

## ARTS & LETTERS

ficially the way 19th-century figures dealt with his problem. Despite these reservations, the book remains an eminently readable volume.

*Ellen Frankel Paul is research director of the Social Philosophy and Policy Center at Bowling Green State University, where she teaches political science.*

### Mischievous Counsel

#### The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener

By Martin Gardner

New York: Quill. 452 pp. \$22.50.

Reviewed by Joy Dee Anthony

Seventy-one-year-old Martin Gardner, having retired from his post as columnist-celebre at *Scientific American*, thought it a good idea to put down his beliefs and opinions in a book. At times, *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener* reads like the midterm exam of an "A" student. Gardner quotes sources so dutifully that the reader begins to feel exhausted before chapter one is over.

To fill out explanations of his 20 "Whys," including why he is not an anarchist, an atheist, or a Marxist, Gardner culled from his file a lifetime of snippets from the famous. A select public, ready for anything from Gardner's pen (out of respect for his work on mathematical puzzles and paradoxes), may be patient enough for this long credo.

Not I. I found myself counting pages to the end of a chapter, reawakening, and then wondering why the section that piqued my interest had to be so short.

The free will versus determinism issue is a case in point. Gardner states that unfortunately he has not enough space to do justice to the subject. One wishes, then, that he had cut out much of the speculation on topics like paranormalism, whether there is sex in heaven, or whether God intervenes on the micro-level when he answers a prayer by changing the paths of photons and electrons.

Of course these digressions can be entertaining, especially when anecdotal. At his best, Gardner is a superb journalist and raconteur, sifting through memories and philosophies for gold.

Take William F. Buckley's first encounter with philosopher Ayn Rand. Gardner tells us, "Her opening ice-breaker was: 'you ahrr too intelligent to

believe in a Gott.' " Then we hear of George Gilder's dog, Laffer. Gilder calls the dog's tail "Laffer's curve."

To commence his book, Gardner explains why he is not a solipsist, one who believes that he or she alone exists. Even that reality may be shaky for some. Gardner relates an incident in which philosopher Morris Cohen was asked by a student: "How do I know I exist?" "Who's asking?" returned Cohen.

Though few would agree with solipsists, Gardner says that the recent interest in quantum mechanics gives even the arguments of a few eminent physi-

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cists a solipsistic tinge. To some, these arguments convey the feeling that the external world is an illusion, that solid substances are really only subjective space-time events, imperfectly observed.

To counter such idealism, Gardner gives three reasons for calling oneself a realist, that is, a believer in a world separate from one's will and perceptions. First, there are pragmatic reasons. To facilitate communication, it is more practical to assume that a world exists separate from one's will and perceptions.

Then there is the empirical argument. Realism is the simplest and most verifiable hypothesis for explaining regularities in nature.

Yet Gardner gives a more important reason for calling himself a realist, and in so doing sets the stage for the remainder of the book. He believes that where the mind fails to decide truth, the heart rushes in, justifiably. Gardner is a pragmatic realist, not just because it's useful, but because he finds it emotionally satisfying.

Commenting on a number of other philosophical conundrums, Gardner often concludes that many such controversies have been primarily semantic. Though this explanation is sometimes reasonable, the repeated appeal to language differences seems overworked. It is almost as if Gardner is saying we all really agree.

Except the economists. Gardner is too much a man of common sense to pretend otherwise in this sticky field. He sees the distinctions, has read Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and John Kenneth Galbraith, among others.

As a democratic socialist, Gardner would like to see our economy head towards further governmental intervention. The reasons he gives are scanty. First and foremost, he thinks a technological society means ever larger corporations, with ever greater need for restraint. Gardner would like wage and price controls imposed on big farming, big labor, and big corporations. It's hard to believe he's really read Mises if he fails to see the problems resulting from manipulation of economic signals, and it's hard to imagine that he's read Friedman either. A Nobel laureate with *The Monetary History of the United States* and other serious endeavors under his belt should hardly be likened to a radical mystic. Yet Gardner, certainly no economist himself, not only does so but also criticizes Friedman as if economics were just another field in the realm of personal experience in which he is as competent to judge as any.

