

# A Lasting Encounter

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My social "enlightenment" (such as it is) began with my friendship with Joseph A. Galambos, as Andrew J. Galambos was known when I met him in 1957. At this time, Galambos and I were colleagues on the technical staff of the Air Force consultancy Ramo-Wooldridge before that company became TRW. He was an astrophysicist calculating trajectories for Atlas ICBM's before the advent of high-speed digital computers. I was engineering rocket thrust controls to put missiles into a certain trajectories. We had both served in the armed forces and had become technologists in the service of U. S. national defense, which we assumed to be the vanguard of the freedom. Our missiles would keep those commie bastards in their place. Oh yeah! Were we naive or what?

On the side, Galambos was an entrepreneur and proud of it. Right away I could see he was eccentric. Here was this highly credentialed physicist who owned a securities and insurance dealership. Galambos partnered this business with another colleague, Donald H. Allen. (Don was a mathematician.) On close examination, they were not only selling securities on company time but also *CAPITALISM*, for gawd's sakes.

At the time, I was a struggling graduate student in engineering at UCLA, and Galambos generously tutored me in thermodynamics, kinetic theory, and scientific method, among other things. He also sold me an income-protection insurance policy and some mutual fund shares for which he got a commission. His forthright and expert explanation of this transaction captured my interest in his free-enterprise ideas.

Don Allen subscribed to *The Freeman*, which he read religiously. He got Galambos interested in this material on the basis of improving his exposition of laissez faire capitalism. Until then, Galambos behaved as though he had invented capitalism as a tool for selling his portfolio of corporate securities and insurance policies. Regardless, Galambos is fondly remembered by many like me who owe a measure of their financial security to his brutally frank advice and unapologetic sales persistence.

Galambos' business enterprise, Universal Shares, Inc., was a compulsory member of the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD). This experience with government regulation provoked his initial ideological campaign. In spite of the bureaucratic regimentation and his anguish over it, the securities business was quite successful financially – paid better than government work – and it accessed kindred spirits who would subsequently patronize his lectures. I was not the only one who bought and held his insurance and investment offerings, and his arguments for doing so.

My preparations for foreign language readings and PhD qualifying exams put me behind Galambos and Allen in apprehending the new social enlightenment flowing from the pages of *The Freeman*. Soon enough, however, we all came to realize our employment made us part and parcel of a racket that, in principle, was not unlike the one against which we supposed we were defending America. Subsequently, Galambos shucked the aerospace boondoggle and joined the faculty of Whittier College to teach physics, math and astronomy. He still had his Universal Shares business and continued his ideological campaign with the students at the college. When he decided to offer his lectures on capitalism during the weekly chapel period in competition with the College Chaplin, his tenure was terminated.

Galambos' aversion to communism was scarcely more intense than his disdain for the dedicated anti-communists of the day. He especially disparaged theocratic anti-communist programs like Dr. Fred Schwarz's. He considered them negative, sectarian, shallow, and hypocritical, that they pandered to chauvinism and domestic collectivism and that they catered to the Washington imperialists, now popularly known as the military-industrial complex.

After a brief but disappointing flirtation with Goldwater constitutionalism, Galambos decided that teaching the positive virtues of laissez faire capitalism on an individual basis was the necessary and sufficient program for dealing with communism, foreign and domestic. He thought the Liberty Amendment (income tax repeal) was more important than military preparedness and the color of political regimentation. He believed that the scientific method is the only source of legitimate authority and that the history of science is the only worthwhile part of human history. The Presidential Potlatch and Heist of 1960 taught him that a few write-in votes for Goldwater, or even an avalanche of such votes, could not possibly make any creative history. But it would take him a few more years of study to understand politics as the virulent social pathology that it is.

In the fall of 1960, Galambos went home to New York City to meet the folks at the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) and at the Nathaniel Branden Institute, Ayn Rand's front at the time. Ostensibly, he was out to research and implement a kindred venture in Southern California. I tagged along as though we were taking the "Yellow Brick Road" to Gotham to find the "wizards" of freedom.

