

The Undercurrent

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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

FROM "YES WE CAN!" TO "WHY BOTHER?"

Rescuing Idealism from Today's Political Cynics

by Valery Publius

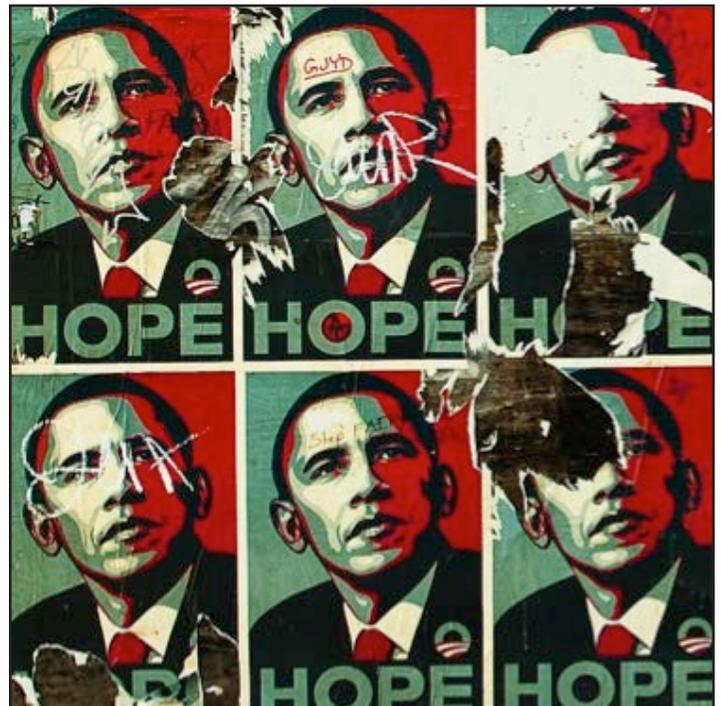
Barack Obama energized an entire generation of young people in 2008 with his declaration, "Yes we can!" "HOPE," "PROGRESS" and "CHANGE" emblazoned the iconic red and blue posters portraying the confident young Obama gazing optimistically into the future.

But as those posters began to fade in 2010, young people began to lose their Obama-fueled hope. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, the national youth voter turnout plummeted from 49% in 2008—a record-breaking figure—to a mere 21% in 2010. Traditionally, congressional midterm elections have lower turnout among all sectors of the electorate, but the 2010 youth turnout was even lower than that in 2006 (24%).

Many of the young people who voted Obama into office now appear complacent about the Republican victory and reluctantly accept the President's move towards pragmatic compromise with his opponents. Obama's pragmatism first sparked discussion after his decision to abandon the "public option" during the debate over health care regulation, and became especially noteworthy in December, when he chose to sign legislation extending the Bush-era tax cuts, abandoning his campaign promise to "spread the wealth around."

Some in the college media have bemoaned Obama's compromise, but complacency has been the norm. Michael Rietmulder, writing in *The Minnesota Daily*, claimed that "effective governance is going to come by means of compromise and sacrifice, requiring lawmakers to acknowledge that not every aspect of their agenda is attainable." Even before the election, Leo Schwartz and Jesse Michels of the *Columbia Spectator* agreed:

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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.

THE UNDERCURRENT

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INTRODUCING THIS ISSUE

Perhaps more so today than in recent memory, many people are acutely aware of the difficult challenges we face both as individuals and as a nation. This somber reality is impossible to ignore: millions of people can't find jobs, thousands of companies encounter obstacles to expansion and can't afford to hire, energy prices steadily rise, deficit spending and national debt loom large, and Islamic terrorists remain vigilant in their war against Americans and the West. These and many other subjects receive constant attention from government and business leaders, media commentators, and everyday Americans gathering around newspaper stands and water coolers.

Yet despite this apparently sober examination of the world around us, there's much evidence that there remains a nationwide reluctance to face the deeper facts at hand. As much as Americans don't like what they see on the surface of things, they remain hesitant to dig deeper, to seek the underlying causes of worrying trends, to identify the fundamental principles at work—and to stake a claim on the proper way forward.

In this issue, we present and examine several examples of this paradox and argue that only a deeper, more fundamental perspective can clarify what's at stake and why conventional wisdom can't work, even if we want it to.

For example, many Americans say it's time to have an "adult conversation" about unsustainable government spending and debt—yet they remain committed to the moral and political ideals that necessitate and motivate that spending. (See Noah Stahl's "Out with Denial, in with Adult Conversation?")

