

The Cultural Thought of Ludwig von Mises

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Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973), heir to the Austrian tradition founded by Carl Menger and developed by Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, was the pre-eminent economic thinker of his age. His best-known insights include the impossibility of economic calculation under socialism, the monetary origins of the business cycle, and an elucidation and defense of the use of deductive reasoning in the social sciences (see, for example, Rothbard, 1983).

In matters of public policy, Mises was an unabashed supporter of the free market, hard money, and the rule of law. During his life in the U.S. (to which he emigrated in 1940), he was considered a member of the conservative movement (see, for example, Nash, 1976; East, 1986; and Filler, 1987), and he wrote frequently for such conservative publications as *American Opinion*, *Christian Economics*, *Intercollegiate Review*, *Modern Age*, and *National Review*. But Mises's political conservatism must be qualified. Rothbard (1981) has shown that Mises was a "laissez-faire radical" who supported national self-determination and the right to secession (even for small groups), the French Revolution, and free immigration, and opposed

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war and militarism—positions not characteristic of conservatism. Mises's political radicalism, however, did not imply any sympathy for moral libertinism (the view that human behavior ought not be restrained by formal or informal codes of manners and morals) or cultural relativism (the view that all civilizations should be regarded as equally valid). Instead, the positions Mises held on various cultural questions are characteristic of modern American traditionalist conservatism.¹

This paper seeks to present Mises's views on cultural questions as well as his belief that certain cultural institutions are buttressed by a *laissez-faire* social order. It also seeks to show that Mises was an opponent not only of the political agenda of the Left, but of its cultural agenda as well, which he saw as inconsistent with and indeed hostile to a *laissez-faire* social order.

The socialists had more than political economy in mind; they also wanted a revolution in social institutions, morals, arts, manners, and relations between the sexes and the races. The socialists understood that politics and economics are inextricably linked to culture. No advocate of a particular political-economic order can overlook this, and Mises did not. Mises believed that feminism was an assertion of equality, a revolt against nature, and therefore akin to socialism; that the family and marital fidelity were essential to civilization; that it was possible to make broad generalizations and perhaps scientific statements about races and ethnic groups; that apparent racial inequalities ought to be studied, although not used to influence state policy; that "Eurocentrism" was the proper outlook; and that one need not be sympathetic to mass culture or the counterculture, as Mises emphatically was not, to support the free market. So conservative was Mises on cultural issues, in fact, that today he would be regarded as a reactionary.²

I. Equality versus Inequality

The central theme in Mises's cultural traditionalism was the fact of human inequality. He therefore opposed all forms of egalitarianism. "The fact that men are born unequal in regard to physical and mental capabilities cannot be argued away," he wrote. "Some surpass their fellow men in health and vigor, in brain and aptitudes, in energy and resolution and are therefore better fitted for the pursuit of earthly affairs than the rest of mankind" (Mises, 1961, pp. 190-91). In holding this view Mises stood apart, as he so often did, from the social science establishment of his day. He cites the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (1930) claim that "at birth human infants, regardless of their heredity, are as equal as Fords."

The market makes society's existence possible, primarily because it is the only means of social cooperation that takes into account the inherent inequality of men. If every man were identical to every other (and therefore all non-human resources would be equally available to all), there would be no question of capital formation, the division of labor, or capitalism. In fact, if the assertion of equality were true, there would be no economic or social problem to discuss. Thus when Mises seeks to support the classical economists' idea of the division of labor, the "innate inequality of men" is the first reason he invokes. The market, through the law of association, provides the means for all men to cooperate under the social division of labor, allowing all people to pursue the tasks most in keeping with their individual talents, strengths, and dispositions, whether the tasks they perform are considered mundane or extraordinary (Mises, 1966, pp. 157-166).

The state cannot know, apart from information generated by the market, which task is better suited to which individual. Because of the constraints that nature has placed on everyone, in varying degrees, it is futile for the state to attempt to eradicate inequalities. To do so will necessarily make social conditions worse.³

Mises believed in the doctrine of equality before the law, but opposed the attempt to derive it from the alleged equality of all men: "[O]nly deadly foes of individual liberty and self-determination" do so (Mises, 1961, p. 190). Rather, he held that equality before the law, more than any other system, promotes social cooperation and prosperity. If equality is made a social goal, then individuals must be treated unequally by the law. Equality and the rule of law are incompatible (Mises, 1966, pp. 840-842). Neither should democracy, nor "representative democracy," be justified on grounds of equality; to do so is "faulty and untenable" (Mises, 1961, p. 196). Those who argue for the "intellectual and moral eminence of the masses," or that "the voice of the people is the voice of God," are most often attempting to "substitute despotism for representative government" (p. 197). For Mises, democracy has only one justification: peaceful succession in government. Majority rule is not "a metaphysical principle . . ." (p. 197).⁴

Thus Mises stood in dramatic opposition to the political and cultural egalitarianism that has long been the operating principle of the modern state (see, for example, Mora, 1987, and Schoeck, 1966).

II. Sex, Family, and Feminism

A poignant illustration of Mises's anti-egalitarianism can be found in his writings on sexuality, the family, free love, and feminism. Though Mises did not derive his views from a deference to tradition, he reasoned that traditional rules and institutions clearly flow from the natural interaction of men and women in freedom, and that these rules and institutions are formed by the biological necessity of the sexual division of labor in combination with the law of contract, which had such civilizing effect on sexual relations.

A. *The Sexual Instinct*

In *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (1922), Mises sought to refute the arguments of those who would overthrow the "natural order" of capitalism for unnatural collectivism. In doing so, he attacked the entire agenda of the socialists, which he saw as internally consistent, yet consistently destructive. Thus Mises observed, "proposals to transform the relations between the sexes have long gone hand in hand with plans for the socialization of the means of production." "Marriage is to disappear along with private property. . . . When man is liberated from the yoke of economic labor, love is to be liberated from all the economic trammels which have profaned it. Socialism promises not only welfare—wealth for all—but universal happiness in love as well" (p. 74).

Mises saw nothing degrading about sexual relations; he condemned the view that sex should be seen as a necessary evil. To Mises, sexual relations were bound up with a human inclination toward sensuality. To achieve its highest expression, however, sensuality must be brought under the discipline that only humans, and not animals, have the capacity to achieve (p. 88). In fact, the process of becoming a man is ultimately linked with the struggle for sexual discipline and fidelity in monogamous family life. "There is a process which every individual must pass through in his own life if his sexual energies are to cast off the diffuse form they have in childhood and take their final mature shape," Mises wrote. "He must develop the inner psychic strength which impedes the flow of undifferentiated sexual energy and like a dam alters its direction" (p. 74). Citing Freud, he said that the necessity for undertaking the process of controlling "sexual energy" is a difficult one, and that "not everyone escapes

unscathed from the stress and struggle of this change. Many succumb, many become neurotic or insane."

