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An Austrian Trojan Horse in the City of God: The Futile Attempt to Reconcile Austrian Economics with Catholicism

By Christopher Ferrara

Attempts to harmonize the Austrian School of Economics with traditional Catholicism inevitably devolve into a muddle of obfuscation. These defenses conceal the true nature of the system laid down by the twin founders of what is really the "Austro-libertarian" school of political philosophy. No less than other forms of political liberalism, all of which are the progeny of the degenerate philosophy of the so-called Enlightenment, Austro-libertarianism (AL) is radically opposed to Catholic teaching on the right ordering of civil society, including justice in the marketplace.

In *Human Action*, by the atheist Ludwig von Mises (1949), and in *Man, Economy and State* (1962), by the atheist/agnostic Murray Rothbard, Mises's most famous student, we find the Old and New "Testaments" of AL. While Mises and Rothbard maintained that as economists they were merely presenting value-neutral "economic" principles, they constantly exceeded their own brief by counseling the world on *human* action (Mises) and *man* and *state* (Rothbard). In these works, and elsewhere, they expounded outrageously errant theories on ethics, politics, justice, and human liberty—subjects on which (unlike the Church) they had no claim to authority.

And so it is with their present-day followers, who promote the opinions of their twin masters as if they were holy writ to be handed down no less faithfully than the Bible. The Mises Institute "Senior Scholar" Walter Block, for example, drolly describes his disappointment that earlier in his teaching career "Converts to *the one true faith* were few and far between."[1] The political philosophy and ethics of this "one true faith" are rooted in the Old Testament of *Human Action*, which sets forth the "laws" of economics and the "science" of "praxeology" pioneered by Mises, which are developed and "perfected" by Rothbard in the New Testament of *Man, Economy and State*, as further explicated in his extended "meditation" *The Ethics of Liberty*.

We cannot say that "Austrian thought" is compatible with traditional Catholicism, even if we

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say that Austrian economics are not sufficient for a full societal vision, or are a means to an end. “Austrian economics” is effectively the brainchild of two Jewish atheists and its twisted attempt to adopt any Scholastic or Classical thought cannot be viewed as acceptable by Catholics.

On the contrary, “Austrian thought”, including the pseudo-science of “praxeology”, is liberalism of the worst sort. The Misesian-Rothbardian system is a vision of man reduced, as he is in all Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment political philosophy, to an animal possessed of exceptional brainpower for making and executing choices regarding the acquisition of what it needs, with the higher capacities of the human soul and man’s eternal destiny shuttled off to the realm of private opinion. Yes, of course, one can be a Catholic in his *private* life, which is even laudable, but one’s “private” morality must not determine the operation of laws and institutions. Like Locke, the co-founder with Hobbes of what Leo Strauss has called “political atheism,” Mises and Rothbard erect their political philosophy on “the puny base of the solitary animal in search of food.”[2] The twin early Fathers of AL exemplify how “the liberal program, once completely elaborated, made the right to property and the economy in general the foundation of social life.”[3]

Austro-libertarians, toss around the terms “natural law“ and “natural rights” with no attempt to settle the question: What is man? By leaving unanswered the question of man’s nature and purpose in the universe—because they cannot agree among themselves on what man is—they leave behind the entire Greco-Catholic tradition of man as an ensouled creature with an eternal destiny, divinely ordered to life in what we call the state, with the state being obliged to order its affairs according to the divine and natural law. What is most ironic here is that while Mises and Rothbard are often portrayed as champions of reason, and the Austro-libertarians would have us believe, neither of them was able to reason his way to the bare existence of God and the soul, and the implications of their existence for human nature and human happiness—knowledge which, as even the pagan Greeks demonstrate and as the Church insists, is accessible to unaided reason.[4] Even radically anti-Christian thinkers of the so-called Enlightenment insisted upon the existence of a God who rewards and punishes, Voltaire being the most prominent example. It is a blinkered “reason” indeed that left the two leading lights of the Austrian School more in the dark than the pagan philosophers of Athens in the 3rd and 4th century B.C. or the deistic *philosophes* of the mid-1700s.

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Are Austrian Economics a 'trojan horse'?

Mises' "Acting Man"

Even the barest sketch of the Miseian-Rothbardian system reveals sinister implications and principles. To begin with, Mises, the most striking thing about his view of man is its crude simplicity. Mises dispenses not only with God and the soul, but also the good for man,

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virtue, the Commandments, the eternal and natural law, and natural right. In *Human Action*, which Austrians hail as a towering work of genius, Mises propounds instead his "science of praxeology." Praxeology purports to be the "formal analysis of human action in all its aspects,"[5] providing a "rigorous logic of action"[6] for a socioeconomic theory not dependent on supposedly "arbitrary" value judgments, including what Catholics know as the truths of Revelation. With ponderous gravity, Mises announces the primary "praxeological" axiom: "Human action is purposeful behavior."[7] That is, "acting man," as Mises calls him, always acts for an end. That is the extent of Mises's exploration of the nature of man.

