

A portrait of Patrick Newman, a man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and a red and blue checkered tie. He is seated in a patterned armchair. In the background, there is a wooden bookshelf filled with books and a large green plant.

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PATRICK NEWMAN

Rothbard's Editor
on the Mentor He Never Met



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Publisher: Jeff Deist
Editor: Ryan McMaken
Associate Editor: Tho Bishop
Managing Editor: Judith F. Thommesen
Design/Layout: Kathy White
Contributing Editors:
David Gordon
Joseph T. Salerno
Mark Thornton

Mises Institute
518 West Magnolia Avenue
Auburn, AL 36832-4501
334.321.2100 | Fax: 334.321.2119
contact@mises.org | mises.org

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jeffdeist@mises.org • [@jeffdeist](#)

From the publisher

Jeff Deist

Why does support for socialism persist?

It's a perplexing question, given the weight of both theory and history. If nothing else, the first half of the twentieth century stands as a grim testament to war and collectivism. But Mises understood the "despotism of public opinion," having literally written the book on socialism in the 1920s.

We still fight that despotism today, as public opinion devolves into an illiterate, innumerate, and ahistorical hash. It's all fed by social media, cable news, DC house organs like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and the outsized influence of a perverse academic culture.

The result is bad politics, bad economics, and bad culture. How else could a man like Bernie Sanders, who was almost literally a bum before grifting his way into the mayorship of Burlington, Vermont, become a serious contender for the highest political office of the most powerful government in human history? A man who traveled to and praised the former Soviet Union as a blueprint for organizing society?

How do we fight this? We start by understanding that progressives — of all parties — aren't kidding. They unblinkingly believe, as Mises explained, that socialism is both moral and inevitable. They don't care about theory or history or human nature because they think society can be engineered. They promise Denmark or Sweden; they deliver Venezuela. And they insist their outmoded and disproven ideas are *new*, when in fact collectivism is an ancient doctrine.

But it's a doctrine that can't and won't work, and our job is to use all the tools at our disposal to make the case for markets and liberty. Mises, Hayek, Hazlitt, and Rothbard already did the hard work of demolishing socialism; now all of us bear the lighter burden of bringing their brilliance to new generations.

Speaking of Rothbard, our great young scholar Patrick Newman is now the editor of not one but two of Murray's posthumous full-length books. *The Progressive Era* was a big hit when it came out in 2017, serving as a needed summation of Rothbard's tremendous historical work on the period. Now Dr. Newman has worked through hundreds of


Rothbard's handwritten pages to produce the final and 5th volume of *Conceived in Liberty*, the long-awaited conclusion to the series. Here Rothbard takes us through the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, a centralizing document which pitted scheming "anti-Federalists" against the misnamed "Federalists." Don't miss Patrick's great cover interview about the process of putting together this wonderful new work of revisionist history.

You'll enjoy David Gordon's review of *Alienated America: Why Some Places Thrive While Others Collapse* by Timothy Carney of the *Washington Examiner*. Carney trained as a reporter under the famed columnist Robert Novak, and unlike most journalists has the late Mr. Novak's feel for the populist American pulse. Carney's new book identifies important schisms in the American experience, in the same vein as Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* and Charles Murray's *Coming Apart* — schisms often created or exacerbated by policies coming out of DC.

"If public opinion is ultimately responsible for the structure of government, it is also the agency that determines whether there is freedom or bondage. There is virtually only one factor that has the power to make people unfree — tyrannical public opinion. The struggle for freedom is ultimately not resistance to autocrats or oligarchs but resistance to the despotism of public opinion."

— Ludwig von Mises, *Theory and History*

But while Mr. Carney correctly sees government as a frequent villain in the quest for civil society, he can't quite accept that government and civil society might be inherently at odds. To Carney, government is a tool to promote the kind of society *he'd* like to live in, whereas Lockean liberals overstate the case for property and markets. But what if government goes the wrong direction, or oversteps its bounds? Thankfully, Dr. Gordon is here to gently correct Carney and bring your attention to this otherwise excellent book. Culture and civil society matter more than politics, or at least they should.

Finally, we hope to see all of you this year at events in Seattle, New York, or Los Angeles (see [mises.org/events](#)). And we urge you to follow our two great new podcasts, *Economics for Entrepreneurs* and the *Human Action* podcast. You won't find more compelling or erudite listening anywhere else! 

Jeff Deist is president of the Mises Institute.



PATRICK NEWMAN

Rothbard's Editor *on the Mentor He Never Met*

Dr. Patrick Newman, a Fellow of the Mises Institute, is assistant professor of economics at Florida Southern College and a Fellow of its Center for Free Enterprise. He completed his PhD in economics at George Mason University, while he was a Research Fellow at the Mises Institute, sponsored by the Conant Family Foundation and James Kluttz. His primary research interests include Austrian economics, monetary theory, and late 19th- and early 20th-century American economic history. He is the editor of Murray Rothbard's *The Progressive Era* (Mises Institute, 2017) and *Conceived in Liberty*, vol. 5 (Mises Institute, 2019).

JEFF DEIST: Patrick Newman, I'll start with the same question I asked Joe Salerno in his interview: how does a kid from New Jersey end up deciding to get a PhD in economics?

PATRICK NEWMAN: That's a great question. I got interested in Austrian economics and libertarianism around the time of the Ron Paul Revolution. During the fall of 2008 and the financial crisis, I was a senior in high school and everything really clicked. I started going on mises.org. Immediately, I ordered *Human Action*, and *Man, Economy, and State* and began reading them. By my second year of college, I transferred to Rutgers University in New Jersey where ironically, Joe Salerno got his PhD. I actually had one of his professors in class. I decided that I wanted to become an economics professor. I was really interested in reading and writing, and once I found out that you could make a living doing that, I said "yeah, that sounds great for me. I'd love to do that." I was really wanting to continue reading Austrian economics, economic history, libertarianism as much as I could and if you can get paid for that, then so much the better.