Most Americans blithely accept the viability of "green energy" and support government efforts to push alternative technology development through intervention in energy research and production—yet they fail to consider the nature of innovation and defend its essential ingredient: freedom from government coercion. (See Alexander Hrin's "Green Policies Poison Innovation.")

The public is horrified at the violent wave of drug-related crime in Mexico and the southwest—yet they avoid contemplating the possibility that the very existence of such crime is caused by the prohibition of drugs, which they almost unanimously accept. (See Amber Chambers' "Prohibition Déjà vu.")

Much of America's youth voiced their enthusiastic support for President Obama's idealistic vision during the 2008 campaign—yet only two years later, they attend rallies denouncing allegedly over-idealistic politicians and barely muster the energy to cast a vote in a crucial election. (See Valery Publius' "From 'Yes we can!' to 'Why bother?'")

In all of these cases and more, what's required, more than any complex analysis or clever policy proposal, is this: a willingness to think. One might point to the constant media analysis and political debate, and argue that it represents thoughtful dialogue. But too often, such dialogue is superficial and the thinking artificially constrained: people impose limits on what they're willing to consider, and designate uncomfortable facts and conclusions as mentally off-limits.

Most people agree that thinking is needed to solve our problems and achieve our goals. But taking problems seriously requires taking ideas seriously, which means honest inquiry with a determination to discover the truth, even if that truth isn't immediately satisfying or uncontroversial.

We hope you find this issue helpful toward that end, and welcome you to join us in thinking our way to a better world.

PROHIBITION DÉJÀ VU



by *A. Chambers*

On August 19 *The Wall Street Journal* reported that serious organized crime had spread to one of the most affluent, secure business communities in Mexico. Drug gangs blocked streets, murdered individuals, and kidnapped the mayor of Monterrey—who was later found dead.

A similar event occurred in America in February of 1929: Americans woke to the news that on the morning of Saint Valentine's Day, bootlegging mobsters had lined up six members of a competing gang along with an innocent garage worker and shot them with rifles and Tommy guns.

What these events share in common is prohibition. In America, the passage of the 18th Amendment was greeted with cheers for its supposed ending of alcohol as a cause of crime, poverty, and family violence. Evangelist Billy Sunday said, "You [alcohol] were God's worst enemy. You were Hell's best friend...The reign of tears is over," while President Herbert Hoover called alcohol prohibition the 'Noble Experiment.' Similar statements could be heard from individuals regarding the United States' prohibition of drugs, which began as early as 1914 and which now requires enforcement by a permanent Cabinet level position in government.

However, the amount of violence related to drugs and alcohol does not lessen but escalates under prohibition. Alcohol prohibition set off the exponential growth of organized crime. In 1927 alone Al Capone's gang took in over \$60 million and killed hundreds of people. Currently, Honduras—with similar statistics to Mexico—has an estimated 8-10 murders a day, 70% of which are drug related. The Mexican drug cartels have as many as 100,000 active personnel and frequently infiltrate law enforcement departments. Over 70% of U.S. inmates are in state and federal prisons as a result of a drug crime. If prohibition is supposed to make us safer, why are these numbers so high?

The crime regarding the use and sale of drugs increases because prohibition of a substance does not actually make anyone safe. Prohibiting drugs does not erase their demand. It simply bans their production, sales, distribution, and consumption, removing the rule of law from any transactions involving the substance, thus forcing the product onto the black market—a realm with no rules except that of cutthroat anarchy. Contracts are void, markets are governed solely by force, and deals are

upheld at the point of a gun. Since anything is permitted outside the law, the blackest criminal wins in a black market—he will be the most ruthless at crushing those who oppose him.

During the months that followed the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, as the event came to be known, Americans understood the prohibition was not working. The problem of organized crime and its violence was finally understood to be the illegality of alcohol. Not that those gangsters would have been upright citizens otherwise, but formerly their activities were limited to crimes like theft and fraud. The prohibition of alcohol gave them a huge new market, by placing alcohol's production, use, makers, users, and distributors outside the realm of justice—outside the law.

Ending prohibition worked to curtail violence in the 20s because it recognized Americans' right to buy and sell alcohol, taking the market out of the hands of criminals and placing it back into legal, government-protected transactions. Today, violence from the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcohol is non-existent. Immediately following the ratification of the 21st Amendment, lawful businessmen again entered the market and mobsters lost their potency. Brewers in St. Louis began production again, putting thousands of people back to work at the Anheuser-Busch plants. Instead of buying alcohol from gangsters, people could again buy alcohol from legitimate businesses. Distributors no longer had to worry about crossing their mobster suppliers and could instead choose between reputable companies who would deal with them without force.