With this statement of the obvious, writes Thomas Fleming, Mises "thinks he is saying something important, not just about economics but about human nature."[8] But having stated the obvious, Mises immediately descends into error as he begins to derive "corollaries" from his "action axiom." The first corollary—a staple of utilitarianism—is that "the incentive that impels a man to act is always some uneasiness," for a man "perfectly content with the state of his affairs would have no incentive to change things."[9] For Mises, "happiness" is defined as merely the relief of a given state of uneasiness. One must not consider whether the action taken to relieve uneasiness conforms to the ethics of "theological, mystical and other schools" for "*the notions of abnormality and perversity . . . have no place in economics*."[10]

Immediately, then, Mises declares "economics" to be an amoral discipline, as opposed to its traditional status in Catholic teaching as a branch of moral philosophy and thus ethics. Of course, having declared that there is no place for morality in the field of economics, Mises has already issued a moral judgment in the field of economics. But this does not deter him any more than it does contemporary Austrians.

Mises's next move (we can skip the tedious elaborations) is to derive as a further corollary to the "action axiom" an ordinal ranking, *on one scale*, of *all* of "acting man's" perceived needs as causes of uneasiness. From this corollary Mises arrives at the "law of marginal utility." This law states that "acting man" will satisfy his most urgently felt need first, and then each lesser need in the order of their ordinal ranking on his "unitary" scale of values.[11] That real human beings do not think and act sequentially according to Mises's imaginary unitary ranking of wants and needs should be obvious. Suffice it to note that here Mises has provided a rehashing of Locke, who is rightly considered one of the founders of utilitarianism. With Hobbes, Locke abandoned as a motive for human action any divinely implanted desire to act rightly and refrain from wrongdoing in keeping with natural and supernatural virtues as "the Schoolmen" of the Catholic Church (principally Saint Thomas) explained them.[12] Rather, said Locke, men are moved to act by "some uneasiness or trouble or displeasure till it be done, and this is that we call desire, so that desire seems to

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me to be a pain the mind is in till some good, whether *jucundum* [joy] or *utile* [utility] which it judges possible and seasonable, be obtained."[13] Or, stated otherwise: "The greatest present uneasiness is the spur to action, that is constantly most felt, and for the most part determines the will in its choice of the next action."[14] Misesian "praxeology" and the law of marginal utility are indebted to Locke's early hedonic and utilitarian ethics.

Based on his false Lockean premise that the motive for action is always "uneasiness," Mises arrived at the derisory conclusion that "A man perfectly content with the state of his affairs… would not act; he would simply live free from care."[15] This conclusion, obviously, negates eternal beatitude and even the very existence of God. And for that very reason Mises belittled "Scholastic philosophers… theologians and likewise Theists and Deists of the Age of Reason [who] conceived an absolute and perfect being, unchangeable, omnipotent and omniscient, yet planning and acting…" Since for Mises "action can only be imputed to a discontented being," it follows that "[a]n acting being is discontented and therefore not almighty."[16] Thus, Mises concluded: "The very idea of absolute perfection is in every way self-contradictory" and "the absolute is indeterminable, unthinkable and ineffable. It is a chimerical conception. *There are no such things as perfect happiness, perfect men, eternal bliss*."[17]According to the dictates of "praxeology," then, Jesus of Nazareth, the perfect Man, could not have existed, the Virgin Mary could not have been sinless and perfect, and there is no such thing as eternal beatitude.[18] Very early on in *Human Action* the "value-neutral" economist blunders about in the realm of Christian theology with remarkably obnoxious results.

In keeping with his conception of "acting man," Mises also disparaged the idea that man, under the influence of divine grace, is capable of acting selflessly for the love of God and his fellow man in accordance with the objective moral order that God has inscribed on his heart, rather than merely to relieve "uneasiness." According to Mises: "Man *never chooses between virtue and vice*, but only between two modes of action which we call from an adopted point of view virtuous or vicious."[19] This too is pure Locke, who opined that "an understanding free agent naturally follows that which causes pleasure to it and flies from that which causes pain; i.e. naturally seeks happiness and shuns misery. That, then, which causes to anyone pleasure, that is good to him; and that which causes him pain, is bad to him… For good and bad, *being relative terms, do not denote anything in the nature of the thing,* but only the relation it bears to another, in the aptness and tendency to produce in it pleasure or pain…."[20]