JD: You read *Human Action* and *Man Economy, and State* in your teens?

PN: Yes. I was 18 and I was reading those my freshman year. As a freshman I went to Loyola Maryland. Ron Paul came to speak in February of 2010. He was promoting his *End the Fed* book. Naturally, I went. There were about 400 people there and afterward, Dr. Paul was signing books. I went up to him and he signed my book. I still have the book with the ticket. I told him “hi, I’m very interested, I’ve read all these books, *Human Action* and *Man, Economy, and State*.” And he says, “well, you’re ahead of everyone else at your age.” I think “great, I’m off to a good start.” I was reading those books, my freshman year of college and senior year of high school, and they really clicked.

JD: Pretty rigorous stuff for a young person! At some point you decided to pursue an academic career and obtain a PhD from George Mason University. Tell us about your experience. Was Rothbard part of your focus? What was the topic of your thesis?

PN: I wrote on monetary history, continuing some stuff that I worked on as a Mises Institute Research Fellow. I was a Fellow at the Mises Institute during the summers of 2012–2013 and that was when I was an undergrad. Rothbard was always a big part of my time at GMU. I always took the Rothbardian line and tried to argue it as forcefully and eloquently as I could. I was grateful to have Larry White as my dissertation advisor, and I worked on a lot of Austrian business cycle theory. The papers I worked on included one paper on the Panic of 1873, another paper on the Depression of 1920 to ‘21 and then a third paper on 1920s monetary policy. On all three of those I took the Rothbardian position.

In the 1920s paper, I defended Rothbard against Friedman as sort of the Austrian view of how the Federal Reserve was expansionary in the 1920s. This was against the monetarist view of Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz. And yes, I continued my studies of Rothbard at George Mason. One day they had a Rothbard Reading Day and I argued forcefully for Rothbard and even on the other reading days we had, I still argued forcefully for Rothbard’s position.

JD: Not too many PhD programs or candidates have a Rothbardian focus.

PN: Yes, you can count them on one hand and, you know, depending on how you go, you can count them on one finger, a few fingers, at least in the United States.

JD: In correspondence with Dr. Salerno you used the term “meta-mentor” to describe your view of Rothbard. Please explain.

PN: Well, I never met Murray Rothbard. I was born in 1991. He died in early 1995. So, I wasn’t quite up there with my intellectual development yet.

By far, Rothbard is the biggest intellectual influence on my life. I read all his stuff. I’m very interested in how he approaches both theory and history and I’ve always sort of viewed him as a meta-mentor.

JD: So you didn’t meet him as a toddler (laughs).

PN: No, he never responded to my letters. By far, he’s the biggest intellectual influence on my life. I read all his stuff. I’m very interested in how he approaches both theory and history and I’ve always sort of viewed him as a meta-mentor because one, I view Joe Salerno as a mentor and he mentored Joe Salerno, in that case, he’s a meta-mentor.

Rothbard died when I was a kid, so he’s almost like an Obi-Wan Kenobi-like mentor. He’s over my shoulder, especially because I was working in the archive, either with *Man Economy, and State*, the Fifth Chapter, *The Progressive Era*, and *Conceived in Liberty*. I

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

was literally having to read his handwriting and sort of proceed there. So, you can naturally develop a feel for the guy that especially is unique because you never met him and you know you're very influenced by him. Basically, all the research I've ever done has really been taking something that Rothbard spoke about and then trying to explore it further. I use it in my research topics or how to approach something through Murray Rothbard.

JD: You've spent quite a bit of time here at the Mises Institute going through Rothbard's personal papers, his letters, his correspondence, his notes, his marginalia, even some of his audio recordings. Did it ever seem voyeuristic? Do you think he would mind having his private thoughts examined decades later?

He's definitely the radical libertarian. He always took the radical view and he always viewed it as "well, no one else is doing it, so I have to do it." He kind of viewed himself as taking the radical position.

PN: Yes, definitely. You're in the archives reading his draft papers. You're reading letters. You definitely get a feel from his personal correspondence of what he's thinking, what he intends for someone, in particular. It's kind of hard especially for younger people such as myself to comprehend, I mean, he never used a computer. He never used the internet, so back in the day when you used to send things through snail mail, you would write to someone and then two weeks later, they get back to you and then you keep the letter. So what I was doing was the equivalent of if you died and someone

was reading your emails or your text messages or your Facebook messages. Granted, those are much shorter, but you definitely get a perspective of the person that you might not get through other means. You think "oh, this is how Rothbard is viewing this problem," or "this is how he's approaching that." And especially when, in his letters, he talks about academic and intellectual matters, I thought "wow, he never even discussed this anywhere else." And I end up thinking, "oh, this is what he thinks about this. I was always wondering if he ever spoke about that. Thank goodness he wrote this little letter and that it survived." Unless you knew him and you spoke to him personally, you never would have ever figured that out. You never would have gotten that from him.

JD: You spent many hours inside his head, almost like a biographer.

PN: Exactly, definitely.

JD: You know where I'm going with this leading question! Have you ever thought about writing a comprehensive Rothbard biography?

PN: Yes, I have. I've thought about that, definitely. I've even thought about a preliminary title and how I would approach it. Yes, I've definitely thought about that.

JD: You might want to talk to Guido Hülsmann first! What did all this time spent with Rothbard's letters and papers tell you about the man himself, apart from his work?