Once again the solution to the current violence in Mexico and the US is to end drug prohibition and restore Americans' rights to produce and purchase what products they see fit. The markets, transporters, and buyers of alcohol can seek legal protection when a contract is violated, a product is faulty, or they're threatened with blackmail. Similar to the process of legalization following the 21st amendment, companies like Marlboro might begin production of marijuana cigarettes, employing individuals in honest labor and dealing openly, without violence and under the protection of the law. Only by returning the sale of drugs to the province of legal trade, thus upholding individual rights, can we eliminate the crime inherent in unnecessary black markets.

A. Chambers has worked with The Undercurrent since 2008. She earned a bachelor degree in psychology and enjoys a good martini.

“GREEN” POLICIES POISON INNOVATION

How government “encouragement” undermines technological development



by *Alexander Hrin*

In recent years, “green energy” has become a major hot-button issue. Advocates argue that the inevitability of global climate change caused by carbon emissions, an end to our “addiction” to fossil fuels and the need for renewable forms of energy all necessitate increased research and development

in alternative energy technologies. Government programs to develop green energy include taxes, subsidies and regulation of everything from consumer products to the production and use of fossil fuels. Taken together, these programs represent an attempt to engineer massive changes in the landscape of energy production and the way we consume it, at a cost of billions. Given the struggling economy, these facts demand a closer look.

The first fact to consider is one that many alternative energy advocates seldom deny: in terms of abundance, accessibility and power output, most alternatives are vastly inferior to currently available fossil fuels. Far from being free, solar and wind energy face myriad challenges that prevent their wide-scale application to national power generation. An area the size of the state of Utah would need to be covered with photovoltaic panels in order to satisfy energy consumption in the United States, not to mention the challenges of high-efficiency power transmission, maintenance, and power generation on cloudy days. In areas of Europe, where wind constitutes a significant fraction of total energy production, changing air currents have played havoc with power grids, sometimes leaving large areas without power on calm days.

Many environmentalists actually view such shortcomings as virtues of green energy—in contrast with inexpensive and readily-available fossil fuels. In the words prominent environmentalist Paul Ehrlich, “Giving society cheap, abundant energy ... would be the equivalent of giving an idiot child a machine gun.” For those that agree with this view (or have accepted the “green guilt” that it teaches), reliance upon inferior energy sources would force mankind into a more meager existence with a reduced impact on an otherwise-pristine Earth. Fundamentally, this viewpoint stands against human happiness and progress, characterizing the wonders of industrial civilization—light bulbs, automobiles, cell phones, industrial agriculture and

personal computers—as part of a destructive “footprint” to be minimized, rather than an achievement to be embraced.

That said, let us grant alternative energy advocates the benefit of the doubt and suppose that they do want human life to flourish. Assuming alternative energy holds some potential to that end, the question remains: Can government policies make green energy a viable benefit to our lives?

After all, government is the dominant force in alternative energy development today. It creates tax credits for installing solar panels and driving hybrid vehicles, subsidies for start-up companies dedicated to generating solar power, and billion-dollar initiatives aimed at developing hydrogen fuels and electric vehicles. It imposes laws to restrict the ability of individuals and companies to produce carbon dioxide, declares carbon dioxide a pollutant, and may soon require that a certain percentage of energy come from renewable sources. Through the use of these contrived, state-funded carrot-and-stick mechanisms, bureaucrats have attempted to steer energy research in what they have deemed to be the right direction.

But government involvement in the development of energy technologies has not driven an energy revolution; wind and solar continue to fall well short of generating the electricity needed in an industrialized nation, and after decades of development the effective range of electric vehicles still remains limited to a modest fifty miles under electrical power. In all of the government-driven research areas, we’re still waiting for technologies and energy sources approaching what’s available in the form of gasoline and coal-fired power plants.

There’s no denying that current researchers face a number of difficult challenges. But it’s instructive to consider the contrast between the current pace of alternative energy research and the amazing developments in the early history of the petroleum industry. Technological advances too numerous to count included the use of kerosene as a lighting source, improved extraction and refinement techniques to increase the yields of usable petroleum products, and the creation of dozens of products like jet fuel and plastic water bottles. None of these achievements depended on government incentives. There was no tax on whale oil to force the move to kerosene, no government



subsidies to research pipelines and no government agency to investigate the viability of developing new technologies from crude oil. The early petroleum industry was able to achieve so much because the best producers in the world were free to pursue what they judged to be the best methods.