For Mises, "what a man does is *always* aimed at an improvement in his own state of satisfaction."[21] Since all human action aims at improving one's "state of satisfaction," it follows that "even an action directly aiming at the improvement of other people's conditions

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is selfish. The actor considers it as more satisfactory for himself to make other people eat than to eat himself. His uneasiness is caused by the awareness of the fact that other people are in want."[22] Thus, as Mises would have it, when Catholic saints like Hedwig of Poland kissed the ulcers of lepers and washed their feet, or saints like Francis gave away all their money and possessions, they were behaving selfishly. There is a reason Mises staked out this ridiculous position: altruism and other forms of non-acquisitive human behavior preclude his grand claim to have devised, with "praxeology," a scientific account of all human action as *economic* action: "economics refers to *every kind of action*, no matter whether motivated by the urge of a man to eat or to make others eat."[23]

No matter how strenuously Austrians insist to the contrary, Misesian man is *homo economicus*,whose actions can be described based on "economic laws," especially the "law of marginal utility," and who acts at all times according to an "economic rationality" (gain-maximizing behavior) that is not the classical Western understanding of reason as a moral faculty whose right exercise depends upon its conformity to the objective moral order. Austrians cannot allow wild cards like love, the theological virtue of charity or the unitive state of spiritual progress to spoil the perfect simplicity of "acting man" as a calculator of utility, even if such motives cause what they would call "lumpiness" in purely economic data.

Given his view of "acting man," Mises held that the objective morality of the "happiness" attained by human action is to be viewed by political authority as a matter of complete indifference, provided only that aggression against property rights (violence, theft and outright fraud) is prevented, so that the social order which makes "happiness" possible is preserved. For Mises, *all* human behavior aimed at attaining an end is rational, and any judgment that another's behavior is "irrational" (or immoral) is "an arbitrary value judgment" that cannot be allowed to restrict human action in society.[24] Mises's view flatly contradicts the Catholic doctrine that immoral acts are contrary to reason and violate the natural law written on man's heart.

As Mises frankly observed, his concept of social ethics is essentially an institutionalized "subjectivist" Hedonism that would replace classical Greek Eudaemonism (i.e. the philosophy that man's happiness lies in achieving what is objectively the good for man).[25] *The attainment of chosen goals (whatever they might be) through unimpeded human action is to be the one universal norm determining social organization and the limits of political authority*. Government must be limited, not because governmental abuses violate man's natural rights or prevent him from achieving the good, "but because they are detrimental to prosperity"[26]¾prosperity being the inevitable result of the social division of labor among men whose actions are not restrained according to "arbitrary value judgments." But notice

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that the purportedly value-neutral Mises has already smuggled into his system the value of material prosperity as the end of government (with other ends of course being desirable on a purely personal level, but not as the subject of governmental activity for the ordering of society).

Since, says Mises, the unimpeded ownership and use of private property and the free exchange of goods and services must be the foundation of all social order, political authority should simply stand back and let the market do what it will, because government intervention of any kind (beyond protecting persons and property from aggression) will only cause more harm than good by preventing "acting man" from pursuing his "happiness" in the manner he deems fit. As Mises put it (quoting the early 19th century utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham): "the sole object of government ought to be the greatest happiness of the greatest number of the community"[27]¾happiness being defined as whatever people wish to have that can be had without violating the property rights of others. The social ethics involved here are starkly utilitarian: what is fitting for the attainment of an end is good; and what is good for the greatest number of people is moral.[28] As Mises declared, praxeology and economics, the twin pillars of his political philosophy, "do not express any opinion with regard to such problems as whether or not sybaritism is better than asceticism. They apply to the means only one yardstick, viz., whether or not they are suitable to attain the ends at which the acting individuals aim."[29] Or, to quote Bentham's famous apothegm: "Push-pin is as good as poetry."[30] I here note that for "Austrian thought", they claim that the entrepreneur is one who engages with competition and the market, and so bad products will naturally die out because of the competition and market full of new goods and services. What they don't tell you is that for the Austro-libertarian, at the level of public law "bad product" means only a product that does not sell, without no regard whatever to the moral content or effects of the product.

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Rothbard's Evil "Ethics of Liberty"

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In *Human Action*, *The Ethics of Liberty* and innumerable other writings, Rothbardto "deepen" Mises's utterly superficial philosophy of man by ostensibly rejecting his mentor's utilitarian ethics[31] in favor of an ethics based on his own proprietary version of "natural law" and "natural rights." Rothbard saw the fatal self-contradiction in the Misesian system: that it purported to be value-neutral, while insisting upon the one value judgment that the majority must not be inhibited in the advancement of its goals through human action. And what if the majority decides against "prosperity" in favor of some other goal that is *contra* the optimal functioning of the market? What if the majority decides upon a course of action that positively violates property rights? "As a utilitarian," Rothbard noted, "he [Mises] *cannot* [his emphasis] quarrel with the ethical nature of their chosen goals, for, as a utilitarian, he must confine himself to the one value judgment that he favors…"[32] But Rothbard's attempt to devise a laissez-faire "natural rights" theory in support of the free market and private property as social foundations—the very thing often defended as a "check" on liberalism—was no improvement over Mises's utilitarianism. Ultimately, Rothbard was no less arbitrary, no less utilitarian, and no less superficial than Mises.