In this struggle to rein in sexual urges, most men overcome their instincts and learn to control their sexual energy, an essential component of a peaceful and fulfilled life. In doing so, some men "turn to religion, others to philosophy, and still others become satisfied with everyday life" (p. 84). Yet one group never adjusts: "men who do not know where or how to find peace." "At any price they want to win and hold happiness. With all their might they strain at the bars which imprison their instincts." With these men, marriages are often "wrecked," not by the capitalist social order—as the socialists claimed—but by a "disease" that "germinates not without, but within; it grows out of the natural disposition of the parties concerned."

Mises held that the neurosis caused by the struggle for fidelity was exploited by socialists and Utopians to advance their political agenda. Moreover, "this was the more to be expected since many of them were themselves neurotics suffering from an unhappy development of the sexual instinct" (p. 75). Mises went so far as to offer a research program: Speaking of the socialist François Marie Charles Fourier (1772–1837), Mises observed that sexual "disorder" is "evident in every line of his writings": "[I]t is a pity that nobody has undertaken to examine his life history by the psycho-analytic method" (p. 75).

In discussing the role of sex, Mises drew a sharp distinction between men and women. "It is clear," he writes, "that sex is less important in the life of man than of woman. Satisfaction brings him relaxation and mental peace. But for the woman the burden of motherhood begins here. Her destiny is completely circumscribed by sex; in man's life it is but an incident. However fervently and wholeheartedly he loves, however much he takes upon himself for the woman's sake, he remains always above the sexual. Even women are finally contemptuous of the man who is utterly engrossed by sex. But woman must exhaust herself in love and as mother in the service of the sexual instinct. Man may often find it difficult, in the face of all the worries of his profession, to preserve his inner freedom and so to develop his individuality, but it will not be his sexual life which distracts him the most. For woman, however, sex is the greatest obstacle" (p. 88).

Mises saw the fate of whole civilizations hinging on their attitude towards relations between the sexes. The proper attitude establishes cooperation between the sexes, so that men are not "dragged by women" into the "low spheres of psychic bondage" (by being fixated on sexual urges and sensual satisfaction) and so that women may preserve the "freedom of inner life" (by entering sexual relations on consensual grounds). To arrive at this ideal is "part of the cultural problem of humanity." For example, the failure to achieve sexual cooperation "destroyed the Orient." "Every progressive movement which began with the development of personality was prematurely frustrated by the women, who dragged men down again into the miasma of the harem." Mises disagreed with those who held that the Orientals "understood the ultimate questions of existence more profoundly than all the philosophy of Europe." In fact, "they have never been able to free themselves in sexual matters" and that has "sealed the fate of their culture." Similarly, the Greeks erred, said Mises, by excluding the married woman from culture. The Greek man's "love was for the hetaera alone. Eventually he was not satisfied even here, and turned to homosexual love. Plato sees the love of boys transfigured by the spiritual union of the lovers. . . . To him the love of woman was merely gross sensual satisfaction" (p. 89). The temptation toward "gross sensual satisfaction" had to be overcome so that men and women could reach a civilized understanding of their respective sexual roles.

Prostitution contradicts this cooperative spirit. The socialists had long claimed that prostitution was a product of capitalism, with women driven to sell their bodies to exploitative men. Mises comments that "prostitution is an extremely ancient institution, unknown to hardly any people that has ever existed" (p. 92). It is a "remnant" of the precapitalistic age, "not a symptom of the decay of higher culture [Western capitalism]." It was the "ideal of capitalism" that contributed to producing the "demand for man's abstinence outside marriage" by insisting on "equal moral rights for man and woman." Thus capitalism, argues Mises, discourages prostitution. Here he applies his model that whatever is in accord with man's nature—such as sexual fidelity within marriage—is fostered by the only economic system, capitalism, that is also in accord with man's nature.

By equalizing all incomes and eliminating all avenues for gaining wealth, socialism might be able to remove the "economic temptation to prostitution" (p. 92), but that would not solve the problems associated with the

sexual instinct. Instead, the socialist's complaints about disordered sex lives under capitalism would reach their fulfillment under socialism. "By returning to the principle of violence," and creating unbalanced conditions contrary to social cooperation, socialism "must finally demand promiscuity in sexual life" (p. 91).

B. *Marriage versus Free Love*

Mises viewed marriage as an inescapable social institution, part of "an adjustment of the individual to the social order by which a certain field of activity, with all its tasks and requirements is assigned to him" (Mises, 1922, p. 85). Marriage, said Mises, reins in the sexual instincts of man and allows woman to achieve what nature and biology tell us is her primary occupation, bearing children and caring for the family.

The socialists wage war against this. "Marxism indeed seeks to combat marriage just as it seeks to justify the abolition of private property" (p. 75). Marxists claim that marriage was never part of natural society, and capitalism created "every imaginable evil," including marriage and the domination of women by men (see, for example, Shafarevich, 1974).

In setting out to refute the Marxist version of history, Mises saw two historical phases in relations between the sexes: the age of violence and the age of capitalism. During the age of violence, "male aggressiveness, which is implicit in the very nature of sexual relations, is here carried to the extreme. The man seizes possession of the woman and holds this sexual object in the same sense in which he has other goods of the outer world. Here woman becomes completely a thing. She is stolen and bought; she is given away, sold away, and ordered away; in short, she is like a slave in the house" (Mises, 1922, p. 76). Moreover, "where the principle of violence dominates, polygamy is universal. Each man has as many wives as he can defend. Wives are a form of property, of which it is always better to have more than few" (p. 81).

This situation could not endure any more than socialism can endure. "[I]t is against nature that man should take woman as a will-less thing." Mises explains that the "sexual act is a mutual give-and-take, and a merely suffering attitude in the woman diminishes man's pleasure. To satisfy himself he must awaken her response." Once that is recognized, it is clear that "the victor who has dragged the slave into his marriage bed, the buyer

who has traded the daughter from her father must court for that which the violation of the resisting woman cannot give. The man who outwardly appears the unlimited master of his woman is not so powerful in the house as he thinks; he must concede a part of his rule to the woman, even though he ashamedly conceals this from the world" (p. 78).

The age of violence was also "against nature" because "the characteristic of love, the overvaluation of the object, cannot exist when women occupy the position of contempt. . . . For under this system she is merely a slave, but it is the nature of love to conceive her as a queen." Under violence, the sex act will become "an extraordinary psychic effort which succeeds only with the assistance of special stimuli. This becomes more and more so in proportion as the individual is compelled by the principle of violence" and thus makes sexual intercourse more and more difficult (p. 78). The onset of capitalism, however, corrected this, by bringing relations between the sexes more into line with nature. Society began to see marital relations as a contract, which makes the "wife a partner with equal rights. From a one-sided relationship resting on force, marriage thus becomes a mutual agreement. . . . Step by step she wins the position in the home which she holds today" (p. 82).