PN: Well, that's a good question. He's definitely the radical libertarian. He always took the radical view and he always viewed it as "well, no one else is doing it, so I have to do it." He kind of viewed himself as taking the radical position. You can clearly see that in his theoretical work, but you also see how he writes. He's radical, and he's also very knowledgeable, the attention to detail is quite astounding. If you look at *Conceived in Liberty*, the first four volumes, and then you're working on volume five — and this is especially true of *The Progressive Era* — he just names names and he had such a tremendous ability to sort and collect information and then process it. It's one thing to take his Rothbardian story or approach and build off of it, but it's another

thing to construct it, entirely, which is quite remarkable. So, the first thing I would say, he's always radical and the second thing, he's very knowledgeable, and the third thing is — and this is one of the things that attracted me to his writing: he was always a very good writer and he could always be funny. His writing is interesting. It isn't dry. In his personal letters and his rough drafts, even with *Conceived in Liberty*, there were times that I was chuckling or — with Rothbard — cackling, kind of, because you could just tell he knew how to grind gears and he knew how to get his point across. And always with joy, you could tell that he had fun with what he did.

JD: Was he the intransigent prickly guy some of his critics allege, or the sweet generous guy underneath it all?

PN: He could be both. I think, as someone who has enormous respect and even agrees with him: he could be very kind and helpful to people, but he could also — when he disagrees with you — sometimes do a demolition job on you. He could do it in writing or in an argument, he would just be exhaustive in taking someone down. He definitely had a wide and broad vision but he was always helpful — extremely helpful — and friendly to people who wanted to help that vision. But you also have definitely a “my way or the highway” type of deal, which is just part of the man. He had his system and he seemed to think “I don't want imperfection in the system and I want to do it my way,” and thank goodness he did that.

JD: You edited *The Progressive Era*, another of Rothbard's posthumous books. One goal was to disabuse us that progressivism was rooted in benevolent, well-meaning reforms. We needed a clear-eyed, Rothbardian understanding of the period, marked in fact by a very unholy marriage of big business and big government. Are you happy with the book? Do you think it poked a hole in the progressive mythology?

PN: Yes, absolutely. One of the things that actually led me to decide I wanted to become a professor and do all of that was, in the summer of 2010 and 2011, I was working at various manual labor jobs that showed me how fortunate I was to be in college. I was getting a college degree. While working I would always listen to Rothbard's audio lectures on the Progressive Era. Just the way he would go

through everything and he would name names and he had this whole grand story. I thought, “wow, that would be great if he wrote something on that.” With *The Progressive Era* book, that was certainly what I tried to do. He wrote this manuscript in the late 70s and then he wrote later essays and then he also used the manuscript in class in the 80s and he kept building on it. That was what I tried to do when I combined everything and tied the story together through editorial footnotes. There's only so much you can do, obviously.

I wish he'd finished the full book because that would help with the narrative, but yes, I'm happy with *The Progressive Era*, with what I did and in terms of that project. Certainly, the goal was to make the book showcase Rothbard's skills as an historian. This was not only his thesis on the Progressive Era, but also sort of a jumping off point for researchers, such as myself, to use it and to build off of it, which is something I've already done, particularly regarding Sherman Antitrust or the 1906 Meat Inspection Act, or the Federal Trade Commission. Would I have changed some things about the finished book? Yes, maybe some things, but overall, I'm very happy with it, with what I did and how I did it — with the approach, the style, the editorial style. I think it's a great book.

JD: Boy, did he name names! And dates. Rothbard's a real historian, giving us granular detail. But he also wanted to be a synthesizer, and present a systematic method of thinking about history. No economist would dare do that today, especially in another field.

PN: He wanted to do that with everything and not just with the Progressive Era. With American history, including the Progressive Era, he had a whole narrative, a whole range of economic analysis. This included the Austrian critique of competition, political parties and ethno-religious historians and all of this stuff. He definitely had in mind a sweeping narrative and I think it's remarkable. Hans-Hermann Hoppe has remarked on this: when you look at Rothbard's writing, it can be very systematic and it's almost like it flows from this whole overarching story. And you read it and then when you talk to him or in my case, when you listen to his lecture, say on the Progressive Era, he's all over the place. And it's funny because that's how I wanted to become a professor. I thought, “I want to be like that.” You can't, unfortunately, do that anymore, but I still want to be like that. But yes, you could

tell that he had this whole theory in his head, this whole story, not just for the Progressive Era, but for American history. The term is “gestalt,” totality, and he definitely had that in his work.

JD: *Conceived in Liberty*, including the long lost 5th volume you recently edited, could serve as the overarching narrative of colonial America. Instead, we're stuck with books like Howard Zinn's *People's History*, which unfortunately is assigned widely in schools.

PN: Yes, I agree completely. I think this book coming out makes it timely, given the change in how people

The book is a product of the 60s and 70s, and you realize this is how American history used to be. I find it a more convincing narrative. It might not be the most politically correct or the least offensive narrative, but at the end of the day, it's just the most correct, period.

view history, the whole lens of political correctness. The book is a product of the 60s and 70s, and you realize this is how American history used to be. I find it a more convincing narrative. It might not be the most politically correct or the least offensive narrative, but at the end of the day, it's just the most correct, period. So yes, I think a book coming out on the Constitution that was written in the 60s, is like a type of time machine. It's very important. It's very interesting, too.

JD: We should mention Rothbard's other historical works too. *The Betrayal of the American Right*, *The Panic of 1819*, *America's Great Depression*, *A History of Money and Banking in the United States*, and his unfinished

An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought were all very serious historical works. He was a *bona fide* historian with a résumé longer than many fulltime academics.

PN: Yes. For his dissertation, Rothbard wrote on the Panic of 1819 and was influenced by Joseph Dorfman. The resulting book, called *The Panic of 1819*, is something that's cited to this day by mainstream authors. It's actually just incredible that someone's dissertation written in the 1950s is still cited. I can't get people to even read my own dissertation and mine was published a couple of years ago. He was a true American, he was a true historian, especially an American historian, and he could be very theoretical.