He likens Friedman to a chiropractor: someone with a prescription for each of the patient's ills. In the meantime, he notes, "real" doctors advise that the signs are too obscure for diagnosis. Funny, but this is why Friedman advocates a monetary rule. It's too hard to predict the bends and dips in the monetary road, Friedman says—better instead, curtail the manipulative power of the Federal Reserve to throw the economy off course.

The overall theme in Gardner's philosophy is summed up by an ode to the color gray in the book's last paragraph. If in doubt, he counsels, choose a course of action that is not extreme. For Gardner, this implies belief in a socialistic state, in reason influenced by emotions, and in petitionary prayer.

Lord help those who follow his economic advice.

*Joy Dee Anthony is a free-lance writer and a correspondent for the Daily Pilot in Newport Beach, California.*

# LETTERS

(Continued from p. 9)

covering the topic so well. Vouchers are, indeed, tempting. The freedom of choice the voucher system offers, however, is a dangerous illusion. He who pays the bills calls the shots (the one notable exception being the taxpayer). Even though taxpayers would in effect simply be getting some of their own money back, the government would view it as *its* money. Experience has taught us that with government money come government strings.

The voucher system in effect will place the government in a position of paying for all education—public and private. The Department of Education, ably assisted by the National Education Association, will then have to set standards for curriculum, teacher certification, and on and on. Indeed, the public will demand it—after all, we can't have taxpayer money squandered on unregulated institutions! The consequence will be a leveling of all schools as they meet government requirements. It doesn't take much imagination to see the end of home schools once the gummy fingers of government invade them as well.

As described by Barbara Morris in her book *Tuition Tax Credits: A Responsible Appraisal*, in the Dutch system mentioned in your article the government determines the curriculum and controls teacher qualification. Some freedom! I encourage everyone to read Barbara Morris's book. Her clear, precise description of past experience and the natural consequences of tuition tax credits and vouchers is chilling and well-documented.

What we really need is the complete excision of government from our schools. Since that is highly unlikely in the near future, we must be especially guarded and suspicious of measures that offer partial relief.

Sylvia Wirth  
Jefferson, OR

its regulations to 10,000,000 words. I have not made word counts of the existing confusion, but I would estimate that such limits would require repealing about 90 percent.

You arouse more interest by damning legislators for excessive verbosity than by employing anarchist arguments in attacking a statute.

John R. Ewbank  
Southampton, PA

found wholly inexplicable and inappropriate.)

But now I should really correct Mr. Raico on another matter. In a recent issue of *Inquiry* Raico denies an assertion that the *Economist* is the best-edited English-language magazine, declaring humbly that "*Inquiry* is that." If so, then why did his excellent review appear in *REASON* magazine?

David M. Brown  
Ithaca, NY

## Right-On Reviewing

Having just completed Paul Johnson's *Modern Times*, a sweeping saga of 20th-century statist sin, I went back to the December special book issue of *REASON* to reread Ralph Raico's review of it and found the review superb. Raico's analysis of Johnson's regrettable philosophical errors, especially his oft-repeated but ill-defended "pitting [of] 'moral absolutism' against 'moral relativism,'" was quite competent. (Mr. Raico might also have mentioned the queer ending to the book, which, in my ignorance, I

## Mergers, Markets, And Morals

Tying together January's "In Defense of the Corporate Coup" by Henry G. Manne and February's "The Virtues of the Market" (Trends), we should ask our liberal friends whether they would be so eager to intervene if socially conscious companies sought to "monopolize" the market by acquiring not-so-socially-conscious companies.

Christopher Miller  
Lima, OH

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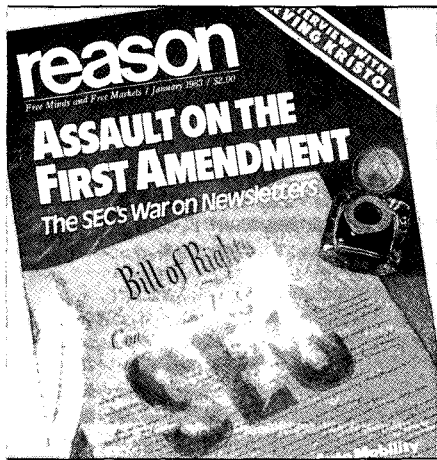
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# Further & More

## DE-PRESSING DECISION

In their article "Assault on the First Amendment" (Jan. 1983), attorney-writers Michael McMenamin and William Gorenc, Jr., exposed the Securities and Exchange Commission's persecution of, among others, newsletter publisher Christopher Lowe. When US District Court Judge Jack Weinstein ruled last year that Lowe could *not* be barred by the SEC from publishing an investment advisory newsletter because of his criminal record, civil libertarians applauded the decision.



