nation is the service we do for ourselves.

Jonathan Akin is an undergraduate studying philosophy and the history of math and science at St. John’s College. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

LET THE FREE MARKET GUIDE CHOICES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

President Obama recently took the opportunity to state his vision for the future of American higher education in an article published in several college newspapers. He writes:

So we are making college more affordable, gearing the education you receive to the demands of a global economy, and taking steps to lift graduation rates. Because this is how we'll retake the lead in producing college graduates. This is how we'll help students like you to fulfill your dreams.

Of course, the "we" in this statement refers to bureaucrats or perhaps an "education czar." Obama is echoing a widespread sentiment that education is a service provided by the government. To most, it doesn't seem particularly controversial that the government should "administer student loans," make "loan repayments more manageable," and "develop, implement and evaluate new approaches to improving college success and completion." Indeed, the government already exerts wide-ranging control over all these aspects of higher education.

But is this the purpose of government? Should our bureaucrats be in control of educational funding? Should they be inventing and implementing programs to optimize graduation rates? There's a basic problem with the government performing this role: the government is fundamentally an institution of force, which is legitimately used to defend citizens from crooks, invaders and con-men. But beyond these functions, the power of the state becomes an instrument to manipulate freedom. For example, if the government institutes a program to increase the number of college graduates, someone must

be forced to pay for that program. When bureaucrats are put in charge of developing curriculums and funding, students are no longer able to engage in trade within a free marketplace of ideas, presented instead with a distorted educational environment where legal authority and taxpayer funds shape the educational landscape.

Alongside the moral problem of government control of education is a practical problem—when a bureaucrat makes a decision that will be forced on millions of people, he has no way to get it right for all of them. Consider the parallel to the government takeover of healthcare described by physician Paul Hsieh:

This politics of pull has led to individuals being forced to spend their own money on such benefits as in vitro fertilization and chiropractic services regardless of whether they actually want or need such benefits. This makes as much sense as the government deciding that everyone needs "transportation coverage," requiring all individuals to purchase BMWs loaded with all the options, and offering subsidies for those who cannot afford to buy their own. Just as the predictable result of that would be massively increased automobile costs for customers and the government, so the predictable result of the Massachusetts plan has been massively increased costs all around.

The government is no better equipped to decide appropriate levels of higher educational funding, target graduation rates or loan payback procedures. A quality education is something that must be actively created and pursued, not doled out by government favor. It is only a free educational market that can meet the unique needs and myriad challenges that come with delivering a higher education. And it is only individuals, not Washington bureaucrats—no matter how smart—that can properly determine what kind of education will help them fulfill their dreams.

Alexander Hrin completed his Bachelor's in Engineering Physics and Masters in Applied Physics from the Colorado School of Mines. He is currently enrolled in the Biophysics PhD program at the University of Michigan as well as in the third year of the Objectivist Academic Center.



by *Alexander Hrin*



COLLEGE, BECAUSE THEY SAID SO

How the blind emphasis of higher education is undercutting its value



by Noah Stahl

“I almost feel I’ve been lied to.” That’s how recent college graduate Britany Dalberg describes her frustration at not finding a desirable job more than a year after receiving her bachelor’s degree in world religion. Her story is a familiar one for many graduates, who resort to living with parents, finding entry-level jobs to pay rent, applying in

vain to countless listings, all the while facing looming student debt—in Dalberg’s case, \$118,000.

Why “lied to?” Because “our society tells us college is a necessary step; that a whole world of opportunities will open up to us simply because we have a degree.” This is doubtless a widespread belief. From childhood, the importance of college is impressed upon us: our parents set up savings accounts at birth, our teachers stress the value of good grades for college applications, our government siphons billions of taxpayer dollars to subsidize tuition, and our culture insists that a college degree is the gateway to a successful life. These authorities give statistics and arguments to support this claim, many of which are valid: college graduates generally earn higher salaries, experience lower unemployment, attain better health and other social outcomes, and are able to pursue careers grounded predominantly in higher learning.