He would write these enormous theoretical works, treatises like *Man, Economy, and State*, and at the same time write a multi-volume history of early America. And like you said, if you were to ask someone, “oh, prominent historian, what did you do?” You'd maybe find out they were known for writing a five-volume history from Jamestown to the Constitution — and that's it. You can put a period. Yes, they might have published some book reviews, and maybe a couple of other papers.

But with Rothbard you'd say “oh yeah, by the way, he also wrote numerous other books and countless articles. He's definitely an historian.”

And something else that should be emphasized: out of all the Austrian economists — out of Mises's students as well as some of the people like Hayek or Lachmann or Kirzner and so on — Rothbard, he was also one of the most empirical. We see this in the massive amount of history he did and that's something that's very important. He not only knew how to develop the theory, but also apply it and I actually think that's quite a unique gift, especially at the beginning when you have to actually develop the edifice, so to speak.

JD: You mentioned the late Joseph Dorfman, who was a mentor to Rothbard at Columbia, a Russian immigrant, and an expert on the history of economic thought. Was Dorfman almost as large an influence on Rothbard as Mises?

PN: That's a good question. I thought about that and I definitely think he was very influential with Rothbard. One thing is that Rothbard was always very grateful to Dorfman because of all the details and historical facts Dorfman provided. In Rothbard's historical work, you see this, especially regarding certain American periods. As with the Jacksonian period, Rothbard was influenced by Dorfman in work on other eras. Actually, in the 60s when Rothbard was writing *Conceived in Liberty*, he attended a conference and he spoke about economic thought. He had to comment on Joseph Dorfman, and he was an invited speaker to that event. I don't know too much about their personal relationship and how that continued, but I think he was very influenced by him. He applied, basically, Mises's theory of history and then used Dorfman's intense attention to details and facts.

JD: Dorfman presumably influenced Rothbard to examine the power elite's motivations and reject sanitized versions of history?

PN: That was something Dorfman was big on and Rothbard definitely took that from him. I actually think — I have to dig back into that — in his lecture on the Progressive Era, I know he mentioned that. He says people have a life and you've got to look at how that influences their work. He might have mentioned Dorfman's name, but I'd have to look into that. Dorfman's big book *The Economic Mind in American Civilization* was a five-volume series published in the 40s and 50s and Rothbard is influenced by that, particularly with his American history regarding the ideas on people. You can see this in Rothbard's *History of Economic Thought*. The style of Dorfman, definitely that was visible, in my opinion. He explicitly gave thanks to Dorfman in the introduction to those books.

JD: This project, resurrecting the final 5th volume of *Conceived in Liberty*, was a doozy. It's subtitled *The New Republic*, and covers 1784 to 1791. I understand Rothbard wrote the book longhand, on yellow pads, and



then used a dictating machine to record it. The tapes were destroyed, so you faced the task of deciphering his handwriting—something even Joey Rothbard and Lew Rockwell couldn't do. Describe how this project developed.

PN: That's a good question. I was a Mises Institute Research Fellow during the summer of 2013 and this is right around when the archives are starting to take shape, and one afternoon I asked Dr. Salerno if I could look in there. Barbara Pickard, the archivist, was there. I thought "hey, there would be good paper ideas in there, some history stuff." So, I started to go in there, started to work in there, sifting through boxes. The only way I can describe it is when you're a kid in a candy store, this is like the same thing, it's the closest you can get to meeting your Mark Maguire, your Barry Bonds. And you're going to see all this stuff that no one else has seen and you could spend all day in there, all night. I've done that.

I first saw some pages developing the unpublished fifth chapter of *Man Economy, and State* on production theory and developed that over the next couple of years. Some of the other things I saw in 2013 were some chapters of *The Progressive Era*, as well as the fifth volume of *Conceived in Liberty*. When I looked at the fifth volume of *Conceived*

in Liberty, I thought, "whoa, what is this hieroglyphics stuff going on here?" But I had an idea. I thought, "okay, I think there's definitely something there for each of those big projects." So, you first work on the *Man, Economy, and State* chapter. Then you go to *The Progressive Era*, then you go to *Conceived in Liberty*, so it's kind of like each step of the way, you're going to a harder and harder project. Most of *The Progressive Era* was typed. He did have some marginalia I had to add in, if I could figure out how to read that. But the fifth volume of *Conceived in Liberty*, that was something with which you had to try to figure out the handwriting. There were some typed pages, but when you get to Shays' Rebellion, it was only handwriting and I just hit an immediate wall. I thought "this is not going to work." And I was ready to throw in the towel because I wasn't making any headway. I remember even talking to the Mises Institute book editor Judy Thommesen about this saying, "hey, this might not work out." But, she said "don't give up yet."

In the beginning it was rough going. Barbara was even helping me with the first part of the handwritten manuscript. I had to go back and forth and look at what I was reading. There were times I just worked through the night. Finally I thought, "alright, I'm starting to get into



this, highlight each word and then write it out.” And then I’d have to go back and say “alright, now what do the other words say?” I’d go over the context and finally see what it said and I just started to get a better feel for how he was writing. Then I could read whole sentences. The biggest thing is, not only do you not necessarily know what he’s writing, but you also have to figure out his point of view. And as you’re reading you’re having history unfold and then you read it better and you don’t need to write out as much. By the end, it was like “translating” a book. It was about a solid four weeks of just hell. I mean, I loved every minute of it. It was great, but it was tough work. I would go to sleep and I would literally see the words in my sleep — the hieroglyphics — and trying to figure out what he meant. At the end of it, you did it and you’re thinking, “wow, I did it.” And now, at least with the writing, I can look at it. I can still look at it and I’m very comfortable reading it, but it was definitely a process. It was a fun struggle, I think that’s the way I’d put it.