But, as in virtually every other area of production in the last century, politicians intervened. They imposed new laws and regulations constraining the choices open to petroleum producers. Today, a complex array of rules—including drilling restrictions and environmental regulations—has stifled the innovative spirit of the early petroleum industry. Few new refineries are built, and we extract relatively little oil domestically despite vast proven reserves. Government permission is required to drill new oil wells, and rare mistakes like the recent Gulf oil spill are punished with arbitrary long-term bans on drilling. The end result of decades of government edicts has not been a more creative, productive oil industry, but rather one in which all innovations are centered on finding ways to produce in spite of arbitrary government restrictions.

Even in the areas that government allegedly promotes innovation, any actual implementation of innovative solutions is subject to the consent of lawmakers, regulators and special interest groups. Companies wanting to develop solar energy in the deserts of California are routinely blocked by environmental groups applying

political pressure to preserve the area for “study.” Efforts to construct wind farms off the coast of Massachusetts have been stymied by layers of government permission-seeking well before the first turbine can produce a single watt. Even products as simple as solar panels for private homes are subject to government approval before they can be used to supplement domestic energy consumption.

On a larger scale, the changing of political leadership can result in dramatic shifts in focus from one area of energy research to another. With the election of the Obama administration there was a parallel shift in government funding from hydrogen-based towards electric/hybrid cars. In the words of Energy Secretary Stephen Chu when announcing massive cuts to the government’s hydrogen vehicle initiative, “We asked ourselves, ‘Is it likely in the next 10 or 15, 20 years that we will convert to a hydrogen car economy?’ The answer, we felt, was ‘no.’” When support for technology development is subject to the changing winds of political opinion, it becomes much more difficult for entrepreneurs to sustain any long-term innovative push.

Government intervention in the energy market, whether in the form of subsidies, taxes, or regulatory “oversight,” creates artificial uncertainty for producers and innovators. Why expand refinement capacity over several decades when the EPA might pass carbon restrictions next year?

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"WHY BOTHER?"

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"Americans, and specifically young Americans, have unrealistic expectations. . . . Even if Obama had all the answers, he never would've been able to turn all these ideas into concrete laws."

Why have the President and a generation of his supporters gone so quickly from "Yes we can!" to "Why bother?"

One explanation might be that nobody wants to fight a losing battle for long. Obama had his chance. He implemented significant elements of his agenda (notably, major new health care regulations) but met with stiff opposition. Certainly many Democrats were demoralized by the opposition and lost interest in fighting it.

But why were Democrats so easily demoralized? Obama was not elected primarily because of his concrete policy proposals, but because of the idealistic moral passion he projected during his campaign. Ordinarily, fervent commitment to moral ideals does not fade so quickly. Had Democrats been more motivated, they could have turned out in greater numbers and overcome Republican opposition.

Perhaps Democrats were so easily demoralized because their commitment to the President's ideals was never very serious to begin with.

When Tea Parties began to challenge Obama's vision of "progress" and label it as socialistic, his defenders reacted with sarcastic contempt. One piece in *The New York Times* characterized the charge as dropping the "S-bomb," or "whacking the S-beast." How unhip, they seemed to suggest, for anyone to think that a politician today would support such an "extreme" ideology—or any principled ideology at all. Asked to characterize his political philosophy in a word, Obama jumped aboard the anti-ideology bandwagon by responding, "No, I'm not going to engage in that."

The same attitude was on display at the October "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear," billed by organizers Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert as appealing to Americans who reject "extremism" on either side of the political spectrum. In his closing speech, Stewart criticized anyone who would "polarize" political discussion in America, and celebrated those who accomplished "impossible things, every day" by virtue of "the little, reasonable compromises we all make."

More recently, a thousand people in New York attended the founding meeting of "No Labels," an organization dedicated to putting aside political affiliations in order to "work together and find practical solutions to our nation's problems." Echoing Stewart, No Labels proclaimed that "ideological extremism . . . [is] toxic and destructive to creating a space where the best ideas can be found and enacted."

Many Americans, then, are jaded about the very idea of political ideology. They view ideology as "toxic" or, if they're like Stewart or Colbert, downright laughable. They regard it as toxic because they believe it encourages dogmatism, "inflexibility," and "divisiveness."