Rothbard's present-day Catholic defenders sometimes try to pass him off as a "neo-Thomist" because he bandied about classical language in support of his radically non-classical "theory of liberty." But they fail to mention that while Rothbard speaks with suave assurance of "right reason," "human nature," "natural rights," "natural law," "social animal," and the "objective good for man," he strips these terms of their traditional meaning even more thoroughly than Locke did, eliminating even Locke's precarious defense of the existence of God, the human soul and eternal reward and punishment.

First of all, Rothbard, who (like Mises) was Jewish by birth, was an agnostic and remained so until his death, so far as we know.

Rothbard's "ethics of liberty" is founded on the indefensible proposition that Scholastic philosophy supports "the absolute independence of natural law from the question of the existence of God."[33] That is precisely the *opposite* of the teaching of St. Thomas and the Jesuit Francisco Suárez, the great Thomist of the School of Salamanca, both of whom Rothbard abuses and mischaracterizes.[34] Rothbard's "scholarship" in this area is simply a sham. It is also nonsense, for it posits "natural law" with no lawgiver. St. Thomas, and the Church with him, teaches clearly that the natural law is within us "'as in one who is ruled.' … We are not self-governed. *We are governed by another*."[35]

In *The Ethics of Liberty*, his premier work on the subject, Rothbard proclaims that his aim is to "build" upon "the Lockean individualist tradition that profoundly influenced the later American revolutionaries and the dominant tradition of libertarian political thought in the revolutionary new nation."[36] In fact, he only further deconstructs what is already a

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deconstructed Lockean man, reaching results that would have horrified not only Locke and the American revolutionaries, but even the Sorcerer (Mises) whose Apprentice he was.[37] To describe Rothbard's thought as "Thomistic" or "Aristotelian" is simply deception.

Rothbard begins *Ethics of Liberty* by paying lip service to the Greco-Catholic tradition of natural law ethics as involving "goodness" for a creature in the sense of "the fulfillment of what is best for that type of creature… relative to the *nature* of the creature concerned" and thus "what fulfills or thwarts what is best for man's *nature*."[38] He allows that the natural law "elucidates what is best for man—what ends man should pursue that are harmonious with, and best tend to fulfill, his *nature*" and that it provides man with "a 'science of happiness,' with the paths that will lead to his real happiness."[39] Citing St. Thomas, he declares that as man knows the natural law through the exercise of his unaided reason, "*moral* conduct [Rothbard's emphasis] is therefore conduct in accord with right reason… apprehending the objective good for man and dictating the means to its attainment."[40]

But, having identified the *objective good* for man as the object of *natural law*, apprehended by *right reason*, which leads man to real human *happiness*, Rothbard promptly abandons the search for the meaning of the very terms he has just introduced! He proceeds to build an entire "ethics of liberty" on "the fundamental truths of the nature of man"[41] without ever telling us what these truths are, beyond asserting (just as Mises does) that man uses his reason to achieve his desired ends, whatever they might be. He (like Mises) prescinds completely from the "fundamental truth" of man's nature as an ensouled creature of God made for a life of virtue and destined for eternal beatitude—the end toward which, in the Greco-Catholic tradition, all human activity must be ordered, as nothing is more important than man's eternal happiness.

So, Rothbard's opening fanfare of concern for human nature and "the objective good for man" is followed by utter silence on the question, leaving us immediately with the very same "acting man" Mises had in view: an effectively soulless being that exists to achieve whatever it considers to be the good without reference to any objective and absolute standard of goodness, much less a divinely endowed end for man.

Rights as the Church understands them—circumscribed by duties and ordered to the good for man and the common good—are precisely what Rothbard and the Austrians attack as "statist." Hence Rothbard, in defending his stunted concept of "natural law," opined: "the great failing of natural-law theory¾from Plato to Aristotle *to the Thomists*… is to have been profoundly statist rather than individualist."[42] In other words, the entire Western tradition, including the Catholic teaching, is wrong, and Rothbard is right.