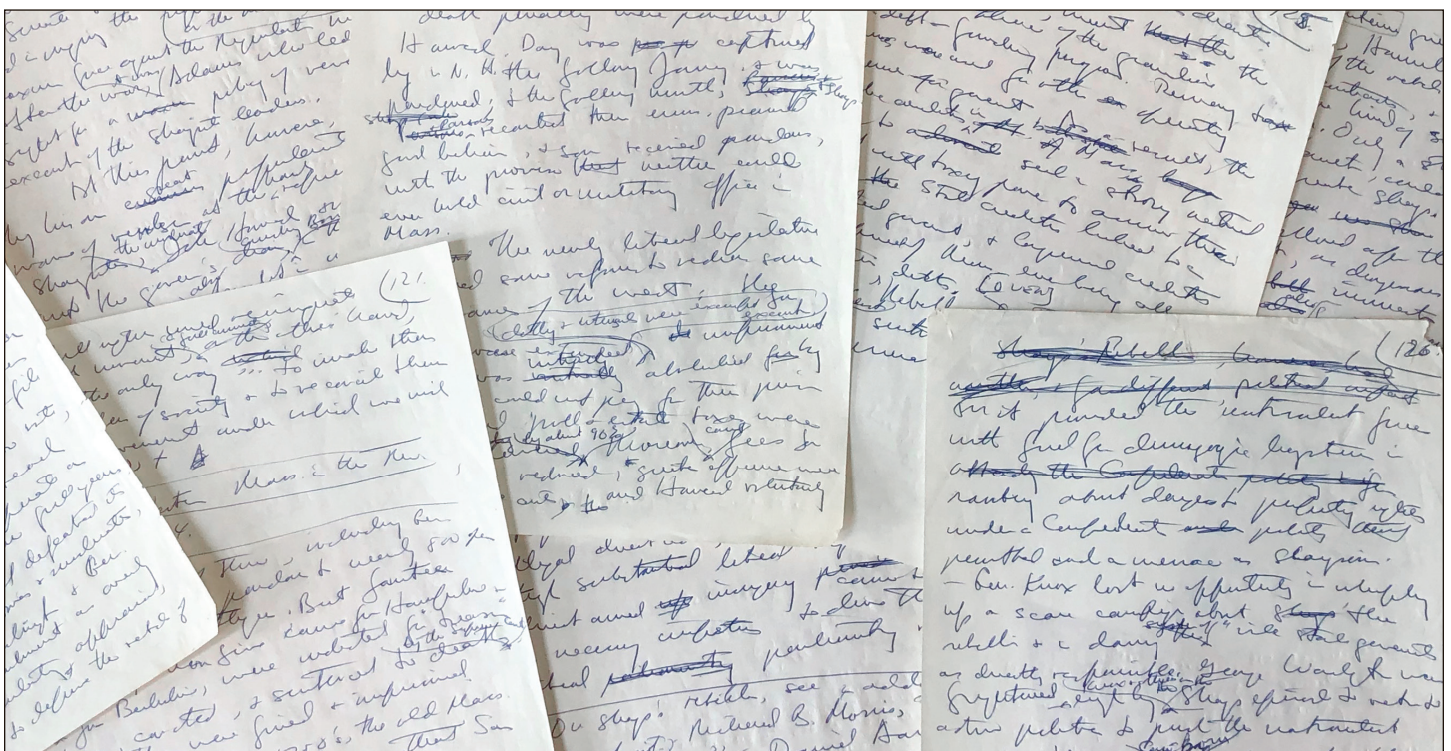
JD: Did you ever have to construct a sentence and hope it was right?

PN: You had to, definitely. There were times I’d have to go back and look at the words and have to construct a

sentence or revise it. In some of the places, he actually wrote his ands as plusses. There was lots of shorthand. But I don’t know how his hand could take it. We’re talking literally 600 pages of front-and-back handwriting. I don’t know if he ever developed carpal tunnel syndrome. He must have used an icepack when he was doing this. But, sometimes you have to edit sentences or kind of reconstruct them a little bit. Obviously you couldn’t do it as much as he did it because it’s his work. What’s remarkable was how little of it, in the structure, I had to edit. He handwrote a book with footnotes and block quotes. He would have, “see this article.” Some of the pages, parts of it were torn, so you had to stitch it in. It wasn’t just purely like transcribing. There was some editorial work involved.

JD: Can you give us a teaser or a surprise, something people might find interesting about the book, to whet our appetite for its release?

PN: Definitely. Rothbard takes a view of the Constitution that, ironically, some Founding Fathers — some neglected ones — took. Namely, that it was basically a conspiracy and sort of a bloodless coup. That was the word he used, the phrase he used, where he moved from the Articles of Confederation to the US Constitution. A



lot of times this is just presented as: “Well, the Articles didn’t work, so these well-intentioned Founding Fathers write up a new Constitution and then this all takes us naturally to the Washington Administration.” But Rothbard definitely takes a view where he says “no, it was a kind of conspiracy, a sort of coup, where you’re having these people trying to institute a stronger government to enhance their own power and privilege, at least for themselves and the various sorts of factions they represent.” He goes through that and it’s a really a fascinating view of how a state forms and how one state takes over another. He definitely goes with the conquest theory of the state as opposed to the contract theory, as if it

I think the best part of the book is when he goes through the ratification. I believe it’s the fifth part of the book, and it’s fascinating. He breaks down all the states and who he’s rooting for, like Patrick Henry of Virginia, who is definitely a neglected Founding Father.

were all a voluntary formation of the new state. Some of the stuff he goes through was new to me. I had to look through all the books that he used. I bought and I read them just to try to get the context that he was going through and even some more recent books, just trying to look at the larger context of what he was talking about. I think the best part of the book is when he goes through the ratification. I believe it’s the fifth part of the book, and it’s fascinating. He breaks down all the states and who he’s rooting for, like Patrick Henry of Virginia, who is definitely a neglected Founding Father. He also covers George Clinton of New York and the anti-Federalists associated with him and the Clinton political machine, particularly Abraham Yates. Rothbard goes through it all and it’s really a fascinating part. It’s a topic that no one else has written about or very few people have written about.