But the SEC appealed Judge Weinstein's decision to the US Court of Appeals. And this year, on January 18, the Second Circuit Court, by a 2-to-1 decision, reversed Weinstein's decision, ruling that Lowe's publications are engaged in practices not protected by the First Amendment. A dissenting judge affirmed Lowe's First Amendment rights, stating that "investment opinion, in my opinion, is as much speech protected from prior restraint as is political opinion, philosophy or gibberish." Lowe and his attorneys are appealing the decision to the Supreme Court.

The Lowe decision and its implications for First Amendment protection of so-called commercial speech is an issue that is gathering a lot of attention. *New York Times* writer Tamar Lewin recently devoted a column to the subject, noting that "any Supreme Court decision that financial advice is protected by the First Amendment might require basic changes in the securities laws, especially since prior restraints"—that is, the authority to bar someone

from engaging in an activity such as publishing investment advice—"are implicit in the registration and disclosure requirements enforced by the S.E.C."

Moreover, *National Law Journal* reporter John Riley also recently discussed the Lowe decision, pointing out the present degree of confusion and debate over First Amendment protection of "commercial speech." Riley noted the possibility, voiced by some experts, that the decision could set a precedent "to give only limited protection to forms of expression that might otherwise be entitled to nearly absolute protection." Because of this confusion, some observers believe the Supreme Court will agree to hear Lowe's appeal.

## WEAPONS AGAINST TESTING

Two years ago, REASON published a dramatic exposé of shoddy testing of new weapons by the Pentagon and uncovered some of the high-priced duds that were produced as a result ("Fighting with Failures," April 1982). In the wake of that article, Congress passed legislation sponsored by Sen. David Pryor (D-Ark.) creating a new office of operational testing and evaluation in the Defense Department. But Michael R. Gordon recently noted in a column in the *National Journal* that the Defense Department has "defined the mandate of the new office so narrowly that it has all but defined operational testing out of existence."

In her REASON article, defense analyst Dina Rasor described how "operational testing has been so deformed by the Pentagon bureaucracy and pork barrel pressures that soldiers continue to end up with weapons that will fail them on a battlefield." It appears that not much has changed. Gordon reported in the *National Journal* that Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's deputies have defined "operational" testing so that it applies only to completed systems—or systems that are "fully representative of the initial configuration of new weapons," as one directive put it.

Advocates of better testing have noted that this excludes *preproduction* operational tests. And ordinarily, by waiting until production of a weapon

begins, "'constituencies' in the defense industry, the services, and Congress have developed," noted Gordon, "making cancellation politically difficult or impossible" if the weapon falls short in tests. The constituencies are described by former Pentagon official Russell Murray—"the research and engineering community—both military and civilian—that have committed themselves and their reputations to the new weapon, . . . the industrial firms whose profitability depends on its production, . . . [and] the employees whose jobs depend on it."

An aide to Senator Pryor told REASON that in the wake of the scandal surrounding deputy Defense secretary W. Paul Thayer and his replacement with William Taft early this year, the political fortunes of operational testing in the Pentagon may improve.