All modern ideals of marriage grow out of contract: "that marriage unites one man and one woman, that it can be entered into only with the free will of both parties, that it imposes a duty of mutual fidelity, that a man's violations of the marriage vows are to be judged no differently from a woman's, that the rights of husband and wife are essentially the same" (p. 82). This change is reflected in the ancient and capitalist attitudes toward divorce. Under the "modern law," no longer does a man have a "right to cast off his wife which man once possessed." Mises notes that "the Church takes the lead in the struggle against divorce," but says it should "remember that the existence of the modern marriage ideal of monogamy—of husband and wife with equal rights—in the defense of which the Church wishes to intervene, is the result of capitalist, and not ecclesiastical, development" (p. 83).

Mises also replied to the socialist and libertine claim that because some geniuses have rejected marriage, the validity of the institution should be cast into doubt. It is true, he says, that "genius does not allow itself to be hindered by any consideration for the comfort of its fellows—even those closest to it. The ties of marriage become intolerable bonds which the genius

tries to cast off or at least to loosen so as to be able to move freely. . . . Rarely indeed is he granted the happiness of finding a woman willing and able to go with him on his solitary path" (pp. 85–86). This was "recognized long ago," says Mises. "The masses had accepted it so completely that anyone who betrayed his wife felt himself entitled to justify his action in these terms." But the true genius "is rare and a social institution does not become impossible merely because one or two exceptional men are unable to adjust themselves to it" (p. 86).

Socialists also used the unhappiness of some marriages to question the institution itself. Mises agreed that it is unrealistic if "the wedded couple demand that their union shall satisfy desire permanently," though only marriage has, to its credit, set up such an ideal. But this carries a danger. "We know for certain that desire gratified, cools sooner or later and that endeavors to make permanent the fugitive hours of romance would be vain." He tells the socialists that "we cannot blame marriage because it is unable to change our earthly life into an infinite series of ecstatic moments, all radiant with the pleasures of love" (p. 85). Most marriages, said Mises, do not fit the socialist caricature—bitter, pathological, abusive—especially not those "blessed with children." In these "married love fades slowly and unnoticeably; in its place develops a friendly affection which for a long time is interrupted ever and again by a brief flickering of the old love; living together becomes habitual, and in the children, in whose development they relive their youth, the parents find consolation for the renunciation they have been forced to make as old age deprives them of their strength" (pp. 83–84).

Mises notes that "no other German socialist book was more widely read or more effective as propaganda than August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*, which is dedicated above all to the message of free love" (p. 74). This is because "free love is the socialist's radical solution for sexual problems" (p. 87). Under free love, "choice in love becomes completely free" so men and women "unite and separate just as their desires urge." All children are nurtured, maintained, and educated by the state. And "relations between the sexes are no longer influenced by social and economic conditions."

The response of the moral theologian, however, is "entirely inadequate" (p. 87). To Mises, radical sexual freedom is not in the interest of men or women. Free love debases sexuality and reduces beauty and sensuality

to promiscuity and force. It is only marriage that unites a man and a woman "as equal, freeborn companions and comrades." The contract allows the woman to "deny herself to anyone" and to "demand fidelity and constancy from the man to whom she gives herself" (p. 91). Free love wars against nature, as do all "pseudo-democratic" efforts to "efface natural and socially conditioned inequalities." In their campaign for absolute equality, the socialists pursue a consistent pattern. They work to "make women the equal of men," a goal which nature will not allow, just as it will not sustain the socialist attempt to "make the strong equal to the weak, the talented to the untalented, and the healthy to the sick" (p. 90).⁵

With regard to the state child care that free love advocates demand, Mises wrote that "to take away a woman's children and put them in an institution is to take away part of her life; and children are deprived of the most far-reaching influences when they are torn from the bosom of the family." For a person to grow up as a "healthy human being," the parents must teach the child to love. That is why state child care leads to "neurosis and homosexuality" (p. 91). "[I]t is no accident," says Mises, that Plato, who "saw only the satisfaction of a physical craving in the relations between the sexes," also proposed to "treat men and women as radically equal, to regulate sexual intercourse by the state," and "to put infants into public nursing homes at birth" (p. 91).

C. *Feminism as a Revolt Against Nature*

Mises made a sharp distinction between two kinds of equality. The first demands that the law treat everyone impartially. The second wages war on nature by demanding that all natural and social inequalities be eliminated. Mises thought that the pursuit of the second would always result in the elimination of the first. That is to say, the pursuit of absolute equality means that people will be treated unequally—and unjustly—through state coercion.

Mises writes disapprovingly in *Liberalism* (1927) of the early liberals who thought "God created all men equal, endowing them with fundamentally the same capabilities and talents, breathing into all of them the breath of His spirit. All distinctions between men" were thought to be the "product of social, human—that is to say, transitory, institutions." The socialists advocate a different kind of equality, but based on the same presupposition. Of these views, Mises writes that "nothing" is as "ill-founded as the assertion of the alleged equality of all members of the human

race. . . . Men are not equal, and the demand for equality under the law can by no means be grounded in the contention that equal treatment is due to equals" (p. 28). It is because Mises praised equality before the law, and rejected "radical equality," that he had no sympathies for the feminists.

The "feminism of the nineteenth century," which Mises rejected, held that marriage forced personal sacrifice on women and denied them all freedom, while it "gave man space enough to develop his abilities." This was the "unchangeable nature of marriage, which harnesses husband and wife together and thus debases the weaker woman to be the servant of the man." To the nineteenth-century feminists, no reform of marriage is possible; "the abolition of the whole institution alone could remedy the evil." What should replace it is "loose relations which gave freedom to both parties" (Mises, 1922, p. 86). Neither did Mises sympathize with twentieth-century feminism. Both overlook "the fact that the expansion of woman's powers and abilities is inhibited not by marriage, not by being bound to man, children, and household, but by the more absorbing form in which the sexual function affects the female body" (p. 86).

Of the demand for radical equality, Mises says that "the difference between sexual character and sexual destiny can no more be decreed away than other inequalities of mankind. It is not marriage which keeps woman inwardly unfree, but the fact that her sexual character demands surrender to a man and that her love for husband and children consumes her best energies. There is no human law to prevent the woman who looks for happiness in a career from renouncing love and marriage. But those who do not renounce them are not left with sufficient strength to master life as a man may master it. It is a fact that sex possesses her whole personality, and not the facts of marriage and family, which enchains a woman. By 'abolishing' marriage one would not make woman any freer and happier; one would merely take from her the essential content of her life, and one could offer nothing to replace it" (p. 90).

To Mises, these unalterable facts influence the division of labor between men and women. He explored what he regarded as women's natural limitations in the division of labor, and their ability to achieve genius and greatness on the level of men: "Pregnancy and the nursing of children claim the best years of a woman's life, the years in which a man may spend his energies in great achievements. One may believe that the unequal distribution of the burden of reproduction is an injustice of nature, or that it is

unworthy of woman to be child-bearer and nurse, but to believe this does not alter the fact. It may be that a woman is able to choose between renouncing either the most profound womanly joy, the joy of motherhood, or the more masculine development of her personality in action and endeavor. It may be that she has no such choice. It may be that in suppressing her urge towards motherhood she does herself an injury that reacts through all other functions of her being. But whatever the truth about this, the fact remains that when she becomes a mother, with or without marriage, she is prevented from leading her life as freely and independently as a man. Extraordinarily gifted women may achieve fine things in spite of motherhood; but because the functions of sex have the first claim upon woman, genius and the greatest achievements have been denied her" (p. 86).