Yet it’s increasingly clear something is missing from this sacred wisdom. Simply completing four years of courses and obtaining a degree doesn’t often result in easy access to boundless opportunity. Current economic conditions have emphasized this fact, with scores of graduates unable to find the type of jobs they seek, if any job at all. Though today’s economy is an important contributor to the struggles of graduates, the fact remains that even in better times many found themselves second-guessing their college experience and wondering why its ending didn’t match the story they’d always been told.

One might argue that this kind of predicament is a natural result of the naiveté of youth who finally discover what the “real world” is like after leaving the campus bubble. But there’s reason to believe otherwise: there’s something fundamental missing from the college education equation. At the very least, despairing college grads have been misled and misinformed.

Consider first the constant drumbeat by parents, teachers, media, community leaders and even the President about the importance of a college degree. One college advocacy website advises pitching the value of college, not only to students in high school or middle school, but to those in elementary school: “preparation needs to begin all the way down in the primary grades. . . [K]ids should be guided by teachers and

parents to understand the importance of college and to accept it as a real goal that they can fulfill.” Thus, kids find themselves learning about the importance of a distant expectation even while they struggle to learn basic math and the rules of soccer.

The message intensifies in middle school, and by high school, students find that entering college is supposedly the basic goal of their education. Teachers focus on college preparation in their curriculums, “Advanced Placement” classes offer college credit, and counselors encourage students to begin taking college entrance exams as early as freshman year.

Assuming that a young adult does enter college after all (as two thirds do), he likely has no self-developed, independent motivation for having done so. Instead, he finds himself following the path that society has laid before him, completing the “necessary step” in order to receive the promised “world of opportunities.” Indeed, the decision seems so obvious at this point that few bother to think critically and decide for themselves, having begun to agree to the idea before they even had the chance to discover what a college is.

Conventional wisdom says that such uncertainty is to be expected because college is a place for directionless youth to find purpose and learn how to think. Yet evidence shows that alarmingly high proportions of students coast through their coursework without tangible benefit. One recent study by the Social Science Research Council of several thousand students found that barely half improved their critical thinking skills in two years of college, and over a third exhibited no gains after four years. And those are the ones who finish: America has the highest college dropout rate in the world, with half of those who start failing to attain their bachelor’s degree.

“Rather than treating college education as something some people decide to do for particular, individual reasons, we’ve come to treat it as something everyone does, by default, for reasons supposedly self-evident.”

Taken together, the picture is distressing: a third-grader instilled with the value of a college education becomes a graduate who is unemployed, underemployed, or unrelatedly-employed with a mountain of debt and a vague sense of being cheated. There are of course many exceptions to this outcome. Some do reach college with purpose and excitement about building the foundation for their chosen career. Others begin aimlessly but find direction along

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the way. Some find that their degree does directly open up opportunity in their field, and are able to put their new knowledge to use right away (and get paid to do so). But the evidence suggests that such cases are fortunate exceptions to the growing trend of a college system that fails to deliver on its promises.

Consider again the cultural marketing campaign, which claims that if you go to college, you will succeed. If you have a college degree, you will get a good job and be happier and more successful. But there's a crucial question that's rarely answered: how? In effect, the answer given is: somehow.

Clearly, as many have learned, it's not that simple. Yet in effect, the cultural view of college has taken on the quality of a get-rich-quick scheme, an easy ticket to the front of the social and economic line. And like other such schemes, some seem to get rich, so others assume that the scheme works without asking how. Some might be tempted to write off so many cases of waitresses with degrees in world religion or English and say they should've known better than to expect a welcoming job market. To the extent such cases involve blithely viewing college as a shortcut, that criticism is warranted.