So it was through Galambos and after Allen that I was introduced to the wonderful world of Read, Mises, Hazlitt, Rothbard, Harper, LeFevre, Chodorov, Bastiat, Weaver, etc. And I must say it was most reassuring to find that Galambos was not alone in believing that laissez faire capitalism was THE way of human life in the world as it is. But then came the realization that building ballistic missiles had nothing to do with building civilization, which created something of a dilemma for those of us who, unlike Galambos, had no entrepreneurial experience and an excess of brains over guts to readily give private enterprise a try.

Curiously, each of us (Galambos, Allen, and I) had previously and independently bonded with Rand, Paine, and Thoreau through their writings. So by the time we met, we were already confirmed individualists and Americanists. But until our exposure to the "Austrians," we were lacking key pieces of social knowledge and technology, specifically economics and profit-and-

loss management. The Austrian connection was a significant turning point for Galambos and subsequently for me.

Galambos readily embraced Mises social arguments and economic conclusions, but as a physical scientist, he could not accept the Austrian notion of *a priori* social knowledge, any more than he could accept such hermeneutic authority in physics. He believed an authentic social science was not only possible but necessary for the future of the race. Mere authoritative opinion would not suffice. For starters, he insisted human action was as much a part of nature as planetary motion; that human nature had to be a part of the whole of the natural world, and that bona fide economic knowledge would have to hold up to the proceedings of natural science.

With postulates and definitions appropriate to the social domain of phenomena, Galambos expected the subject to yield to the scientific method in its entirety as does all natural history. He explained how an *a priori* deductive exercise consisting of reasoning alone, which comprises only the middle part of the scientific method, would fail to accredit economic knowledge to the degree necessary to overcome controversy. He showed how a complete round of scientific endeavor must include an *a posteriori* inductive struggle at the beginning and an observational test of the deductive projections at the end to escape the appearance of dogma. He would have agreed with the declaration of Hayek's friend Karl Popper; "If it can't be falsified, it isn't science, economic or other." Predictably, Mises was offended by these notions, but then, after all was said and done, Galambos was not an "economist" and he paid good money and delivered enthusiastic audiences.

Suzanne Galambos (Andrew's long suffering wife), Don Allen, and I comprised the original staff of Galambos' Free Enterprise Institute. Initially, Galambos was the sole faculty member in residence. All the courses were his starting with a 20-lecture offering called "Course 100: Capitalism, the Key to Survival" in the spring of 1961. Also in the curriculum were courses on investments and insurance; physics; astronomy, astrophysics and astronautics; Thomas Paine: Author of the Declaration of Independence. He soon changed the title of his initial course was to "Capitalism: The Liberal Revolution" in keeping with his increasingly ideological concentration.

Galambos was eager to have scholars he admired visit and speak to his students. The first such invited lecturer was Professor Ludwig von Mises, whose 1962 seminar in Los Angeles that Galambos promoted was attended by me and many other seekers asking similar questions as Galambos. Shortly after Mises' visit, Galambos arranged seminars for Leonard Read and F.A. Harper. These meetings were well attended and it was all very stimulating and inspiring. Looking back, I don't know how I could have lived without the experience. Galambos also scheduled and promoted a seminar for Spencer Heath, but that one had to be cancelled because of Heath's age and failing health. He longed to host Ayn Rand in "his" market but she spurned him. She would have none of Galambos as long as she had Branden. (Branden was much better looking.)

Galambos welcomed the "objectivists" in his courses. Some bought into his "liberalism" and private enterprise government ideas. Although he did not recommend his students enroll in Branden Institute lectures, many did over his objections. Most of them were already confirmed

individualists, and inasmuch as they had been inoculated against "Objectivism" as some special form of knowledge, they were immune to Ayn Rand's misguided affection for Republican Party politics. The intellectual intercourse with the objectivists was just healthy competition. However, the messianic personalities were destined to clash and the "followers" were prone to worship, not collaborate.

Like Galambos, I never answered to the *nom de guerre* "libertarian." It was always easier for me to identify with the apolitical and historical sense of the term "liberalism" as embodied in Galambos' ideological challenge. When Galambos debated Leonard Read on the need for a new public label for the laissez faire paradigm, I sided with Galambos. Galambos like Mises, Hayek, and other Europeans of the laissez-faire persuasion considered themselves "liberals" in keeping with that respectable tradition. The world could go to hell before they would relinquish this word to a bunch of erstwhile American fascists. Galambos even used "The Liberal" as a pseudonym and named his parent company in the ideology business "The Liberal Institute of Natural Science and Technology," abbreviated "LIONS Tech."