Mises summarized his position on feminism by distinguishing between the claim that women be granted an equal legal position with that of men—a desire fully in accord with capitalism and nature—and the more radical claim of absolute equality, which is akin to socialism. He wrote: "So far as feminism seeks to adjust the legal position of woman to that of man, so far as it seeks to offer her legal and economic freedom to develop and act in accordance with her inclinations, desires, and economic circumstances—so far it is nothing more than a branch of the great liberal movement, which advocates peaceful and free evolution. When, going beyond this, it attacks the institutions of social life under the impression that it will thus be able to remove the natural barriers, it is a spiritual child of socialism. For it is a characteristic of socialism to discover in social institutions the origin of unalterable facts of nature, and to endeavor, by reforming these institutions, to reform nature" (p. 87).

Efforts to enlist feminism on the side of liberty would be doomed to failure, in Mises's view, since the two ideologies are in fundamental disagreement regarding the limitations that nature has placed on human possibilities (compare McElroy, 1982, pp. 3–26). It is for this reason that Mises saw public policy on the relationship between the sexes as having reached the ideal by the early twentieth century. "Nowadays the position of the woman differs from the position of the man only in so far as their peculiar ways of earning a living differ" (Mises, 1922, p. 82). What was left of the old order did not concern him: "The remnants of man's privileges have little importance. They are privileges of honor. The wife, for instance, still bears her husband's name" (p. 82).

Neither was Mises concerned about laws regulating private life. "Now man and woman are equal before the law," Mises writes. "The small differences that still exist in private law are of no practical significance. Whether, for example, the law obliges the wife to obey her husband is not particularly important; as long as marriage survives one party will have to follow the other and whether husband or wife is stronger is certainly not a matter which paragraphs of the legal code can decide" (p. 89).

Mises reserved his harshest criticism for the political ends of feminism. He regarded the laws against women's suffrage and their election to public office as largely expressing what is inherent in nature. Mises writes: "Nor is it any longer of great significance that the political rights of women are restricted, that women are denied the vote and the right to hold public office. For by granting the vote to women the proportional political strength of the political parties is not on the whole much altered; the women of these parties which must suffer from the changes to be expected (not in any case important ones) ought in their own interests to become opponents of women's suffrage rather than supporters. The right to occupy public office is denied women less by the legal limitations of their rights than by the peculiarities of their sexual character. Without underestimating the value of the feminists' fight to extend woman's civil rights, one can safely risk the assertion that neither women nor the community are deeply injured by the slights to women's legal position which still remain in the legislation of civilized states" (pp. 89-90).

III. Race and Ethnicity

Mises's cultural traditionalism also led him to oppose egalitarianism as regards the traits distinctive to particular racial and ethnic groups. He believed that all human beings are inherently unequal, and that these inequalities can be generalized according to the social patterns that develop in terms of race and ethnicity. He viewed scholarship that seeks to study such racial and ethnic differences, within the proper scientific context, as legitimate. However, he condemned state-imposed distinctions among various groups and wanted all of them, regardless of what might be their intellectual and social capacities, incorporated into the division of labor.

From the outset Mises condemned the theory of racial determinism and rigid racial categorization, especially when it was defended by pseudoscience. He expressed frustration and even disgust at some of the attempts

to differentiate between racial groups. In *Nation, State, and Economy* (1919), among Mises's earliest works, he writes: "What has so far been discovered in [racial] sciences is quite scanty, of course, and is overgrown with a thicket of error, fantasy, and mysticism" (p. 11). He objected to the racialists' unscientific procedures, which he found "impossible to condemn too emphatically" (Mises, 1922, p. 289). They focused on race "in an entirely uncritical spirit." "More anxious to coin catchwords than to advance knowledge, they scoff at all the standards demanded by scientific thought." As a result of such blunders "scientific knowledge" of the innate qualities of man "is still in its infancy" (p. 288). As an example of bad science, he writes of the "cranial index" of Georges Vacher de Lapouge, which was based on postulating firm relationships between the physical and the mental that "do not exist." "More recent measurements have shown that long-headed men are not always blond, good, noble, and cultured, and that the short-headed are not always black, evil, common, and uncultured" (p. 289).

Moreover, Mises ruled out the idea that races can be measured against a "pure" standard since "all peoples have arisen from a mixture of races." It can even be shown that often the people at the "lower strata" of society are of purer "blood" than those of the upper orders, where "foreign ancestors" are common (Mises, 1919, p. 10). Thus the source of perceived racial advantages cannot relate purely to biology: "The undisputed outcome of . . . scientific investigations is that the peoples of white skin, Europeans and non-European descendants of emigrated European ancestors, represent a mixture of various bodily characteristics." Nor has science successfully related body size to mental and moral characteristics: "All these endeavors have also failed" (Mises, 1944, p. 182).

As a determinant in the course of world events, people's association with a "nation," defined in terms of language, is of "great importance" when compared to the "slight significance" that race plays in shaping cultural and political movements. And the a priori argument to the contrary, that race is the most important factor in world events, Mises regarded as sheer diletterantism (Mises, 1919, p. 11).

Yet Mises thought that racial factors were important in social and cultural development and that the possibility of legitimate scientific investigation into these factors should not be ruled out. We should not be misled "into skipping lightly over the race problem itself. Surely there is hardly any

other problem whose clarification could contribute more to deepening our historical understanding. It may be that the way to ultimate knowledge in the field of historical ebb and flow leads through anthropology and race theory." "There exists true science in this field. . . ." "It may be that we shall never solve" the scientific problems associated with race studies, "but that should not make us deny the significance of the race factor in history" (p. 11). Mises would not renounce racial studies, since "there still remains a germ of the race theory which is independent of the specific differentiation between noble and ignoble races" (Mises, 1922, p. 289).

One can say that "some men are more gifted by birth than others"; that men differ in their physical and psychic qualities; that "certain families, breeds, and groups of breeds reveal similar traits"; and that "we are justified in differentiating between races and in speaking of the different racial qualities of individuals" (p. 289). There are even "considerable bodily differences between the members of various races; there are also remarkable although less momentous differences between members of the same race, sub-race, tribe, or family, even between brothers and sisters, even between non-identical twins" (Mises, 1957, pp. 326-27). And "it is a historical fact that the civilizations developed by various races are different," for example (p. 322). It is "unassailable" that "some races have been more successful than others in their efforts to develop a civilization" (p. 334). All this is possible to observe scientifically and sociologically, even though attempts to find "somatic characteristics of racial relationships have had no result" (Mises, 1922, p. 288).