JD: In Rothbardian history there are still heroes and villains, just not who we thought.

PN: Yes, exactly. He has heroes and villains and he tries to give people their just due. He definitely tries to provide a new look at people who have been overlooked by history and he thought that was an important thing to do. He was always very humble, but I think he knew in his writing, like he was himself getting overlooked. That was probably why he has somewhat of a harsh view of academics. He might have thought, “these people, I could have done what they did, but I decided not to do it.” So, he may have been thinking about some of these neglected historical figures, thinking, “these people, they made the right choices, at least back in the day. They weren’t perfect, but they made the good choices and they’ve kind of gotten overlooked.” He definitely has that view of bad people and a lot of times, the bad people are the bad people who we were taught, are actually the good people.

JD: Does the 5th volume of *Conceived in Liberty* work as a standalone book, for those who haven’t read the earlier volumes?



PN: Right. It can definitely be a standalone. The main reason why I say that — and certainly not to give myself too much credit — in the introduction, I go through an overview of the first four volumes. So, to someone picking it up, they're certainly not going to get all of the detail, but you can read the introduction and you can say "oh, okay, this is where we are." You definitely don't need to read the first four volumes. Now you certainly want people to read the first four volumes. But, you don't need to read the first four volumes. I certainly would like people to, but you get brought up to speed, so to speak. It was one of my initial goals to make sure it could be read as a standalone volume. The last volume was published in 1979, and 40 years later a lot of the original readers are dead. To get people back into the series, you'd want to at least read the introduction in the beginning.

JD: We're minting PhDs in economics, even Ivy League PhDs, who know nothing about the history of economics. Rothbard knew so much about both the history of economic thought and American history. How did his historical knowledge manifest itself in his economics?

PN: That's a great point. Hyper-specialization is a huge issue where you only concentrate on a certain field. Academics especially sort of shun synthesizing. Academia pooh-poohs it. It's really unfortunate and, ironically, I also think that's why most people don't read. Most academics don't read most academic papers because in order for them to get published, they have to be writing on increasingly minute and specialized things where you can get some sort of new data or new source for research. But, Rothbard in his history writings, was able to switch between theory and history and he was able to apply it to, like you said, the economic thought regarding his economics. He was able to — when drawing on the Austrian edifice — remark on things like the Marshallians or Chicago school or Keynesians. He drew on that history, as well. He also could just draw on his massive array of historical knowledge when developing theory, he always had that in the back of his mind. I'm not saying you need to use the empirical analysis to develop the theory, but he definitely had that — at least I imagine that's how it was — in his mind. He really was like a political economist. He built off of philosophy, political science, economics, history, you name it. And

that shined through all this work. He's combining all sorts of disciplines together.

JD: Like Hayek, Rothbard is arguably not best known as an economist. He refused to stay in his lane, and wrote on history, political philosophy, ethics, you name it. Do you think spending so much time writing outside economics injured his reputation as an economist?

PN: Oh, absolutely. He knew that, and I've seen some great letters where he talked about it. He says, "sure, I could have had a better career by just sticking to certain

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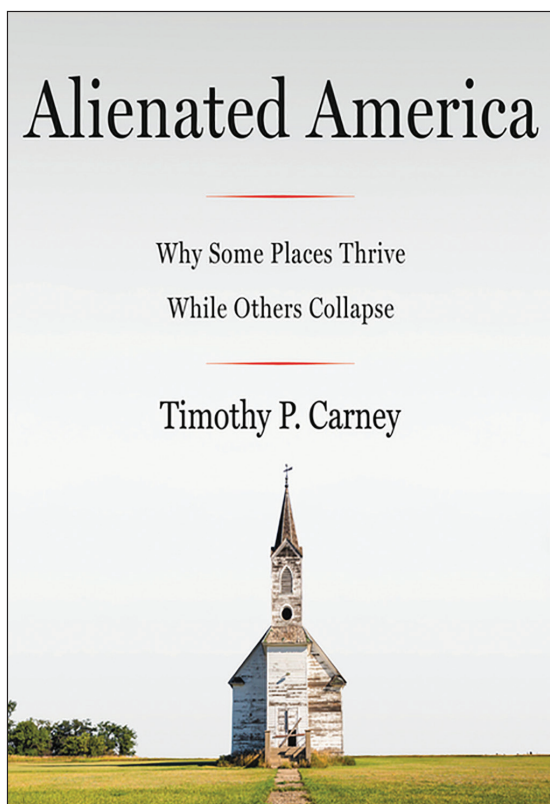
things or sticking to my discipline, or sticking to non-controversial topics. I could have worked at the Hoover Institution or Heritage." But then he concluded, "I don't want to do that. That wasn't what I thought was right and no one else is naming names and criticizing certain people. So, I took it upon myself to do that." It definitely hurt him, and I think this is what some of his detractors necessarily don't appreciate that he had to lay a lot of ground for the initial Austrian movement. This was also true for libertarianism in which people were able to jump on later. But just imagine a world with no *Man, Economy, and State*, no *America's Great Depression*. Austrian economics and libertarianism would have taken a very different turn. I don't think there would have really been any Austrian revival. Libertarianism, I don't think would have been as big. He took a lot of bullets, but it was for the long run, so to speak, instead of short-term gain. ■■■

ALIENATED AMERICA

DAVID GORDON

REVIEWS

Alienated America
Why Some Places Thrive While Others Collapse
Timothy P. Carney
Harper Collins, 2019
xiv + 348 pages



Timothy Carney, a researcher at the American Enterprise Institute and editor at the *Washington Examiner*, has a message of vital importance for supporters of the free market. This message is not, though, the only theme of his book. He pursues two other projects as well, also of interest, but for readers of *The Austrian* it is the first theme that demands our attention.