What is ideology? It is simply an organized set of ideas or beliefs, a basic point of view, a set of philosophical principles offering answers to life's major questions. Consider one example: if you think that slavery is evil and freedom is good, you have the seeds of a political ideology. If you think that an individual's secure possession of property is good and theft is evil, this is another seed. If you then understand that what unites these two positions is a commitment to an individual's right to a life free from interference by others, you have a political ideology in full bloom.

If you openly advocate this ideology, you will necessarily be "polarized" from and in conflict with those who advocate its opposite. The American Civil War was nothing if not an ideological conflict. Ideology led some Americans to evaluate slavery as evil, and to pursue abolition (and even war) with idealistic passion. Were abolitionists being too "extreme"? Were they "inflexible" and "divisive" to treat their opponents as evil? If the answer to both questions is yes, we should wonder if these concepts can be used meaningfully to criticize.

Fortunately, the debate about slavery has long been settled. But serious struggles over political principles remain. Obama's pragmatism may be growing, but there is no question that Democrats' principles push them in the direction of increased government control over our economic lives. Many Americans, by contrast, believe that a principled commitment to individual freedom implies a commitment to economic freedom, a value that Obama's policies threaten.

We cannot escape the questions of principle that underlie current debates. Does freedom include economic freedom, or not? Do individuals have inalienable rights, or not? Must individuals sacrifice for the "greater good," or not? Answering these questions means thinking about ideology.

There is no reason to think that Americans today can "work together and find practical solutions to our nation's problems" without ideology, i.e. without reference to basic principles. We cannot cure a disease without identifying its underlying causes. And if we face economic stagnation, we cannot eliminate it without identifying its underlying causes or the fundamental basis of long-term economic prosperity. A genuine commitment to principles doesn't involve unthinking dogmatism. Rather, it requires observing the evidence and thinking clearly to identify the underlying causes.

Not only in politics, but in life in general, we all rely on principles even if we don't realize it and even if we don't form or apply them consistently. As the philosopher

Ayn Rand observed, “You have no choice about the necessity to integrate your observations, your experiences, your knowledge into abstract ideas, i.e., into principles. Your only choice is whether these principles are true or false, whether they represent your conscious, rational convictions—or a grab-bag of notions snatched at random, whose sources, validity, context and consequences you do not know, notions which, more often than not, you would drop like a hot potato if you knew.”

If we must choose our principles, which should we pick? Which are rational, true, and effective in life? We cannot begin to answer these questions even about political principles, let alone others, in the space of this column. But if so many Americans dropped their devotion to Obama’s ideals so quickly, there is reason to think that they had begun to realize the meaning and consequences of his ideology. Obama’s ambition to extend the role of government in every aspect of the economy had become increasingly clear. If Americans dropped this ideological hot potato so quickly, was it because it was “too idealistic”? Or was it a reaction to the nature of the ideals themselves?

Sadly, too many Americans would rather follow Jon Stewart’s example of political cynicism than do the difficult mental work of formulating and advocating clear principles. Today’s political trend reflects, perhaps, a broader cultural phenomenon. More and more, the symbol of our age has become the modern-day hipsters,

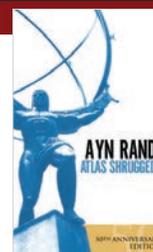
who proclaim their ideal of opposing consumerism and materialism, but who can’t live without their American Apparel or iPhones. It’s alright to compromise like this, they think, provided that they embrace materialism ironically. And so we see the proliferation of kitschy eyewear, 1970s mustaches, Aston Kutcher trucker hats—and TV opinion programs masquerading as comedy.

Whatever ideology and ideals we decide to live by, we should take them seriously. Irony is good for comedy, and comedy is the spice of life—but it is only the spice. Life is too important an adventure to be viewed with ironic distance.

To live life seriously, we need ideas, and to understand our ideas we need ideology. Ideology integrates our ideas in a way that helps us see what it means to take them seriously—the essence of idealism. As Americans lament ideology, they undermine their capacity for idealism and allow a discouraged cynicism to take its place.

Can we take ideas seriously? Yes we can—and must.

Valery Publius is a teacher living in the American South.



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OUT WITH DENIAL, IN WITH ADULT CONVERSATION?

Have Americans actually changed their minds about government spending?



by Noah Stahl

A Federal commission recently concluded its work on a proposal to address the nation's skyrocketing national debt. That debt is the subject of much renewed attention, and is growing at an unsustainable pace which, like reckless credit card use, promises certain and serious economic consequences in the years ahead.