But more significant than individual mistakes is the broader trend they represent, and the subtle premise underlying that trend. Observe a parallel between the college boom and the housing boom. As we now know, millions of people bought homes they ultimately couldn't afford. They may have been naïve, but they were also following the conventional wisdom, which tells us that owning a home is the hallmark of a successful life, that it's a universal goal, that the sooner you own one, the better, that it's a quick and easy means to big financial rewards, and fundamentally, that everyone should rightfully be a homeowner, regardless of individual circumstances. The outcome of that thinking is now evident: many people with title to something below face value, a mountain of debt, and a feeling of being cheated. Sound familiar?

The assumptions inherent in both cases—that there's a way to shortcut the process, that a college degree or home ownership is the right goal for everyone, that there's a pre-

scribed path for success in life, and that everyone should legitimately be able to partake, regardless of circumstance—all serve to undercut the crucial value of independence and individualism. College is alleged to be the best thing and the rightful domain of everyone, regardless of their individual attributes. Never mind that many professions are more effectively served by a variety of trade schools. Never mind that countless people go on to become happy and successful without a college degree, or in a field completely unrelated to the one they received. Never mind that a young adult might be better served to work in several fields before finding one

that's actually of interest to him for academic learning. Rather than treating college education as something some people decide to do for particular, individual reasons, we've come to treat it as something everyone does, by default, for reasons supposedly self-evident.

What many students confront when college ends is the jarring realization that they're on their own, and that being proficient on one's own, i.e. being independent in thought and action, is a far more basic requirement of success than possession of a degree. But independent thought and motivation are undermined at every turn in the college trajectory. Children aren't offered higher education as something they should independently choose to value and pursue: they are confronted instead with a series of clichés that don't include critical assessments of pros and cons.

High school students are coached to approach learning not because the courses are personally interesting and significant, but because those courses have currency with anonymous college admissions officers. College students often find little required of them in terms of effort and thought: the inflation of grades and reduction in assigned reading and writing is well-documented. And naturally, graduates find themselves unsure of what they're supposed to do with the title conferred upon them at the end—and hope that society will take care of the opportunity for them.

Without independent motivation, students can't learn much if it at all—something echoed in the aforementioned

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TO CULTIVATE CIVIL DISCOURSE, ENCOURAGE INTELLECTUAL “POLARIZATION”

by Valery Publius

After the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, some left-leaning commentators were quick to suggest that the shooter must have been a right-wing Tea Partier. When this proved to be baseless, they retreated to the allegation that a vague “climate of hate” generated by right-wing political discourse had somehow created conditions encouraging violence.

The charge echoed through the campus media. A variety of columns condemned the “polarization” of political rhetoric. Some dwelled on the use of militaristic metaphors by Sarah Palin (such as her now-infamous map of congressional districts with Giffords’ district behind crosshairs), which could arguably be regarded as insensitive if the metaphors involved were not so widespread and cliché. But the examples that others cite (of right-wing positions on policy) reveal not a concern for sensitivity but a desire to silence legitimate political discourse.

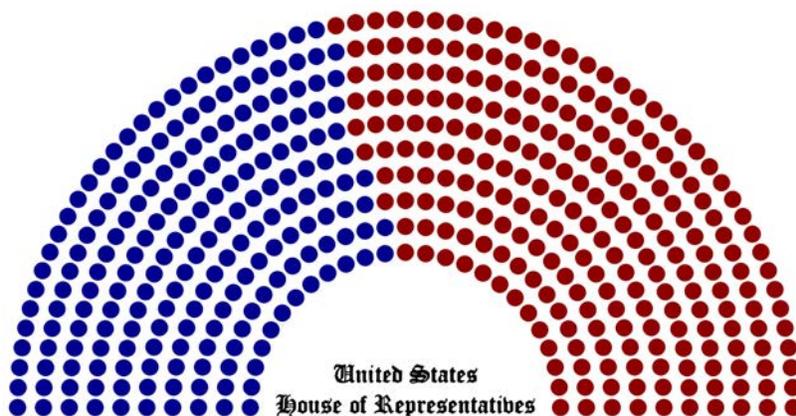
Writing in Vanderbilt’s *Inside Vandy*, for instance, Matt Scarano cites as examples of political “radicalization” the following:

Republicans just took over the Senate on the platform that they will not compromise with Democrats. On the other side of the aisle, President Obama passed a healthcare initiative through regulation that was previously struck down in Congress.