Supporters of the free market rightly stress that it promotes the interests of individuals better than any alternative system, but emphasis on this point risks falling into a fallacy. We tend to think only of individuals, seeing them as battling against the state. This ignores both families and civil society, “the stuff bigger than the individual or the family, but smaller than the central government.”

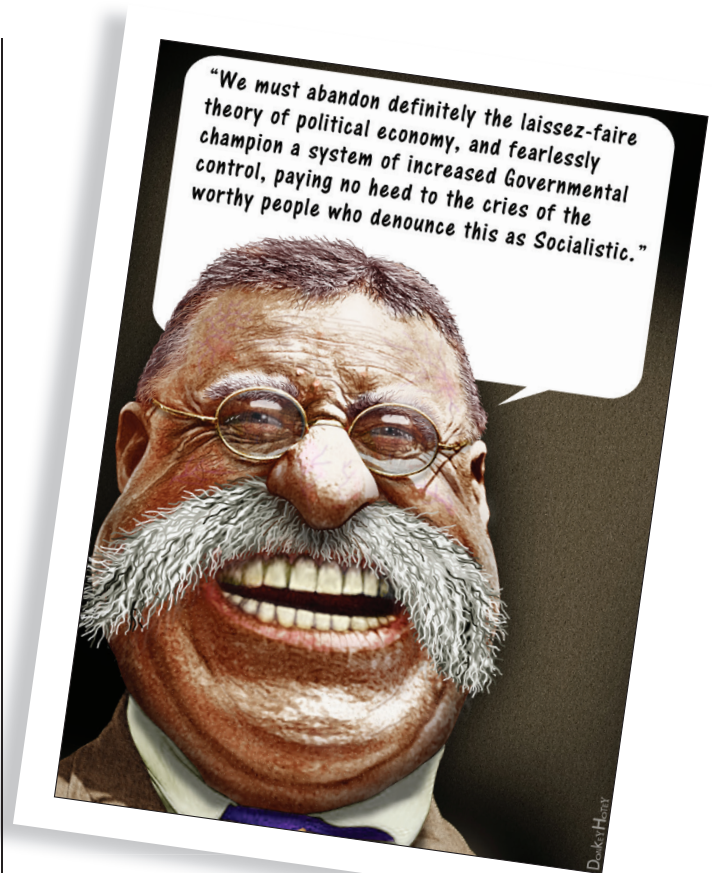
Carney quotes with evident approval the great sociologist Robert Nisbet, who in *The Quest for Community* wrote that the conflict “between central political government and the authorities of guild, community, class, and religious body has been, of all the conflicts in history, the most fateful.”

Why should we care about this conflict? People lacking strong bonds of family and association are likely to be alienated. “Alienation” was a term much in favor decades ago among Marxists, but Carney means something different from them in his use of the term. Again quoting Nisbet, he says that the alienated individual “not only does not feel a part of the social order; he has lost interest in being a part of it.”

Carney blames a strong state for this trend. “When you strengthen the vertical bonds between the state and the individual, you tend to weaken the bonds between individuals.” The great nineteenth-century French historian Alexis de Tocqueville described this process: “as in centuries of equality no one is obliged to lend his force to those like him and no one has the right to expect great support from those like him, each is at once independent and weak. ... His independence fills him with confidence and pride among his equals, and his debility makes him feel, from time to time, the need of the outside help that he cannot expect from any of them, since they are all impotent and cold. ... In this extremity he naturally turns his regard to the immense being that rises alone in the midst of universal debasement.” (quoting Tocqueville) “The centralizing state,” says Carney, “is the first step in this. The atomized individual is the end result: There’s a government agency to feed the hungry. Why should I do that?” (emphasis omitted)

In one of the book’s strongest sections, Carney shows that some supporters of a powerful central state favor exactly that process. They want the state to replace private charitable institutions. Readers will not be surprised to find that Theodore Roosevelt led the way to centralization: “Roosevelt seized on the spirit of the age, which professed that science enabled great solutions to society’s problems — if only people of goodwill were given enough power. Armed with this confidence, TR moved to increase government’s role in daily life and in industry, and to consolidate that power in the federal government. ... The progressives believed that things previously left to happenstance and the uncoordinated decision making of millions of individuals could now intelligently and rationally be planned, to the betterment of everyone.”

Distrust of private charitable organizations is by no means a thing of the past. Bernie Sanders has been explicit in his desire to end private charity. “In 1981, the Chittenden County [Vermont] chapter of the United Way hosted a star-studded banquet for the organization’s fortieth anniversary. Vermont’s governor, Richard Snelling, was there, as was the local mayor, a self-proclaimed socialist named Bernie Sanders ... ‘I don’t believe in charities,’ Mayor Sanders told the assembled fund-raisers and philanthropists. Sanders ... rejected ‘the fundamental



concepts on which charities are based,’ the *New York Times* reported at the time, ‘and contended that government, rather than charity organizations, should take over responsibility for social programs.’”