The kind of racial study he thought most important from the standpoint of classical liberalism would posit the following thesis: that "certain influences, operating over a long period, have bred one race or several, with specially favorable qualities, and that the members of these races had by means of these advantages obtained so long a lead that members of other races could not overtake them within a limited period of time." While Mises was not willing to say whether this statement contains absolute scientific truth, he thought it most compatible with the methods of science. We must ask "how it stands in relation to the theory of social cooperation" (pp. 289-90).

Even granting that certain races have "specially favorable qualities" does not necessarily mean these qualities are entirely biological; they could be predominantly environmental and cultural (pp. 289-90). Sometimes

environmental and cultural conditions can manifest themselves in physical, intellectual, and moral qualities: "Men living under certain conditions often acquire in the second, sometimes even in the first generation, a special physical or mental conformation. . . . Very often poverty or wealth, urban or rural environment, indoor or outdoor life, mountain peaks or lowlands, sedentary habits or hard physical labor stamp their peculiar mark on a man's body" (Mises, 1944, pp. 170-71).

Environment alone, however, cannot account for all group differences. If that were true, as the Marxists claim, it would be possible to adjust environment in a successful effort to equalize all human differences. It is in the context that Mises reminds that "there is a degree of correlation between bodily structure and mental traits. An individual inherits from his parents and indirectly from his parents' ancestors not only the specific biological characteristics of his body but also a constitution of mental powers that circumscribes the potentialities of his mental achievements and his personality" (Mises, 1957, p. 327). The attempt to change this is at odds with the doctrine of equality under the law (p. 328).

Most important from a methodological standpoint, whatever the racialists say and "no matter how great . . . differences may be, they do not affect the logical structure of the human mind. There is not the slightest evidence for the thesis developed by various schools of thought that the logic and thinking of different races are categorically different" (p. 327). This point is crucial, since Mises's system of deducing economics from human action relies on the universal validity of logic.

As a cautionary note, he wrote in one of his last books, *Theory and History* (1957), that there is no justification for one group feeling "racial self conceit." What may be true for the past is not necessarily true for the future. For this reason, historians should not adopt a "racial interpretation of history" (p. 334). Asserting racial superiority can also have pernicious consequences on one's personal ethics: "innocuous vanity" can "easily" turn to "scorn of those who do not belong to the same distinguished group and into an attempt to humiliate and to insult them." This kind of behavior has "poisoned the relations between the races for ages to come" (pp. 334-35). Moreover, Mises vociferously opposed any talk of eugenics, arguing that "[i]t is vain for the champions of eugenics to protest that they did not mean what the Nazis executed. Eugenics aims at placing some men, backed by the police power, in complete control

of human reproduction. It suggests that the methods applied to domestic animals be applied to men" (Mises, 1947, p. 78).

Whatever the results of the studies of racial differences, Mises said they would in no way affect his view that the free society and the division of labor are the best ways to deal with group differences. Race theory "cannot in any way refute" the case for liberalism (Mises, 1957, p. 328) since race theory and the liberal society "are quite compatible" (Mises, 1922, p. 289). "It may be assumed that races do differ in intelligence and will power, and that, this being so, they are very unequal in their ability to form society, and further that the better races distinguish themselves precisely by their special aptitude for strengthening social cooperation" (pp. 289–90).

It is the free market, and the law of comparative advantage, that makes cooperation between the races possible. Classical liberalism argues that free labor is more productive than unfree labor, and that, said Mises, is a sufficient reason for favoring liberalism. Liberalism in no way depends on the "natural-law postulate of the equality or equal rights of all men." "It may be admitted that the races differ in talent and character and that there is no hope of ever seeing those differences resolved. Still, free-trade theory shows that even the more capable races derive an advantage from associating with the less capable and that social cooperation brings them the advantage of higher productivity in the total labor process" (p. 290).

It is when race theory begins to conflict with the classical liberal order that Mises objects most strongly—especially in his *Omnipotent Government* (1944), which focused on Nazi ideology. When race war is advocated at the expense of social cooperation, race theory becomes a force for evil. Mises pointed out that race war is not to be desired from any point of view. "Lapouge has pointed out that only in the case of primitive peoples does war lead to the selection of the stronger and more gifted"; "among civilized peoples it leads to a deterioration of the race by unfavorable selection" since "the fit are more likely to be killed than the unfit." And those "who survive the war find their power to produce healthy children impaired by the various injuries they have received in the fight" (Mises, 1922, pp. 290–91).

The emergence of Hitler led Mises to discuss race and ethnicity in light of recent history. As Mises has warned, state enforcement of racial purity had led to conflict and war. Those race theorists whose unscientific studies

Mises found "impossible to condemn too emphatically" achieved power under Nazism. In opposition to them, Mises writes in 1944 that the "Aryan hypothesis was scientifically disproved long ago. The Aryan race is an illusion." It was bound to be, like all theories that posit a "pure stock" among white people. Hence Mises condemned the Nazi campaign against the Jews: It was morally wrong as well as scientifically incorrect, since there is no "alleged Jewish or Semitic race." "It has proved impossible to differentiate the Jewish Germans anthropologically from the non-Jewish ones." "Negroes and whites differ in racial—i.e. bodily—features; but it is impossible to tell a Jewish German from a non-Jewish one by any racial characteristic" (Mises, 1944, p. 182).

With regard to private discrimination based on preferences for one race or ethnic group or another, Mises thought such activity was permissible and natural, but that the market would tend to make it costly. "In an unhampered market society there is no legal discrimination against anybody. Everyone has the right to obtain the place within the social system in which he can successfully work and make a living. The consumer is free to discriminate, provided that he is ready to pay the cost" (p. 182). "In a world in which people have grasped the meaning of a market society, and therefore advocate a consumer's policy, there is no legal discrimination against Jews. Whoever dislikes the Jews may in such a world avoid patronizing Jewish shopkeepers, doctors, and lawyers" (p. 184).

Mises wanted to broaden the usual condemnation of unequal treatment under the law by pointing to economic interventionism as "compulsory discrimination, which furthers the interest of a minority of citizens at the expense of the majority." Under interventionism, various groups strive to form a political alliance to obtain privileges. The farmers attempt to enforce discrimination against foreign products, and this intervention burdens the rest of the community. Moreover this legal discrimination "need have nothing to do with hatred or repugnance toward those against whom it is applied." As an example, "the Swiss and Italians do not hate the Americans or Swedes; nevertheless, they discriminate against American and Swedish products. People always dislike competitors" (p. 184).

Economic interventionism must by necessity lead to wider and wider legal discrimination, until it ends in cruelties toward ethnic minorities, especially Jews. "In a world of interventionism only a miracle can in the long run hinder legal discrimination against Jews," said Mises. "The policy

of protecting the less efficient domestic producer against the more efficient foreign producer, the artisan against the manufacturer, and the small shop against the department store and the chain stores would be incomplete if it did not protect the 'Aryan' against the Jew" (p. 184). It was not hatred of other racial or ethnic groups, however, that Mises blamed for racial conflict. It was their reflection in state policy that treated different groups in different ways. Whether these groups were organized along economic or racial lines, to the extent that the state bestowed privileges on minority interests—whether farmers or racial and ethnic minorities—at the expense of the majority (or on the majority at the expense of a minority), it created social conflict and contradicted the principles of a free society.