Nevertheless, the appointed commissioners remained hopeful, declaring that "the era of deficit denial is over," despite the narrow defeat of their proposal when put to a vote. Meanwhile, many politicians and commentators praised the newfound willingness of the nation to have an "adult conversation" about the problem with government spending. Commentator David Brooks has argued that

there is more willingness to face the realities of such issues now than in the past decade.

At first glance, this seems plausible: the attention devoted to reducing the deficit and the warnings of impending consequences suggest that Americans have indeed mentally shifted toward action that in the recent past would have been eagerly put aside for another day, or ignored altogether. So, is something different now? Has America sobered up and resolved itself to contemplate and address what it has been blithely ignoring for decades?

There's good reason to think not: there's something vaguely unserious and hypocritical about such a sudden willingness to "face the facts." It's not simply the relative abruptness, but more importantly the nature of the message. Consider the oft-repeated metaphor of "adult conversation," which Republicans have used to urge dialog aimed at reducing government spending. It suggests an

analogy to parents sitting down with their college-aged son who has naively buried himself in credit card debt. The parents explain the dangerous long-term financial consequences of the behavior, and argue that the prudent decision is to decrease spending and pay off the loans.

On its face, this appears to be a sensible analogy. But there's a critical omission: government spending isn't the result of naïve or whimsical financial mistakes. The halls of Congress and the federal buildings in Washington are full of economists, accountants, and other financial experts employed solely to construct and fund enormously complex organizations that implement the requirements of legislation drafted in committees, voted on by hundreds of elected officials, and signed by the President. Despite its reputation for impulsiveness, government spending is highly calculated: it is done for specific reasons justified by specific arguments supported by specific ideas and values.

Which values underpin today's government spending? A glance at a pie chart of the federal budget reveals that over 40% (well over a trillion dollars a year) is spent on just three programs: Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Many billions more are spent on unemployment benefits, aid to businesses in the form of "stimulus" money, educational subsidies, food stamps, and a myriad of other so-called "entitlement" programs. Thus, the majority of government spending takes the form of personal financial handouts for things like health care, food, school, housing, unemployment, and other living expenses.

What is similar between this spending and the expenses familiar to parents who support financially-dependent children? The government has increasingly been charged with the duty of providing a "safety net" for Americans: like parents, it has pledged to provide the nation with food, doctor visits, housing, school tuition and savings accounts. But parents raise their children to become independent adults. Do government welfare programs?

A core value at the heart of today's government spending is the idea that the role of the state is to provide for the citizens' daily needs. Why? Because, it is argued, it's the right thing to do. At the heart of government expansion and spending is a moral question: what should the government do, what is its purpose? The predominant answer today is: to provide for those in need – whether the recipient is somebody without a job, or medical care, or retirement savings. In effect, Washington views Americans as children in need of assistance and guidance,

and itself as the surrogate parent morally responsible for providing for our needs.

But this is a fundamentally immature philosophy. "Becoming an adult" suggests achieving independence, both in terms of one's ability to make decisions and to support one's own life. In maintaining and expanding welfare entitlement programs, our politicians implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) endorse the opposite: that Americans never truly become adults capable of thinking for and supporting themselves, and must always have the support of government—from birth until retirement and beyond.

The missing element in the "adult conversation" is a willingness to confront this, the moral question at the center of the issue: should the government treat Americans as independent adults with the freedom that entails, or should we be treated like children and forced to support one another through taxes and debt imposed upon us by Washington? Republicans and Democrats alike remain in denial that according to their own ideologies, providing for those in need is the morally necessary thing to do, and that for them doing the right thing requires taking an enormous amount of money from some Americans and handing it to others. So long as this remains a guiding principle, ever-increasing spending, taxes, and debt are unavoidable.

Fortunately, there is a way to avoid this dilemma: to reject this paternalistic policy and the moral outlook that supports it, recognizing instead that human beings are in fact capable of thinking rationally and living self-sufficiently. They do not require a government to provide for their needs, but rather to protect their freedom to provide for themselves. This means that social relationships should be free and mutually beneficial, and that there is no basis for the collective burden imposed upon us by an imagined duty to act as our neighbors' providers.

Perhaps Americans are indeed ready to confront denial, and sense that there is moral denial underlying our fiscal denial. If we're willing to honestly consider the alternative, that's truly an adult conversation worth having.

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.

FIND THE IDEAS EXPRESSED IN THIS ISSUE THOUGHT-PROVOKING?