Carney merits great praise for his treatment of civil society, but unfortunately he is not altogether convinced of the merits of his own case. Private organizations help overcome alienation and we ought to fear the powerful state, but against this must be set the intrusiveness of private organizations. A balance between government welfare programs and private charity, Carney thinks, is called

for: “Centralized safety-net programs need to be reconsidered, too, through the lens of subsidiarity. Which programs can be done better by states than by Washington? Which programs currently administered by state or local governments are more fittingly done by non-profits, by voluntary groups and by churches? Can the central government shift to being a safety net for safety nets, letting civil society be the front line in the effort, with government as the auxiliary safety net, or the reinsurance program?”

Carney, it is apparent, lacks a robust concept of property rights. He asks, in effect, ‘what type of institutional arrangements will best promote the sort of community values I favor?’ rather than ‘what natural rights to property do people have?’ He would dismiss this question as reflecting too much weight on the value of “autonomy,” for

him an overly individualistic concept. In line with this, he dismisses Locke: “Thomas Hobbes and John Locke have convinced Europeans and Americans that the point of politics is to preserve the autonomy of the individual from any claims by others.” Here he has wrongly relied on the political theorist Patrick Deneen, who takes the

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free market to be the embodiment of greed. Contrary to Deneen, Locke valued civil society highly. Precisely his point was that, except for limited purposes, no state was necessary. Owing to his failure to consider the possibility of a society along Lockean lines, Carney finds himself in the uncomfortable position of having to say, in effect, “the state is dangerous and bad, so let’s just take a little of this poison.”

Carney not only believes in the importance of social institutions but also has definite ideas on the values they ought to promote; and this brings us to the second of the book’s projects distinguished above. He strongly supports the traditional family: “Marriage is good for the kids. ...

About 8 percent of children born to married parents end up in poverty as adults, while about 27 percent of children born to unmarried parents do. ... There's tons of hard data showing that kids who grow up in intact families do better as adults."

Carney is a devout Catholic and favors the promotion of religion. He contends that doing this can be defended on secular grounds; even atheists and agnostics should recognize the benefits of widespread church attendance. What interests Carney is religion as a social institution rather than private belief. It is participating in public worship and in social networks sponsored by churches that carry with them social benefits. "[The sociologist Robert] Putnam, a decade after writing *Bowling Alone*, published an exhaustively researched follow-up called *American Grace*, along with Notre Dame government scholar David Campbell. This volume reaffirmed that church was the most important institution of civil society in America, and that it provided great benefit to its members and the broader community. ... One-third of all volunteering in America is for religious organizations. ... Churchgoers give more, as well."

Public support for religion, Carney contends, does not violate the Constitution. To the contrary, aggressive proponents of secularization try to drive religion out of the "public square": "To understand this brand of secularism, you need to combine the phrase 'separation of

church and state' with Barney Frank's definition of government. If 'government' is the name for everything we do together, as Frank says, then the entire public sphere of daily life must be seen as belonging to the 'state.' Thus religious entities must be seen as inherently 'private,' and if they try to open their doors — say by opening a hospital that takes all comers — then they have stepped their unworthy religious foot on the sacred grounds of state."

Carney pursues yet one more project in his book, and here we can be brief. When Donald Trump, to widespread surprise, was elected president in 2016, he campaigned on the slogan "Make America Great Again." America was no longer great, he suggested because for many, the American Dream was dead, and it was the despair of these people he proposed to remedy. Trump's claim appealed to a large number of voters in the Republican primaries, and it is this group that Carney at great length investigates. He finds that many of them are alienated in the sense he has set forward. He defends his analysis at various points in the book, stressing in particular the importance of counties, towns, and rural areas in which patterns of alienation prevail.

Readers of *Alienated America* will gain much from Carney's account of civil society. The free market rests on a stable civil society, not on isolated individuals. ■■■

David Gordon is Senior Fellow at the Mises Institute, and editor of *The Mises Review*.

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July 14–20, 2019	Mises University; Mises Institute
September 14, 2019	Mises Institute in Seattle, WA
September 28, 2019	Libertarian Scholars Conference; New York, NY
October 25–27, 2019	Supporters Summit; Los Angeles, CA
November 9, 2019	Mises Institute in Lake Jackson, TX
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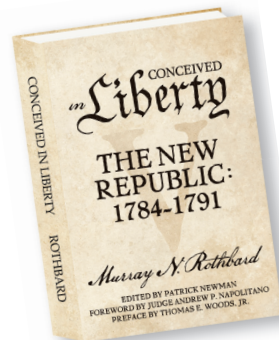
- The Institute hosted the 2019 **Austrian Economics Research Conference**. This year's event featured over 160 attendees from 17 countries and 31 US states. 54 students attended on scholarship, and 15 of those presented papers.
- The Institute was a sponsor at **LibertyCon 2019** in Washington, DC. We passed out hundreds of booklets and articles, Mises Senior Fellow **Dr. Joseph Salerno** gave a talk on Ludwig von Mises, Nationalism, and Self-Determination.
- Our newest Mises Academy class, "The Economics of Medical Care", with Mises Senior Fellow **Dr. Timothy Terrell**, has over 350 students signed up for independent study. All of which is free to students!
- **The Mises Store** helped sponsor two homeschool conventions in Virginia by providing 30 titles as door prizes.
- **Rothbard A to Z** was published as a reference book of excerpts and quotes on all of Rothbard's thoughts on economics, philosophy, epistemology, ethics, history, law, and libertarianism.
- **Dr. Mark Thornton**, Mises Senior Fellow, was interviewed on the *Glenn Beck Program* about "The Skyscraper Curse." Mark was also interviewed by *Apple Daily*, the second largest publication in Hong Kong and east Asia.
- **Hans-Hermann Hoppe**, Mises Distinguished Senior Fellow, was interviewed on the Austrian talk show *Hangar 7* on the subject of Brexit and the future of the EU.
- **Jeff Deist** was quoted by the *Christian Science Monitor* about society separating artists from their work.

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