Likewise, Chad Mohammed of the University of Florida’s *Alligator* lists as sources of this polarization most of the political issues dividing left from right:

Over the past couple of years, hot button issues such as immigration and health care reform coupled with a harsh economic climate led to a caustic political environment unseen since the Vietnam War... [T]he lion’s share of [the Republican party] is not inclined to calming the language and refraining from using pejoratives such as “Obamacare”, “anchor baby” and “death panels” in order to rouse their base into a frenzy.

But if this “caustic political environment” results from disagreement about the very issues that lead to the existence



of distinct political parties in the first place, what do these critics want? A country in which nobody disagrees about anything?

Writing in 1971, philosopher Ayn Rand observed that when political disagreement is characterized as “polarizing,” those who make this charge might not want to silence all disagreement, but they

do want to silence important disagreement. “It is principles,” she wrote, “fundamental principles—that they are struggling to eliminate from public discussion.” It is one thing to bicker about the particulars of health care legislation, these critics might claim. But, they say, it is “polarizing” to oppose health care regulation altogether (on principle), on the grounds that it represents government abridgment of individual freedom.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, disagreement about fundamental principles is precisely what we need to encourage “civil discourse,” the absence of which so many critics of today’s political climate lament. Rand’s case for “intellectual polarization” is compelling:

If clear-cut principles, unequivocal definitions and inflexible goals are barred from public discussion, then a speaker or writer has to struggle to hide his meaning (if any) under coils of meaningless generalities and safely popular bromides... He must strive to be misunderstood in the greatest number of ways by the greatest number of people: this is the only way to keep up the pretense of unity.

In its present state, what this country needs above all is the clarifying, reassuring, confidence-and-credibility-inspiring guidance of fundamental principles—i.e., in modern parlance, *intellectual polarization*.

This would bring to our cultural atmosphere an all-but-forgotten quality: honesty, with its corollary, clarity. It would establish the minimum requirement of civilized discourse: that the proponents of ideas strive to make themselves understood and lay all their cards on the table...

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SOLAR ENERGY: A PATH TO PROSPERITY?



by *Alexander Hrin*

In the midst of a prolonged economic recession we hear the cry from all quarters that the most immediate path to recovery and prosperity is through a so-called green economy. “Green” energy, “green” jobs and “green” technologies are touted everywhere, from national publications to college newspapers. Indeed, a recent article in *The Minnesota Daily* by Stephen

Murphy-Logue goes so far to argue that “Solar Energy has the Potential to Turn Minnesota into an Economic Powerhouse.”

In support of his extravagant claim about the economic viability of solar energy, the author mentions a single fact about solar energy: that it is the most abundant form of energy on Earth. Failing to acknowledge the monumental difficulties inherent in photovoltaic energy generation and storage, especially in a state famously devoid of direct sunlight nearly 200 days per year, Murphy-Logue goes on to call for the government to mandate that a certain amount of electricity be produced directly from the sun.

Minnesota has the potential to significantly increase solar energy output in the forthcoming future. Increasing the state’s target for solar electricity—homegrown energy from the sun to power our homes and businesses—will transform Minnesota’s economy, creating good, family-supporting jobs that can’t be outsourced. We need Gov. Mark Dayton and our new Legislature to lead by setting a goal to produce 10 percent of Minnesota’s electricity from the sun by 2030.

The fact is, turning energy from the sun into the kind of power generation required for an industrialized society is extremely difficult. While the amount of energy from the sun is vast, the concentration of such energy is very low, much lower than what is available from fossil fuels. It’s perhaps unsurprising therefore that the solar energy industry largely owes its existence to government mandates, subsidies and other artificial incentives of the kind the author proposes.