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"GREEN" POLICIES

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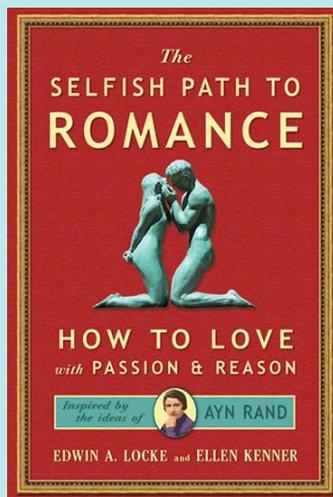
Why develop new coal plants with a “cap and trade” scheme looming on the horizon? Why spend millions to research cheaper internal combustion engines if the government is going to hand your competitors a massive subsidy for developing an electric-only car motor? Too often, the prospect of these government actions makes the risk of implementing new solutions unacceptably high. So, rather than undertake additional development and possibly run afoul of an antitrust suit or an overzealous regulator, the safe decision for producers is to continue doing what they've always done and no more—the essence of stagnation.

In the end, government attempts to push development of “desirable” technologies undermine the innovative spirit required for the development of any technology. Innovation means discovering a new, unanticipated solution to a problem—but when the solution is dictated beforehand, it blinds innovators to better ways of doing things. For example, by offering huge incentives to develop solar and wind energy while demonizing fossil fuels, the government puts off-limits a wide array of potential innovations. Diverse new ways of attaining energy, ranging from nuclear fusion to genetically engineered plants capable of

producing hydrocarbon fuels, go under-examined because government bureaucrats have already decided that solar and wind are the desirable solutions.

The lesson of the most inventive periods in human history, from the Industrial Revolution to the explosion of Silicon Valley, is that in order to create new technologies and services human beings must be free to think independently and act on their own judgment, in their own interests. The transition from horses to automobiles was not mandated by government legislation. The replacement of lamp oil with electric light bulbs wasn't driven by taxes and subsidies. If energy harvested directly from the sun or wind is going to power our civilization in the coming centuries, it's going to have to be able to do it without government crutches—born from individual, thinking minds, without government obstructing their course.

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.



THE SELFISH PATH TO ROMANCE

HOW TO LOVE WITH PASSION & REASON

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

Learn more at: selfishromance.com

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.

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
Email: irmorales@bama.ua.edu

ARIZONA

Fountain Hills Objectivist Club
Email: graffhyrum@gmail.com

Arizona State University Objectivist Club
E-mail: nyomi.lei@gmail.com

ARKANSAS

University of Arkansas Objectivist Association
Email: jpanders@uark.edu

CALIFORNIA

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

Stanford University Objectivists
Email: dakinsloss@gmail.com

University of Southern California Objectivist Club
Email: uscobjectivists@gmail.com

UCLA: LOGIC
Email: info@clublogic.org
Web: clublogic.org

UC Berkeley Objectivist Club
Email: berkeleyobjectivists@gmail.com

UC Irvine Objectivist Club
Email: shovelcharge88@yahoo.com

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

CONNECTICUT

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

COLORADO

Front Range Objectivism (Denver)
Email: fro@frontrangeobjectivism.com
Web: frontrangeobjectivism.com

University of Colorado, Denver Objectivist Club
E-mail: johngalt.ucd@gmail.com

Colorado State Objectivist Club
E-mail: alnavarr@rams.colostate.edu

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

American University Objectivist Society
Email: nrusotto@gmail.com

DC Objectivist Salon (DCOS)
Email: contact@dcobjectivistsalon.org
Web: meetup.com/DC-Objectivist-Salon/

FLORIDA

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

South West Florida Objectivists (SWFO), Sarasota to Marco Island, FL
Email: jswo@h-mmm.com

GEORGIA

Atlanta Objectivist Society
Email: aoscontact@gmail.com
Web: atlantaobjectivists.com

Georgia Institute of Technology Students of Objectivism
Email: gtaynrandclub@gmail.com
Web: cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/aynrand/

Kennesaw State University Objectivists
Email: randianz@msn.com

New South Objectivists (SC, NC, and Georgia)
Email: contact@newsouthobjectivists.org
Web: newsouthobjectivists.org

University of Georgia Objectivist Club
Email: slademendenhall@gmail.com

HAWAII

Hawaii Pacific University
E-mail: radical_individualist@hotmail.com

IDAHO

Idaho State University Objectivist Club
Email: inaway@gmail.com

ILLINOIS

Chicago Objectivists
Email: contact@chicagoobjectivists.org
Web: chicagoobjectivists.org

