

EDITOR'S REMARKS

WHEN MURRAY ROTHBARD FOUNDED the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* in 1977, publishing opportunities for libertarian scholarship, especially *radical* libertarian scholarship, were even rarer than they are today. Certainly the intellectual climate was beginning to improve. New books and conferences, along with the Nobel prizes for Friedrich A. Hayek and Milton Friedman, had all combined to give broadly libertarian approaches a higher academic profile.

But libertarian ideas nonetheless largely remained an academic curiosity, something to be mentioned, mischaracterized, and rebutted in passing, perhaps in a snide footnote (something that is still true today, though happily to a far lesser extent).

What Rothbard understood, moreover, was that even if the standard publishing venues in various established fields should grow more hospitable to libertarian ideas, the movement also needed an *interdisciplinary* journal, because the case for a free society depends upon a variety of different fields.

In Rothbard's vision, libertarianism represented not simply a set of policy proposals, but a wide-ranging and diverse body of social theory articulating an integrated understanding of human agency and social interaction *underlying* such policy proposals. That's why it's the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* and not just the journal of libertarianism.

As Rothbard wrote in the journal's inaugural issue, libertarian scholarship constitutes "a new and growing interdisciplinary discipline" drawing upon "each of the particular and seemingly isolated fields that study human action," including "[p]hilosophy, political science, economics, history, law, sociology, geography, anthropology, education, and biology."

For Rothbard, as for his mentor Ludwig von Mises, one could not hope to understand current political problems without a grasp of history, one could not understand history without knowing economic theory, one could not understand economic theory without investigating such philosophical matters as epistemological apriorism and the nature of agency, and so on.

Under Rothbard's editorship until his death in 1995, and under Hans-Hermann Hoppe's editorship for the past ten years, the *JLS* has remained true to that mission, publishing cutting-edge articles in

social-scientific methodology, class analysis, cultural evolution, anarchist theories of justice, and other topics that cross disciplinary boundaries.

The JLS has also served the need for a venue that publishes libertarian scholarly work that is radical—both in the sense of being willing to apply principles consistently rather than resting content with tepid half-measures, and in the sense of seeking fundamental rather than superficial explanations, exposing the interconnected nature and underlying causes of social phenomena.

Rather than simply complaining about government regulations, for example, the JLS has published articles showing how such regulations have traditionally worked to sustain a *régime* of military imperialism and corporate privilege. Rather than arguing for, say, tax cuts or a lower minimum wage, the JLS has challenged the very legitimacy of the state as an institution.

As my editorial predecessor Hans Hoppe has noted, "criticisms of specific government policies or personalities" are ineffective against the prevailing order unless they address "the root of the problem" by showing how any "particular government failing" is "symptomatic of an underlying flaw in the very idea of government itself" (*Democracy—The God That Failed*, pp. 93-94).

In the 1978 edition of *For A New Liberty*, Rothbard argued that while "persuasion and conversion" are crucial to the success of the libertarian project, the point of libertarian scholarship is not just to educate others but to educate ourselves; "continual self-education" enables libertarian activists to "keep their own ranks vibrant and healthy" while at the same time "refining and advancing" a "systematic theory" comparable to Marxism in integration and scope. "Libertarianism, while vital and true," he wrote, "cannot be merely graven in stone tablets; it must be a living theory, advancing through writing and discussion, and through refuting and combatting errors as they arise."

As incoming editor of the JLS, I am honored and excited to be able to continue the tradition that Rothbard and Hoppe have begun. I can't claim to be a clone of either of them; individuals differ, and my particular perspective and intellectual heritage are not identical with anyone else's. But I share entirely their commitment to providing a serious professional venue for hard-hitting, high-quality scholarship in the field of radical libertarian studies.

While the journal's vision has been and will remain solidly libertarian in the Rothbardian tradition, we continue to renounce any attempt to impose a "party line" on its contributors; scholarship progresses through civil but vigorous debate, not through confinement in an echo chamber.

As Rothbard noted in his inaugural editorial, we are interested in articles that "advance the discipline of libertarianism," not in "whether or not the scholar is personally a libertarian."

Accordingly, we enthusiastically solicit contributions from across the ideological spectrum, both within and beyond the libertarian movement. If you think you have something to teach us about any aspect of libertarian thought, write it! Submit it! Don't expect to see the journal's radicalism watered down, however; the point of reaching beyond the core is to invigorate the core, not to displace it.

In line with Rothbard's description of libertarianism as "a living theory, advancing through. . . refuting and combatting errors as they arise"—and in light of the journal's potential global reach, given its online availability—we also solicit not only theoretical articles (though those continue to be our foundation) but, in addition, pieces that illustrate and apply the theory via analysis of current events.

At present, attention to issues of U.S. military policy seems an especially pressing need; discussion of that topic has dominated the libertarian blogosphere, but so far this concern has not been equally reflected in continuing libertarian academic scholarship.

Other topics in need of deeper attention and application concern the relationship between culture and liberty, centralization and secession, trade and society, the history of ideas, historical origins of states, private covenants, religion and political change, strategy toward liberty, the changing ideologies of left and right, the arts, power-elite analysis, the impact of imperialism, the state and intellectuals, and much more.

This is an exciting time to be a libertarian scholar. When Rothbard founded the *JLS*, such scholars were few and far between; participants in the 1974 South Royalton conference, for example, have told me that that event was the first time they'd ever met another Austrian economist. Today we are everywhere, and the internet makes it easier than ever to keep in touch and exchange ideas.

Of course the growth of statism and militarism continues apace as well; the tares and the wheat grow up together. But at a time like the present era, when traditional political alliances and interpretations are in disarray, the opportunity for raising the academic profile of the libertarian alternative has never been better. The 1960s, too, were a time of political confusion, cultural conflict, ideological disappointment, and an unpopular war; but back then, libertarian scholars were a tiny remnant, much of their output confined to mimeographed broadsides of small circulation, and so were unable to take full advantage of the opportunities for libertarian education that such a situation offered.

Today our numbers are rapidly growing, and our potential audience is as wide as the internet. I hope you will join us in making the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* the chief academic harbinger of the libertarian revolution.

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