Thus Mises treats the issue of race and ethnicity as an anti-egalitarian scientist who defers to the natural patterns of group interaction, even if these patterns imply systematic discrimination by one group against another. As a justification for such action, he rejected the theoretical grounding of most of the race theorists of his time. But he did not shrink from the conclusion that certain groups might have advantages over other groups in particular areas, and even saw justification in speaking of superior group traits. Thus he rejected all attempts to equalize groups, and all attempts to treat them differently by law. Group differences were best harmonized in the liberal market order.

IV. "Multiculturalism"

Mises was emphatically pro-Western, for he valued freedom above all, and saw the West as responsible for the idea of freedom. The idea can be traced to the Greeks, since they "were the first to grasp the meaning and significance of institutions warranting liberty" (Mises, 1950, p. 303). Despite the oligarchies of Greece, the "essential tenor of Greek ideology was the pursuit of liberty" (p. 305). Their ideas were transmitted to the Romans and later to Europe, and through the Europeans to America. The Western idea of liberty led to representative government, the rule of law, independent courts, habeas corpus, judicial examination, freedom of speech, and separation of church and state. The West "transformed the subjects of tyranny into free citizens" (p. 304).

This contrasts with the East. The "ancient works of Oriental philosophy and poetry can compare with the most valuable works of the West" (p. 311). But the West overtook the East because of the Western emphasis

on freedom. As a result, "for many centuries the East has not generated any book of importance. The intellectual and literary history of modern ages hardly records any name of an Oriental author. The East has no longer contributed anything to the intellectual effort of mankind. The problems and controversies that agitated the West remained unknown to the East. In Europe there was commotion; in the East there was stagnation, indolence and indifference" (p. 311).

The West, unlike the East, thought that the power of despots ought to be questioned, that the individual should be independent of the state, and therefore it was necessary to create a "legal framework that would protect the private citizens' wealth against confiscation on the part of the tyrants." Since in the East no wealth was protected except that of the rulers, "big-scale capital accumulation was prevented." No middle class developed, and thus there "was no public to encourage and to patronize authors, artists and inventors." The children of the East "know nothing else than to follow the routine of their environment": advancement through the state (p. 311).

In contrast, "the alert youth of the West looks upon the world as a field of action in which he can win fame, eminence, honors, and wealth; nothing appears too difficult for his ambition." "The noble self-reliance of Western man found triumphant expression in such dithyrambs as Sophocles's choric Antigone-hymn upon man and his enterprising effort and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Nothing of the kind has been ever heard in the Orient" (pp. 311-12).

The idea of liberty made possible the wealth of the West. Other civilizations reject Western ideas, while longing for the material benefits of capitalism. "The non-Caucasians may hate and despise the white man," says Mises; "they may plot his destruction and take pleasure in extravagant praise of their own civilizations. But they yearn for the tangible achievements of the West, for its science, technology, therapeutics, its methods of administration and of industrial management" (Mises, 1957, p. 332). "Whatever people may say about Western civilization, the fact remains that all peoples look with envy upon its achievements, want to reproduce them, and thereby implicitly admit its superiority." But other cultures will fail to achieve the West's prosperity so long as they insist on "preserving their traditional rites and taboos and their customary style of life" (p. 333).

But was not communism also a product of the West? Mises replies that no one advocating absolutism would get a hearing in the West, and that communism had to be disguised as "super-liberalism, as the fulfillment and consummation of the very ideas of freedom and liberty" (Mises, 1950, p. 306). Moreover, the communists were free to write and publish in the West, whereas ideas contrary to the rulers of the East were not to be aired.

To Mises, however, the superiority of the West is not necessarily permanent. It would inevitably decline if "the scions of the builders of the white man's civilization should renounce their freedom and voluntarily surrender to the suzerainty of omnipotent government" (p. 312). Nor can the West's superiority, no matter how relevant to the past, be used to predict the future (Mises, 1957, p. 335).

V. Literature and the Arts

On sex, the family, and feminism, Mises held that the capitalist order reinforces the natural order, while believing that it was futile to work against man's nature and the institutions it produced. With regard to social patterns that express themselves along racial or ethnic lines, Mises thought the capitalist order would eliminate conflict by integrating everyone into the division of labor, so long as the legal order did not discriminate among groups.

The situation was different with regard to literature and the arts. Here, Mises heartily disapproves of what the market tends to reward and champions an older tradition, explaining that his disapproval of popular culture and counterculture ideology did not affect his defense of the market. The critics of capitalism often argued that the market rewards inferior work in literature and the arts. Mises shared the preferences of many of these critics, but believed that mass culture is the "ransom mankind must pay" so that genius will have the freedom to work (Mises, 1956, p. 108).

Great literature, Mises thought, is not likely to be successful in the marketplace. "Literature is not conformism, but dissent. Those authors who merely repeat what everybody approves and wants to hear are of no importance. What counts is the innovator, the dissenter, the harbinger of things unheard of. . . . He is precisely the author whose books the greater part of the public does not buy." "The dissenter and innovator has little to expect from the sale of his books on the regular market" (p. 51).

The book tycoon caters to the public, which does not always "prefer bad books to good books"; the "buyers lack discrimination and are, therefore, ready to absorb sometimes even good books." Nonetheless, "it is true that most of the novels and plays published today are mere trash." This is largely due to the amount produced, and that—under capitalism—the public, not just the intelligentsia, has for the first time the opportunity to influence what books are written and sold. "It is not the fault of capitalism that the common man does not appreciate uncommon books" (p. 51). "What characterizes capitalism is not the bad taste of the crowds, but the fact that these crowds, made prosperous by capitalism, become 'consumers' of literature—of course, of trashy literature. The book market is flooded by a downpour of trivial fiction for the semi-barbarians. But this does not prevent great authors from creating imperishable works" (p. 79). Even if only one out of 1,000 books published each year were "equal to the great books of the past" then "our age could still some day be called an age of the flowering of literature" (p. 51). Mises suggested that critics who attack the market for its literature "inculcate their own inability to sift the chaff from the wheat."

"Everybody is free to abstain from reading books, magazines, and newspapers he dislikes and to recommend to other people to shun these books, magazines, and newspapers" (p. 56). And Mises did so. He attacked the popular literature of his day, especially what he saw as promoting socialism. Chief among his targets were detective stories where the villain is a member of the "successful bourgeois," apparently respectable and widely considered incapable of wrongdoing, but then caught by a sleuth suspicious that all successful people are corrupt underneath. Mises also attacked "proletarian" novels as "nothing but trash." His aesthetic elitism never took the form of advocating legal discrimination, however; indeed he argued against it. But he never shrank from personal discrimination, or denouncing books he did not like.