How does the fact that solar energy is the most abundant on earth support the claim that it can be used as an endless engine of economic growth? Solar energy’s spectacular failure to compete with fossil fuels precludes it from being an easy ticket to economic prosperity. In every developed country, it was abundant cheap energy that spurred massive production and economic growth. If solar energy were truly the key to making a perpetually cloudy state into an “economic powerhouse,” it wouldn’t need government strings holding it up.

In discussing similar energy mandates imposed by the State of Colorado, Ari Armstrong discusses the old economic fallacies that are being recycled by proponents of a “green” economy.

Corporate welfare does not just fall from the sky. It comes from taxpayers. That money is no longer available to those who earned it to create jobs and support businesses in other sectors. While [Colorado governor] Ritter creates jobs with one hand, he destroys them with the other. The difference is that the jobs Ritter creates serve political interests rather than the interests of consumers.

Consider, as Bastiat might do, the logical absurdities of Ritter’s position. If mandating “new” energy creates jobs, then why stop at 30 percent?



FIND THE IDEAS EXPRESSED IN THIS ISSUE THOUGHT-PROVOKING?

Visit our blog at the-undercurrent.info, where you’ll find much more commentary from *The Undercurrent* authors.

SOLAR ENERGY

continued

Why not 100 percent? Why not expand subsidies 1,000 fold? Why not outlaw all coal, oil and natural gas in Colorado, and force every property owner to install solar panels and windmills? Think of all the new jobs that would require!

As Armstrong points out, any government action taken to promote the use of solar energy must be paid for, and that money necessarily comes from the pockets of American citizens—citizens who would otherwise be able put that money to more productive uses.

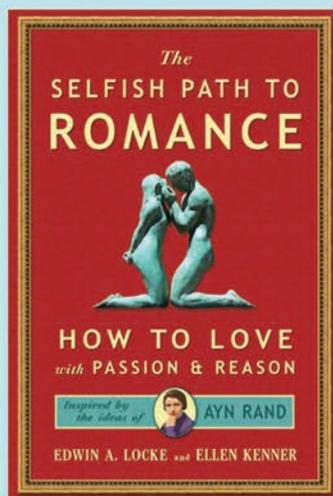
But government cannot achieve prosperity by force-feeding us a green energy paradise. It is a historical fact that the periods of highest material prosperity have only been attained when men were left free to engage in production and trade without interference from the government. But what has happened when governments have attempted to impose their own vision of a prosperous society upon their people? Never have such schemes delivered on their claims of greater production, wealth and happiness, and too often they result in just the opposite. Why should we expect that government mandated “solar prosperity” would be any different?

Prosperity does not result from any particular policy, technology, or institution. Ultimately, everything that makes a society prosperous has a single source: freedom.

Technological engines of prosperity like gasoline, electric lighting and personal computers can be created only by individuals free to act on their own judgment. Laws mandating the use of solar energy do just the opposite by removing individual judgment from the equation and substituting the will of bureaucrats. In effect, these mandates make people act against their own judgment—otherwise such laws would not be required. Once the laws are in place, producers shift their efforts into finding the least painful ways of jumping through onerous government hoops, rather than to finding new ways to produce more effectively.

That laws are required in order to implement solar energy reveals not only the economic impotence of the idea, but also the injustice inherent in overriding the judgment of those who produce and consume energy. The premise that we can be forced into prosperity against our better judgment fails to grasp that it is precisely our independent judgment that makes prosperity possible.

Alexander Hrin completed his Bachelor's in Engineering Physics and Masters in Applied Physics from the Colorado School of Mines. He is currently enrolled in the Biophysics PhD program, University of Michigan as well as in the third year of the Objectivist Academic Center.



THE SELFISH PATH TO ROMANCE

HOW TO LOVE WITH PASSION & REASON

by Dr. Edwin A. Locke and
Dr. Ellen Kenner is now available

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JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING MOST OF US HAVE LEARNED ABOUT HOW TO FIND LOVE IS WRONG.