Since, like Mises, Rothbard essentially treats political man as a "solitary animal in search of

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food," with all other considerations of human nature being a matter of private philosophical or religious speculation, he inevitably arrives at the standard conclusion of post-Lockean liberal thought. According to Rothbard, "the concept of 'rights' only makes sense as *property* rights"[43] and the "very concept of 'rights' is a 'negative' one, demarcating the areas of a person's action that no one may properly interfere with." He declares, therefore, that "No man can have a 'right' to compel someone to do a positive act…"[44] The natural law to which Rothbard pays lip service is immediately tossed overboard. Man is simply the creature who has rights; and these rights are nothing but property rights. Gone are the first precept of the natural law—to *do* good and to avoid evil—along with the Ten Commandments, the two "love commandments" which sum up the Ten, the life of virtue as true happiness, the eternal law, any ultimate purpose or end for man's existence that must guide his earthly conduct, and, of course, God the lawgiver. For Rothbard, these are all matters of "private opinion."

Proceeding from his notion that natural rights involve only a negative restraint against injuries to property, Rothbard arbitrarily posits two "natural rights" as the universal basis of Rothbardian social order: ownership of one's own body, and ownership of private property (including all titles thereto) attaching on first appropriation of unused resources.[45] Rothbard declares that according to what he considers to be "the correct theory of justice in property rights," both of these rights must be *absolute*, meaning "the absolute property right of each individual in his own person" and "the absolute right in material property of the person who first finds an unused material resource and then in some way occupies or transforms that resource by the use of his personal energy."[46] This is pure Locke.

Based on this idiosyncratic conception of "natural rights," Rothbard (adverting to the "individualist" natural rights theory of Locke) defines "freedom" in society as "the *absence of invasion* [his emphasis] by another man of any man's person or property."[47] The only legitimate social function of coercion, therefore, is to prevent invasion of property rights in order to maintain the *existence* of those rights, not to punish an immoral *exercise* of those rights that does not harm anyone else's person or property.[48] As Rothbard elsewhere states, in an argument endorsed by Thomas Woods,[49] "Legal and political theory have committed much mischief by failing to pinpoint *physical invasion as the only human action that should be illegal* and that justifies the use of physical violence to combat it."[50]

Aside from being a gross truncation of the real thing, Rothbard's version of "natural rights" cannot bear the least scrutiny by any minimally instructed Catholic. In the first place, the "natural right" to ownership of one's own body does not exist, as men are only stewards, not owners, of the bodies God has given them, which is one reason suicide, self-mutilation

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(including "sex-change" operations) and drug abuse are gravely immoral. Putting that aside, neither of Rothbard's two "natural rights" is derived from a supernatural endowment by God, without which any notion of rights is ultimately feckless.

For Rothbard, natural law is not man's rational participation in the divine plan for man, but rather his rational participation in *Rothbard*'s plan for man, which involves only two "commandments" instead of ten: (1) Thou shalt respect the "self-ownership" of others, and (2) Thou shalt respect the property of others. This arbitrary selection of two "commandments" ignores what St. Thomas called the first precept of the natural law: "that good is *to be done and pursued* and evil is to be avoided."[51] Like Mises, Rothbard does not concern himself with discovering objective standards of good and evil for human conduct in all situations, that being a matter of "personal" ethics, but only with the protection of property rights as the one norm he opined should govern all societies.

At any rate, Rothbard's "Duologue" has no divine source; no one is objectively and absolutely obliged to observe it. Like all secular natural rights theorists, Rothbard posits natural rights with no foundation, supported by nothing more than the observation that they pertain to man's nature. Rothbard does not explain why anyone *must* respect man's "nature" and his "natural rights," as opposed to merely *agreeing* to do so to gain the benefits of life in society for as long as this seems convenient. Where is the binding obligation to respect another's natural rights if there is no divine Obligor who ultimately judges and punishes the creations He has endowed with these rights? Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov rightly argues that without God "everything would be lawful, even cannibalism" and "if you were to destroy faith in immortality, not only love but every living force maintaining life in the world would at once be dried up…. There is no virtue if there is no immortality."[52] If there is no eternal law or virtue, then there are no objectively binding "natural rights" as such, but only opinions or human agreements on what man's "rights" should be. As Pope Leo XIII declared in his encyclical *Libertas humana*: "When, therefore, it is established that man's soul is immortal and endowed with reason and not bound up with things material, the foundation of natural liberty is at once most firmly laid."[53]

Rothbard did not seem to recognize that any attempt to ground natural rights on man's nature, standing alone, results in both a tautology (man has natural rights because they are natural to him) and a *non sequitur* (man's nature entitles him to rights). Let Rothbard's own statement of the tautology illustrate the problem: "In short, man has rights because they are natural rights." Rothbard fails to demonstrate why his list of human traits and needs confers "rights" upon man, whereas the lower traits and needs of animals do not give them rights. If there is no God, and men do not have immortal souls whichHe has endowed with reason, why should one being have "rights" but not another? What is reason itself but an

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illusion, a mere operation of matter, if there is no God to endow it and provide the standard of absolute truth and goodness to which it must conform? In fact, without a God to endow man with certain immutable attributes not subject to evolution, how can Rothbard even speak of a human *nature* in the first place?