So it is with architecture. Mises says that "modern architecture has not attained the distinction of that of past centuries," not even the "New York skyline" despite its "peculiar grandeur." He cites several reasons for this. With regard to religious buildings, the "accentuated conservatism" of the churches shuns innovation. There are no more palaces because "the wealth of the entrepreneurs and capitalists is . . . so much inferior to that of kings and princes that they cannot indulge in such luxurious construction. No one is today rich enough to plan such palaces as that of Versailles or the Escorial." And government buildings are dull because "committees and

councils are not likely to adopt the ideas of bold pioneers.” Though such grand projects may never return, in the modern era architectural genius is expressed on a smaller level. “Only in apartment houses, office buildings and private homes have we seen something develop that may be qualified as an architectural style of our age” (p. 78).

As far as art and architecture are concerned, genius must have the freedom to breathe. When freedom creates base culture, it is the fault of the masses. Says Mises: “It is not the fault of capitalism that the masses prefer a boxing match to a performance of Sophocles’s *Antigone*, jazz music to Beethoven symphonies, and comics to poetry” (Mises, 1958, p. 27). “The moral corruption, the licentiousness and the intellectual sterility of a class of lewd would-be authors and artists is the ransom mankind must pay lest the creative pioneers be prevented from accomplishing their work. Freedom must be granted to all, even to base people, lest the few who can use it for the benefit of mankind be hindered” (p. 108).

How could Mises deliver such harsh judgments on aesthetic issues? Does liberalism not mean tolerance? Indeed, in *Liberalism* (1927) Mises writes that “[l]iberalism demands tolerance as a matter of principle, not from opportunism. It demands tolerance even of obviously nonsensical teachings, absurd forms of heterodoxy, and childish silly superstitions. It demands toleration for doctrines and opinions that it deems detrimental and ruinous to society and even for movements that it indefatigably combats. For what impels liberalism to demand and accord toleration is not consideration for the content of the doctrine to be tolerated, but the knowledge that only tolerance can create and preserve the condition of social peace without which humanity must relapse into the barbarism and penury of centuries long past” (pp. 56–57). By toleration, however, Mises means that coercion ought not to be used to prevent the public from being exposed to these ideas—not that the public should grant even passive approval to them. In fact, it is the job of the liberal to discourage that approval. “Against what is stupid, nonsensical, erroneous, and evil, liberalism fights with the weapons of the mind . . .” (p. 57).⁶

VI. Summary

In sum, we see that Ludwig von Mises held many cultural positions central to modern American traditionalist conservatism, all of which are centered on his anti-egalitarianism. He favored traditional families organized on the principle of patriarchy and viewed the accompanying obligation

of fidelity as binding; he thought that such institutions as the family and marital fidelity were natural, exclusively civilized, and highly desirable; he thought it was possible to make generalizations about races and ethnic groups when they exhibit distinctive traits, to study these differences, and even to use racial and ethnic generalizations as principles of action, while opposing any legal discrimination among groups; he praised Western civilization as superior to all others because it is the fount of liberty and capitalism; and he criticized mass culture and counterculturalism while favoring Western literature and arts that had stood the test of time.

VII. Some Points of Analysis

What follows are the authors' thoughts on some points in Mises's analysis that we find particularly interesting:

1. The cultural thought of Ludwig von Mises has received virtually no attention from Misesian scholars, though it is clear that his framework is rich in analytical possibilities. Besides its consistency, the most distinctive mark is his cultural traditionalism, which bears strong resemblance to orthodox religious ethics on matters of sexuality, marriage, free love, and promiscuity.

Yet it is important to view Mises as he was: a value-free scientist, a rationalist, and a utilitarian. A brief perusal of the writings of modern American conservative thought (Buckley, 1970) shows sharp differences with the Misesian approach. Mises took great care to arrive at his cultural views (excluding here his purely aesthetic preferences) through deductive means. His thinking on the institution of the family and fidelity demonstrates this most clearly. Nowhere does he defer to tradition or theism. Instead, for Mises, the family and fidelity are natural outgrowths of the division of labor (supported by pervasive inequality), and the need for sexual relations governed by contract.

This is not to suggest that religion did not have a tacit influence on the non-religious Mises, although his Jewish parents were also non-religious. The culture of Mises's Austria, and the University of Vienna where he studied, was heavily Catholic. Even Mises's own tradition of the Austrian school of economics had as its founder Carl Menger, a disciple of the Thomist philosopher Franz Brentano (Grassl and Smith, 1986). Menger's economic ideas, in turn, have much in common with those of the late scholastics (Chafuen, 1986).

This cannot be taken too far, however, for Mises credited capitalism and the industrial revolution for advances in liberty, contract, and voluntarism—not Christianity. He sought to set capitalism and Christianity against each other in terms of their respective historical contributions (Mises, 1922). This did not mean, however, he was hostile to religion as such. "It would be a serious mistake to conclude that the sciences of human action and the policy derived from their teachings, liberalism, are antitheistic and hostile to religion" (Mises, 1949, p. 155). The problem was anti-capitalism. "The churches of all denominations," Mises complained, are promoting economic fallacies instead of teaching "Christian doctrine" (Mises, 1945, p. 231).

2. For Mises, cultural and sociological analysis that subverts "social institutions" that are the product of the "unalterable fact of nature" is highly dangerous. It is in this sense that Mises can be most comfortably called a conservative: What is, should be preserved, with the proviso that its origins are consistent with social cooperation. For him, only socialists would argue against those institutions, whether by disputing the results of economic cooperation (for example, price formation and income distribution) or patterns in sexual relations. Only to the extent that social conditions are the result of exogenous aggression (state or private) are they to be fought and rebuilt on a foundation of private property, contract, and the rule of law.

3. Mises can be seen as typical of twentieth-century laissez-faire economics, as the advocates of free markets have largely been associated with cultural traditionalism (Nash, 1976). Conversely, the advocates of socialism have been associated with cultural libertinism (Nisbet, 1984). Libertarians who regard themselves as "neither Left nor Right," and who therefore mix free markets with libertinism, dismiss this pattern as an accident, or as the result of Christian conservatives intent on promoting their religious agenda (see Kurtz, 1984).⁷ But if there is coherence to Mises's position, it may assist in the development of a deeper understanding of the relationship between a free economic order and a traditionalist perspective on cultural matters.

In Mises, the connection between laissez faire and traditionalism can be seen in two ways. First, Mises—and most other economic libertarians—are vehemently anti-egalitarian, as shown above, and most cultural leftists support some sort of social and cultural leveling. Second, Mises and other

economic libertarians regard the free market and traditional social institutions as in keeping with the natural order, whereas socialism and interventionism, as well as cultural libertinism, seek to upset this natural order and to impose designs on society that are alien to the social patterns of freedom. How this relates to Mises's apparent use of natural law-type constructs, in spite of his explicit rejection of natural law, ought to be the subject of further scholarly reflection.