That's the premise of *The Selfish Path to Romance*. Love is not about sacrifice. Real, lasting romance comes when you are certain about your self, your needs, and your worth.

Authors Dr. Edwin Locke and Dr. Ellen Kenner are inspired by the work of philosopher and novelist Ayn Rand. Their book explores Ayn Rand's belief that the assertion of your own needs and values is the foundation of love.

The book offers a no-nonsense, rational alternative for those who are serious about finding and sustaining a lifetime romance.

COLLEGE

continued from page 6

studies. The sheer number of college graduates with four-year degrees is dramatically increasing, rising in a few decades from barely 5% of the population to almost a third. Yet more and more, the graduates are not budding writers, engineers, psychologists, or teachers—they're people with degrees in writing, engineering, psychology, or teaching hoping for the opportunity to somehow become the real thing.

This is lamentable, not merely for the stories of economic hardship, but because a higher education can be such a tremendous value. That our culture encourages it so blindly is a disservice to all involved, from those misled and destined for failure to those who succeed but without the full benefit they could have received.

This doesn't have to happen. We can reclaim and realize the full value of higher education if we start with a fundamental reexamination of our cultural approach to college. Teachers should focus on instilling knowledge and independent thought, not tunnel vision towards college entrance. Government should stop pouring billions of taxpayer dollars into the hands of students who aren't sure why they're being given the money or what to do with it. Parents should allow their children to develop interests and academic pursuits independently, rather than as a parental mandate. Students, most importantly, should examine their own motivation for pursuing a higher education, think critically about where they want it to take them, and work to integrate that goal with the actual learning in which they are paying to engage.

Taken together, such changes could begin to bring about a shift in the character of higher education: towards students more aware of the nature and purpose of their efforts, more passionate about learning, and better equipped to seek, seize, and create the kind of opportunities they desire.

Noah Stahl received his BS in Computer Engineering and MS in Information Assurance from Iowa State University. He currently works as an information security engineer in Tampa, Florida.

“POLARIZATION”

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If today's political climate is distasteful, it is not because of too much “polarization,” but because of too little of the right kind. What passes for political debate today is usually nothing better than a series of personality attacks, charges and countercharges of hypocrisy, and endless appeals to emotion. What more can we expect when today's politicians scrupulously avoid naming their position on the fundamental question of politics: whether government exists to protect the rights of the individual or to promote the alleged interests of “society.”

Instead of debating which if any political party a deranged shooter might have been inspired by, we should be debating which if any political party is right, and more importantly, what is the correct answer to that fundamental question? To demonstrate why persuasion and not violence is the proper way to transform society, we must rededicate ourselves to exemplifying political persuasion in its purest and most fundamental form: philosophical argumentation.

Valery Publius is a teacher living in the American South.

CAMPUS CLUBS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

These organizations hold regular meetings and events discussing and debating Objectivism and its applications.

ALABAMA

University of Alabama
Objectivist Club
irmorales@bama.ua.edu

ARIZONA

Fountain Hills Objectivist Club
graffhyrum@gmail.com

ARKANSAS

University of Arkansas
Objectivist Association
jpanders@uark.edu

CALIFORNIA

Golden Gate Objectivists
(San Francisco Bay Area)
goldengateobjectivists@yahoo.com
goldengateobjectivists.com

Stanford University Objectivists
dakinsloss@gmail.com

University of Southern California
Objectivist Club
info@uscobjectivists.com

UCLA: LOGIC
arthur@clublogic.org
www.clublogic.org

UC Berkeley Objectivist Club
berkeleyobjectivists@gmail.com

UC Irvine Objectivist Club
shovelcharge88@yahoo.com

UC Santa Barbara
Objectivist Club
emiliano.noriegapetti@
hotmail.com

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Objectivism
Discussion Group (Southbury)
aaron.n.turner@gmail.com