While his "personal morality" may be Christian, the Austro-libertarian's *social* ethic is "individualist," rather than what Austrians deride as "statist," by which they mean a social ethic that looks to political authority, as the Church does, to take due measures to vindicate the divine and natural law in the State. Without denying that the exercise of an individual's right can be immoral according to his "personal" moral code, the Austro-libertarian insists, with Rothbard, that "what may be the moral or immoral ways of exercising that right is a question of personal ethics rather than of political philosophy¾which is concerned solely with… the proper or improper exercise of physical violence in human relations."[54] This is the classical liberal disjunction between "private" and public morality first suggested by Machiavelli in *The Prince*, advocated by Martin Luther for German princes in his rebellion against the Catholic Church,[55] and finally incorporated into a full-blown system of social ethics on the foundation laid by Hobbes and Locke, the co-founders of "classical liberalism." The result of that disjunction has been nothing short of the impending demise of our civilization. And yet that very disjunction is fundamental to AL.

Following the necessitarian logic of his "natural rights" theory, Rothbard insisted until his death in 1995 that, insofar as his "ethics of liberty" is concerned, women have the right to abort their children because a woman "has absolute dominion over her body and everything within it."[56] And what of the child's natural right to life? Rothbard refused to recognize what he derided as "the right to life doctrine," holding the term "right to life" to be "ambiguous" because it could be construed "to give one an enforceable claim to the action of someone else to sustain that life."[57] A duty to sustain someone else's life would violate Rothbard's property-based theory of natural rights, which, as already mentioned, rejects "the 'right' to compel someone to do a positive act…" Rothbard was satisfied that the concept of "self-ownership," that is, the "right to have one's person free from aggression," sufficed to protect the property right to life in born people, a right he would not accord to humans in *utero.*

In short, Rothbard's "ethics of liberty" is a monstrous perversion of Catholic teaching on the natural law.

Conclusion

What I have presented here is merely a glimpse into the abundance of moral errors inherent in "Austrian thought." Any Catholic attempt to defend the assertion that the market is a

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natural corrective mechanism that fosters the proper ordering of human action must reckon with these fundamental flaws is simply ridiculous, as anyone can see from the utterly degenerate state of our aridly secular "market society" and the very disjunction between public and "private" morality Rothbard insisted upon. Rather, that system is wholly antithetical to Catholic social teaching on the moral limits to "free market" activity, the rights of labor with respect to capital, commutative and distributive justice, and the proper social relation between Church and State as seen in such monumental encyclicals *Libertas*, *Immortale Dei*, and *Rerum Novarum*, by Pope Leo XIII, *Vehmeneter Nos* by Saint Pius X, and *Quadragesimo Anno* and *Quas Primas* by Pius XI.

"Austrian thought" has nothing to say to Catholics except this: reject it root and branch. The obstinate promotion of "Austrian thought" by Catholics is just another post-conciliar Trojan Horse in the City of God.[58]

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"And if you be Christ's, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

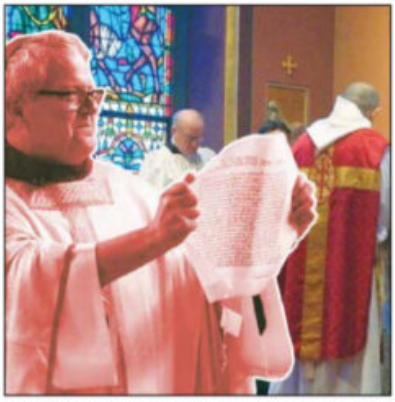
Leaked Letter Reveals Bishop of Charlotte Wants to Mandate His Personal Fetishes

By Brian M. McCall

In May the Bishop of the Diocese of Charlotte decided to cancel all Traditional Masses in his parishes and relegate about 1,000 faithful who regularly attend to a former Protestant worship space that seats about 300. This assault on faithful Catholics made headlines around the country. Fortunately, and unexplainedly Bishop Martin granted a reprieve to his decision that was to take effect July 1, giving the priest and faithful until October. Bishop Martin's defense to such a persecution was one of "obeying orders." He claimed he had to take this decision due to *Traditionis Custodes*. Yet, his predecessor had requested and received permission to continue the parochial Traditional Masses through October of 2025. Bishop Martin did not publicly claim that he tried to renew that permission and was denied. He simply stated the prior bishop's permission was coming to an end.