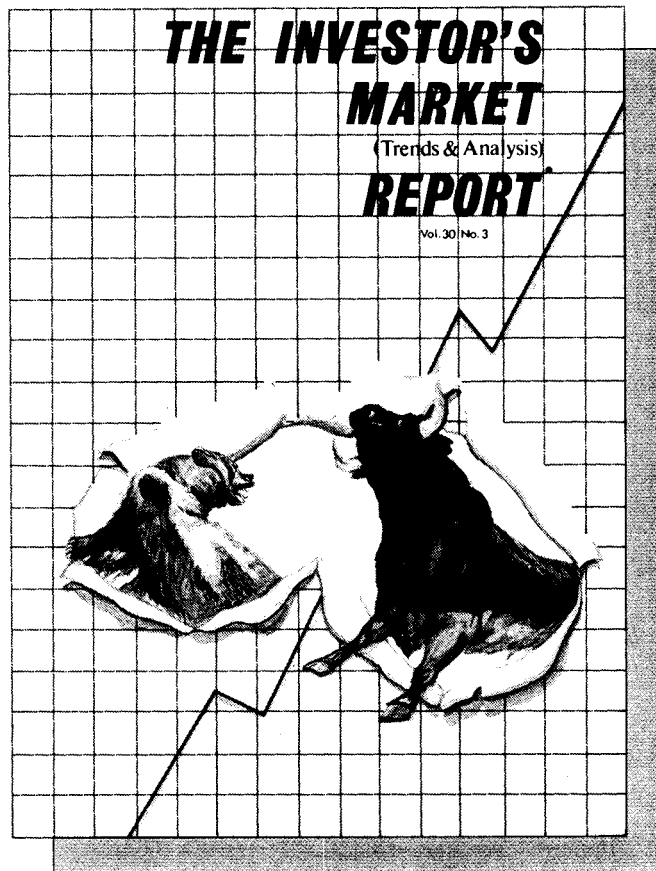
## AND MORE

- *Hope for homeowners.* REASON's December 1982 cover story ("Self-Help Housing") reported on the efforts of the Pittsburgh-based Housing Opportunities, Inc. (HOI); to enable low-income families to "earn" their own homes, a program largely based on local charitable and private-sector initiative. HOI now reports that another of its programs—one designed to help out-of-work delinquent mortgagors keep their homes—is achieving impressive results, again primarily with private support. The Home Ownership Protective Effort (HOPE) program, largely supported by a number of Pittsburgh-area lending institutions and a utility company, offered financial counseling to 235 families who faced foreclosure last year because of delinquent mortgage payments. The organization reports that none of the 235 families lost their homes—in fact, the mortgagors made payments 47 percent in excess of what had been targeted.

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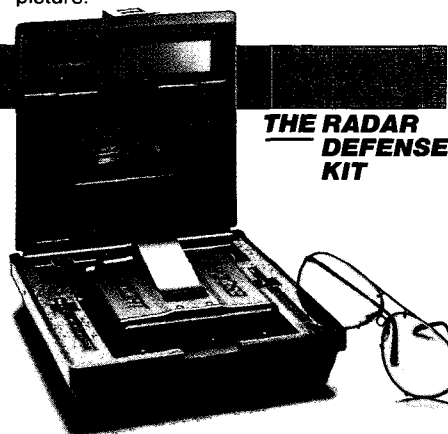
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We're particularly proud of that quote because it credits ESCORT with *more* than just industry-leading performance. Just as we designed ESCORT to be the best detector possible, we knew there had to be a way to take better care of customers than the usual retail distribution system. That's why we have no dealers. From the beginning, we've sold all ESCORT's direct from the factory.

#### Informed Source

You see, we know how difficult it is to buy a camera or stereo component, or any precision gear. Every store has different prices so you feel obligated to shop around. Then you have to wait for a salesman. He may not know much about the products or may try to get you to choose another brand. And the week after you buy, they go on sale.

We don't want any middlemen speaking for us. When you're buying precision electronic products, we think you'd prefer to deal with experts. Dial our toll-free number and you're talking to the factory: **One Microwave Plaza**. All of our engineering, manufacturing, sales and service happen under this one roof. The buck stops here, you might say. And you always know where to find us.



**THE RADAR  
DEFENSE  
KIT**

#### Undivided Attention

At Cincinnati Microwave, we treat customer service differently, and for a very good reason. We don't have a network of hungry dealers, we've got something far more persuasive: *Hundreds of thousands* of satisfied owners. In fact, the chances are pretty good someone you know owns an ESCORT. We try our best to please our customers after the sale, because they are the biggest source of new sales. It's that simple.

You should also know that we'll fix any ESCORT, no matter how old. We don't believe in planned obsolescence.