Naperville North High School Society for Objectivist Studies
Email: obdura@gmail.com

INDIANA

Indiana University, Bloomington Objectivist Club
Email: aynrand@indiana.edu

Objectivists at Indiana University, Indianapolis
Email: jes.shepherd@gmail.com

KANSAS

Kansas State University Objectivist Club
E-mail: cgreinke@k-state.edu

MAINE

University of Maine, Orono Students of Ayn Rand
Email: m.gibson42@yahoo.com

MARYLAND

Johns Hopkins University Objectivist Society
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University of Maryland Objectivist Club
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MICHIGAN

Michigan State University Objectivists
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Web: msuoc.com
University of Michigan Objectivist Club
Email: agaglio@umiche.edu
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MINNESOTA

Minnesota Objectivist Association (Twin Cities, MN)
Email: info@mnoobjectivists.com
Web: mnoobjectivists.com

MISSOURI

Kansas City Objectivists (KS and MO)
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MONTANA

The Objectivist Society at Montana State University
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NEBRASKA

Omaha Area Objectivists Omaha
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NEVADA

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Objectivist Club
Email: stp@worldzone.com

NEW JERSEY

Central Jersey Objectivists (Union County)
Email: zigory@comcast.net

Tenafly High School Objectivist Club
Email: THSOobjectivists@gmail.com

NEW YORK

West Islip High School Objectivist Club
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NORTH CAROLINA

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Email: contact@newsouthobjectivists.org
Web: newsouthobjectivists.org

Students of Ayn Rand at UNC Charlotte
Email: dgabrie1@unc.edu

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Objectivist Forum
Email: jwadwor@email.unc.edu

OHIO

Baldwin-Wallace Objectivist Club
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CAMPUS CLUBS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS, CONT'D

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Web: aristotleadventure.com/pao/index.html

PENNSYLVANIA

Carnegie Mellon University Objectivists
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Penn State University Objectivist Club
Email: rvb5057@psu.edu

Philadelphia Region Objectivists
Email: bhvcom@gmail.com

RHODE ISLAND

Ayn Rand Admirers (RI and surrounding area)
Email: rogerw@tribrocorp.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

Clemson Objectivists
E-mail: objclub@clemson.edu

New South Objectivists (SC, NC, GA)
Email: contact@newsouthobjectivists.org
Web: newsouthobjectivists.org

TEXAS

Houston Objectivism Society, Houston, TX
Email: JanetLWestphal@aol.com
Web: houstonobjectivism.com

Rice University Objectivist Club
Email: rice.objectivism@hotmail.com

South Texas Ayn Rand Society
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Web: meetup.com/HoustonSTARS/

Texas A&M University Aggie Objectivist Club
College Station, TX
Email: kelly.scribner@gmail.com

UT Austin Objectivist Society
Email: utobjectivism@gmail.com

VERMONT

Bennington College Objectivists
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VIRGINIA

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Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Objectivist Club
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WASHINGTON

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Central Washington University Objectivist Club
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Seattle Portland Objectivist Network (SPON)
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University of Washington Objectivist Society
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Web: stevensnet.net/event&articlelist.html

University of Calgary Objectivist Club
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University of Toronto Objectivist Society
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IDEAS MATTER

AYN RAND'S MESSAGE TO TODAY'S WORLD

A LIVE LECTURE SIMULCAST TO UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY
MARCH 31ST, 2011 6:00 PM PACIFIC, 9:00 PM EASTERN
MORE INFO: IDEAS.THEUNDERCURRENT.INFO

Today's young people face an uncertain world. Unemployment among recent college graduates is at a record high, the United States is still bogged down in two foreign wars, and the wobbling American economy is in danger of deteriorating further once the Baby Boomers retire. Voters choose between Democrats in one landslide election and Republicans in another, expressing their discontent with each party, and seemingly, their own uncertainty about how America should move forward. Many people wonder: where are we headed? Will America continue to be the land of opportunity, or are our best days behind us?

Dr. Yaron Brook, President of the Ayn Rand Institute, will argue that the answer to that question depends on what ideas young people accept and fight for. Join Dr. Brook as he goes beyond the headlines, examining the basic ideas that have shaped today's events. And learn why the solution to today's problems lies in rethinking not just our political system, but in challenging an idea most everyone holds to be true: the virtue of selflessness.