Yet, a draft letter that Rorate Caeli obtained from what it deemed to be a reliable source[1] offers greater insight into the mind of Bishop Martin. The letter which Rorate claims is scheduled to be made public in the future is not about the Traditional Mass but rather the Mass of Paul VI, the *Novus Ordo*. The letter claims to make sweeping changes to the way the New Mass is to be celebrated in the diocese. The Diocese of Charlotte, under Bishop Martin's predecessor, was one of the best examples of a case study of what Benedict XVI hoped to achieve with *Summorum Pontificum*. Although we at *CFN* have criticized the goals of Benedict XVI, it is clear that the prior Bishop of Charlotte embraced those goals and implemented them. First, the offering of the Traditional Mass was widespread in the diocese. Priests were free to offer it under the terms of *Summorum Pontificum* and several did so with organic communities developing within parishes which regularly offered the Traditional Mass as an option alongside the Novus Ordo. This side by side offering of Old and New clearly had one of the effects that Benedict sought – the mutual enrichment of what he called the "two forms" of the Roman Rite. Yet, since there is nothing really enriching in the New Mass in practice this meant the enrichment of the New Mass as celebrated in practice. Churches were restored to a more traditional architecture. Communion was distributed in many parts of the diocese at altar rails. There was a reduction in the use of lay "extraordinary" ministers of the Eucharist. Priests began reusing traditional looking vestments (Roman style) and adding back the maniple and amice. More Gregorian chant and polyphony could be heard. Some priests offered even the New Mass *ad orientem*. Some priests restored candles and the crucifix to the altar. What effects followed? Beyond more faithful attending the Traditional Mass, the diocesan seminary program began to recover from the overall malaise. Relative to other diocese young men entered seminary formation

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Bishop Michael Martin has imposed a rule of anti-traditional liturgical practices.

War in Iran

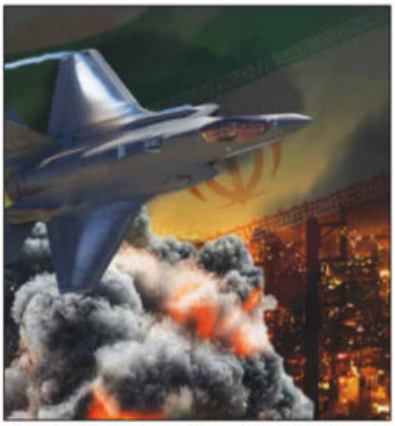
By Murray Rundus

As of writing this article on June 17, 2025, all signs point to the approaching United States involvement in yet another war in the Middle East. This set of circumstances in many ways seemed inevitable after the massacre on Oct. 7, 2023. Attentive followers of the situation could see that Israel was to use the Oct. 7 acts as a turning point, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said this provided them with a mandate to "reshape the Middle East."[1] The full extent of U.S. involvement is still unknown, but it should be made clear that the U.S. is already deeply involved. Not only has it provided the Jewish state with hundreds of billions of dollars, it has also engaged in numerous foreign wars on its behalf, is influenced by a massive pro-Israel lobby – most notably AIPAC and the Adelsons – and more recently has taken to assisting in the defense of Israel from ballistic missiles. The United States has tied itself to the Iran conflict, and in refusing to restrain the Israeli government, this conflict and its resolution will be a defining part of the legacy of the Trump Administration.

The Beginnings of the Attack

The number 613 is an important number in Judaism, as it represents the number of 'mitzvot' or precepts in the Torah. Both the Talmud – the cornerstone text of Rabbinical Judaism – and Maimonides – arguably the most important Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages – assert the importance of this number. It is no coincidence, then, that Operation Rising Lion, which had taken years to prepare, was conducted on June 13, 2025. Iran was first hit with a cyber-attack which took out their radar and any kind of surveillance, and was then hit with drone strikes that were able to assassinate nearly the entire command structure of the Iranian government. This happened all from secret locations of Israeli and Mossad assets established irside of Iran. Iran was left deaf, dumb, and blind and was prone then for a successive wave of airstrikes that managed to strike at many Iranian military assets. These tactics are exactly what have made Israel so successful in these kinds of operations, and is also how they destroyed Hezbollah in Lebanon through an extensive intelligence project of sneaking explosives

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June 13, 2025 marked a massive escalation in the Middle East

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[1]Block, “Reflections Upon Attending the Mises University Summer Sessions, 2004,” lewrockwell.com/block/block43.html.

[2]Pierre Manent, The City of Man (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ 1998), p. 124.

[3]Ibid.

[4]See, e.g. Summa Theologiae, I., Q. 1, Art. 12; I, Q. 2, Art. 1.