4. Mises is often credited for having provided the best analytical framework for understanding the inevitability of the failure of socialism: its inability to calculate the relative usefulness of the collectively owned and thus non-traded means of production. Do his cultural and sociological criticisms of socialism have similar predictive power? Nineteenth-century socialists advocated free love, but it was not until the 1960s that it was openly practiced by the Left, creating what has been called the "destructive generation." Mises regarded this and other aspects of the sociological and cultural agenda of the Left as being as socialist as the desire to collectivize the means of production.

5. If we can think about welfarism as a halfway house to socialism, can we say that Mises correctly correlated the growth of interventionism with the breakup of the family and increased promiscuity (Murray, 1984)? If natural differences between the sexes and the requirements of the division of labor yielded the family, then the attempt to equalize the sexes will break down the division of labor, and *mutatis mutandis*, the family, as a fundamental unit of society. Scholars and policy groups concerned with family issues might do well to consider this.

It is also noteworthy that Mises claimed that capitalism saved humanity from sexual neurosis. The idea of contractual sexual relations freed both men and women from the psychological oppression of the disordered sexual lives that result from broken marriages and the socialist desire to abolish the institution altogether. Has the level of sexual neurosis and misconduct risen in conjunction with the level of economic interventionism?

6. Mises says that economic intervention, by definition, must favor some groups over others, so that intervention necessarily translates into unequal treatment of groups defined by their race and ethnicity. Could the plethora of race-based programs established by the U.S. government be directly correlated with its economic interventionism? Might working to reestablish a free economy also lay the intellectual groundwork for repealing laws that mandate racially and ethnically unequal treatment? Furthermore, Mises

saw great danger in attempting to ground legitimate equality under law in a false notion of inborn equality. If the state imposed an equality that ignored possible patterns of different strengths and weaknesses among different groups, the rule of law would be undermined. Can it be argued that this has occurred in American society since at least the early 1960s (Williams, 1982)?

7. Mises leaves open the question of why it might be in the interests of women in traditional roles to oppose women's suffrage. Logical speculation produces the following possible deduction. Feminists are the ones most likely to exercise the vote once it is granted. Given their socialist intellectual framework, feminists would also support heightened state intervention, which is likely to make the lives of women who are full-time wives and mothers more difficult (with state child care, fewer tax breaks for motherhood, and cultural opposition to the family). Greater state intervention, by making most people poorer, also makes the maintenance of the traditional family with one wage earner more difficult.

Moreover, non-feminist wives and mothers will have less interest in being politically active. Thus, by default, women's suffrage leads to political power being exercised against non-feminists. It would be far better, Mises might have argued, for the non-feminists to oppose women's suffrage, than to live under the feminist domination that would logically follow the passage of women's suffrage. (Possibly instructive in this regard is Gilder, 1973).

8. Mises denied the cultural worth of many goods and services produced under capitalism, especially those associated with mass culture. For him, capitalism was not to blame for this, for the market reflects the moral character of the public. What is unclear is whether he thought a growing baseness of mass culture could undermine the intellectual foundations of the free market. He certainly thought that popular literature laden with leftist ideology (Mises gives the example of detective stories) had bad consequences. But did he see similar dangers in trashy but non-ideological mass culture?

Notes

1. Mises himself repudiated the term "conservatism" (see, e.g., Mises, 1961, p. 191; 1957, pp. 376 and 372), but by this he meant social systems characterized by "stagnation" and "rigidity," where the purpose of government is to "prevent any innova-

tions that could endanger its own supremacy." This definition of conservatism would apply to Eastern cultures and Bismarckian welfarism. To Mises, writing in his time and place, conservatism had more in common with socialism (and American liberalism) than *laissez faire*. Our use of the term "traditionalist" is derived from its use in contemporary America, especially in the context of culture: an emphasis on family and anti-egalitarianism, and a preference for the enduring ideas, art, and literature of the West as versus popular culture.

2. Note the contrast between the economic and cultural thought of John Maynard Keynes and that of Mises. Keynes, like his philosophical mentor E. G. Moore, was a moral libertine. Of his years at Cambridge, Keynes stated flatly: "We repudiated entirely customary morals, conventions and traditional wisdom. We were, that is to say, in the strict sense of the term, immoralists. . . . [W]e recognized no moral obligation on us, no inner sanction, to conform or obey" (Skidelsky, 1986, pp. 142-43). Charles Rowley argues that Keynes's moral libertinism is linked with his anti-orthodox economics: "The young Keynes was to engage his energies in a sustained attack upon the moral order of Victorian England. The maturing Keynes was to launch an attack upon the fundamental precepts of classical political economy: the gold standard, *laissez faire* and the principle of budget balance." Moreover, Keynes "was an active participant in organizations that regularly indulged in criminal behavior . . . The hostility of the criminal to the specific laws that he is infringing usually extends to the wider rules and conventions of the society in question. . . . By setting himself without the law, Keynes predisposed himself to an attack on classical political economy which culminated in the *General Theory*" (Rowley, 1986, pp. 115 and 121).
3. The inequality of men is also cited as a point against universal public education. In addition to its potential for abuse by government officials (Mises, 1944, pp. 82-83 and 276), the goals of public education are unrealistic and socialistic. The U.S. "embarked upon the noble experiment" of "making every boy and girl an educated person" by making them "spend the years from six to eighteen in school." The goal of every American graduating from high school has been achieved only by "destroy[ing]" the "scholarly and scientific value" of high school. "If one lowers the scholastic standard of high schools and colleges in order to make it possible for the majority of less gifted and less industrious youths to get diplomas, one merely hurts the minority of those who have the capacity to make use of the teaching. The experience of the last decades in American education bears out the fact that there are inborn differences in man's intellectual capacities that cannot be eradicated by any effort of education" (Mises, 1961, pp. 195-96).
4. Mises advocated democracy as a procedural matter because he thought it the system best suited to social cooperation, a position growing out of Mises's rule-based utilitarianism. Every individual preference is to be considered equally valid for the social order, but every individual choice is not equally valid in a moral or aesthetic sense. On Mises and utilitarianism see Yeager, 1991.
5. At this point in Mises's exposition, he adds a footnote: "To examine how far the radical demands of feminism were created by men and women whose sexual character was not normally developed would go beyond the limits set to these expositions."

6. The very discussion of tolerance presupposes the legitimacy of disapproval; if it were possible and desirable for everyone to be equally approving of all doctrines, cultures, and practices, there would be no reason to raise the question of toleration. See Mises, 1967, p. 218.
7. As to a possible connection between libertinism and statism, Kurtz's role in the drafting of the "Humanist Manifesto II (1973)" is instructive. The document calls for "a socialized and cooperative economic order, autonomous and situational ethics, . . . many varieties of sexual exploration, . . . and the development of a system of world law and order based on a transnational federal government." (see Martin, 1990, p. 295).

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