Yale University Objectivist Club
helen.rittelmeyer@yale.edu

COLORADO

Front Range Objectivism (Denver)
fro@frontrangeobjectivism.com
www.frontrangeobjectivism.com

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DC Objectivist Salon (DCOS)
contact@dcobjectivistsalon.org
www.meetup.com/DC-Objectivist-
Salon

American University Objectivist
Society
aobjectivists@gmail.com

FLORIDA

Canterbury School Objectivist
Society (Fort Myers)
seanja@autoinstore.com

Students of Objectivism of FGCU
bwasicsko@gmail.com

Florida International University
Objectivist Club
objectivism2010@aol.com

Objectivist Society at Florida State
University - Tallahassee
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South West Florida Objectivists
(SWFO), Sarasota to Marco
Island, FL
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GEORGIA

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Think Tank
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(SC, NC, and Georgia)
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University of Georgia
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HAWAII

Reason Club at Hawaii Pacific
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radical_individualist@hotmail.com

IDAHO

Idaho State University Objectivist
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Columbia College
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Society for Objectivist Studies
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Minnesota Objectivist Association
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MISSOURI

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UCM Objectivist Club
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University of Central Missouri
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Columbia Objectivist Society:
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Fordham University
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CAMPUS CLUBS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS, CONT'D

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West Islip High School
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Cornell University
Objectivist Club
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SUNY Albany Objectivist Club
rb372275@albany.edu

RIT Objectivist Society
adam@flyleaf.us

NORTH CAROLINA

New South Objectivists
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Chapel Hill Objectivist Forum
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Students of Ayn Rand
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OHIO

Ohio Objectivist Society
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University of Cincinnati
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RHODE ISLAND

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TEXAS

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Rice University Objectivism Club
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South Texas Ayn Rand Society
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UT Austin Objectivist Society
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UTAH

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www.stevens.net
netevent&articlelist.html

University of Calgary
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University of Toronto
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OTHER

ORGANIZATIONS OF INTEREST

Ayn Rand Institute (ARI)
Purpose: To advance Objectivism
in the culture
www.aynrand.org

Ayn Rand Center (ARC)
Purpose: To conduct Objectivism-
based media and political outreach
www.aynrandcenter.org

Ayn Rand Lexicon
Purpose: Free online mini-
encyclopedia of Ayn Rand's
thought
www.aynrandlexicon.com

Americans for Free Choice in
Medicine (AFCM)
Purpose: To advocate for free
market health care
www.afcm.org

Anthem Foundation for
Objectivist Scholarship
Purpose: To provide grants to
academic professionals engaged
in serious, scholarly study of the
philosophy and writings of
Ayn Rand
www.anthemfoundation.org

Capitalism Magazine
Purpose: Online political magazine
www.capmag.com

Coalition for Secular Government
Purpose: To advocate for the full
separation of Church and State
www.seculargovernment.us

Clemson Institute for the Study of
Capitalism
Purpose: To encourage
scholarship exploring the moral,
legal, constitutional, political,
and economic foundations of
capitalism
www.business.clemson.edu

Free Agriculture Restore Markets
(FARM)
Purpose: To advocate for
agricultural and health policies
based on individual rights
www.fa-rm.org

Freedom and Individual Rights in
Medicine (FIRM)
Purpose: To advocate for freedom
and individual rights in medicine
www.westandfirm.org

Objectivist Clubs Network
Purpose: To help Objectivist Club
leaders be maximally effective
www.oclubs.org

The Association for Objective Law
(TAFOL)
Purpose: To advocate for
Objectivism as the proper basis for
the U.S. legal system
www.tafol.orgindex.html

The Lucidicus Project
Purpose: To encourage those
entering the medical profession to
examine the moral foundations of
capitalism
www.lucidicus.org

The Objective Standard
Purpose: A journal of culture
and politics that publishes essays
informed by Objectivism
www.theobjectivestandard.com