[5]Murray Rothbard, Man, Economy and State (Mises Institute: Auburn, AL, 2001), p. 258.

[6]Murray Rothbard, The Ethics of Liberty, (New York University Press: 2002), p. xi.

[7]Mises, Human Action, p. 11; and see 13-14.

[8]Thomas Fleming, “Abuse Your Illusions,” Chronicles, January 2002.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Human Action, pp. 15, 95.

[11]Ibid., pp. 92-97, 119-127.

[12]Cf. Essay Concerning Human Understanding, I.2.4.

[12]Ibid., I.2.3,

[12]Ibid.

[12]Ibid. II.1 and II.11.

[13]Locke, Pleasure, Pain, the Passions (1676), in Locke: Political Essays, 242

[14]Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II.21.40.

[15]Mises, Human Action, pp. 13-14.

[16]Ibid., p. 69.

[17]Ibid., p. 70.

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[18]As John Médaille observed in commenting on the early manuscript that became this book: "Actually, Mises should be praised at this point for his intellectual consistency and courage. He is absolutely correct on this point: If action is what he says it is, then God cannot exist. Most Austrian Catholics cannot and will not display this sort of intellectual courage."

[19]Mises, Human Action, p. 45.

[20]Locke, Of Ethic in General (c. 1686-8?), in Locke: Political Essays, 300-302.

[21]Human Action, p. 242.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., p. 104.

[25]Ibid., p. 15.

[26]Mises, Human Action, p. 175.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 149ff (where Mises advocates his "Liberal social doctrine, based on the teachings of utilitarian ethics and economics…").

[29]Ibid., p. 93.

[30]Quoted in John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Essay on Bentham, ed. M. Warnock, (New American Library: 1974), p. 123

[31]Rothbard, Ethics of Liberty, pp. 206ff.

[32]Ibid., p. 211.

[33]Rothbard, Ethics of Liberty, p. 4.

[34]Following St. Thomas, Suárez taught that the mere judgment of what is good for man according to his reason has no force of law, for "the judgment does not impose an obligation… Therefore, if this judgment is to have the nature of law, it must indicate some sort of authority as the source of such obligation… God has complete providence over men;

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therefore it becomes Him, as the supreme Governor of nature, to prohibit evil and prescribe what is good." On Laws and God the Lawgiver (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1944), Bk. II, Ch. 6, p. 191, 192, 193.

[35]J. B. Schneewind, The Invention of Autonomy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 21; quoting ST Ia.IIae.90.3.

[36]Ibid.

[37]It is Rupert Ederer who suggested the Sorcerer-Apprentice analogy.

[38]Ethics of Liberty, 11.

[39]Ibid., 12.

[40]Ibid., p. 7.

[41]Ibid., 29.

[42]Ibid., p. 21.

[43]Ibid., p. 113.

[44]Ibid., p. 100.

[45]Ibid., p. 43. John Médaille has noted the problem that "there is no property in land that traces to this right; every square inch of [real] property traces to right of conquest" at some time in the past. The lands of the United States acquired by conquest from the prior American Indian occupants are an obvious contemporary example.

[46]"Justice and Property Rights: The Failure of Utilitarianism," from Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature and Other Essays, mises.org/daily/4047.

[47]Ethics of Liberty, p. 42.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Woods, "Anatomy of an Economic Ignoramus," mises.org/story/3695: "Here's a genuinely free-market way to think about these issues" (linking to Rothbard article).

[50]Rothbard, "Law, Property Rights and Air Pollution," mises.org/daily/2120#1.

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[51]ST, I-II Q. 94 Art. 2.

[52]Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. Constance Garnett (Signet: New York, 1957), p. 72. Ivan Karamazov's comment should not be taken as an endorsement of the error of nominalism—i.e., that acts are wrong simply because God declares them to be, and that He could just as readily declare them to be right. The Catholic view, rather, is that God declares wrong what objectively is wrong on account of the very fact of God's existence as the ground of all being and all goodness. If there were no God, however, mere observation of natural tendencies would not give rise to a law of human conduct, properly speaking. Natural law requires both nature and a lawgiver to punish transgressions of the natural order.

[53]Libertas, n. 3.

[54]Ibid., p. 24.

[55]See, Hartman Grisar, Luther (Kegan, Paul, Trench, London: 1913), Vol. II, p. 297 ff.; see also Joshua Mitchell, "Protestant Thought and Republican Spirit: How Luther Enchanted the World," THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW, VOL. 86, No. 3 (SEP., 1992), pp. 688-695.

[56]Rothbard, Ethics of Liberty, p. 98.

[57]Ibid., p. 99

[58] Dietrich von Hildebrand, Trojan Horse in the City of God: The Catholic Crisis Explained (Sophia Inst. Press, 1967).

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