I wondered – if there was no politics, who needs a label? In fact, Galambos was rabidly anti-political, so the fuss over labels seemed a bit incongruous. When the Libertarian Party was formed, Galambos was predictably and immediately repulsed. When he learned Rothbard had joined this political movement, he assumed Rothbard had gone off his rocker. By the time his former student and colleague Harry Browne became the LP candidate for president (1996), Galambos was mentally incapacitated. But it takes no imagination to figure out what he would have thought of Harry's political campaign.

When I need a label, "liberal" suits me fine. I realize it takes more than a sport coat to make a sport, and I enjoy an argument on the level of "who owns it," a rhetorical device Galambos made potent. Galambos considered the liberal label a weapon in a war of ideas. He saw any opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of FDR's political heirs, the New Deal thugs and their descendents, as a valuable one. He considered the usurpation of this label by fascists to be pernicious and insisted such use should be challenged at every opportunity. I notice some libertarians refer to themselves on occasion as classical liberals. They could well admire how Galambos was able to make that rhetorical device a shining badge of distinction

Galambos has been characterized as "one of the oddest characters in the shadows of libertarian history." There is no denying he was an oddity, but perhaps no more so than von Mises in terms of an uncompromising posture in the teaching of well-considered principles. But unlike the academic Mises, who suffered at the discretion of tenured academics and bureaucratic university administrators, Galambos was an entrepreneur who anguished over the usurpations of the regulatory bureaucrats and tax collectors. As an uncompromising preacher as well as a practitioner of profit-seeking proprietorship, he was in a class by himself. As he might well have expounded in a five-hour lecture with no breaks, I will venture to boil down his thesis to three simple and familiar prescriptions – (1) do no harm, (2) live and let live and (3) to each his own. His overarching principle that profit is virtuous would take longer to explain.

That Galambos is possibly "in the shadows of libertarian history" is a consequence of his radical ideas on intellectual property. His so-called theory of primary property had the effect of discouraging publication or extrapolation of any aspects of his teachings by any of his students while, at the same time, he himself suffered a writers' paralysis. (See my essay "On Andrew Galambos and His Primary Property Ideas." Nevertheless, Galambos' influence has been penetrating, unmistakable, undeniable and creative. During the period 1957 to about 1982, he persuaded thousands of adults to pay him to convince them he was right. (See Harry Browne's poignant but accurate account of his affair with Galambos entitled "Andrew Galambos – the Unknown Libertarian," *Liberty*, November, 1997.)

In 1999, the executors of Galambos' estate d.b.a. The Universal Scientific Publications Company, San Diego, published posthumously some transcriptions of his course lectures. This 941 page volume is entitled, *Sic Itur ad Astra* meaning "This is the way to the stars." With this publication, there has been a renaissance of interest in his ideas. (See, for example, reader reviews at <http://www.amazon.com/> and discussions in progress at [www.bridgetofreedom.com/](http://www.bridgetofreedom.com/), [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/volitional\\_science/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/volitional_science/), <http://www.volitionalpartners.com/manifesto.htm> and <http://www.above-the-garage.com/rblts/index.html>.)

What set Galambos apart from others in the "freedom" movement was his utter disdain for politics and non-profit organization. He was completely liberated from the polls and he celebrated the individual human profit motive as the engine of creation. He described a "not-for-profit" declaration and application to the state for a tax exemption as a blatantly hypocritical gesture of voluntary servitude and poverty. Such eleemosynary status he considered not only unnatural and anti-capitalistic but also a seeking after legal privilege by tax-hustling panderers to the state. He upheld proprietary administration as the total alternative to politics and bureaucracy, describing all manner of innovative possibilities for the delivery of public services by voluntary market means. For him, private property was the only rational and moral basis for authority in society and he was out to buttress this audacious hypothesis with scientific verification, a quest he called "Volitional Science."

Sadly, Galambos suffered from an affliction lamented somewhat earlier in history by Frederic Bastiat, namely an obsession to dispense with all the vulgar fallacies before dealing with the creative harmonies. With so many human stupidities and foibles at hand to contend with, he never got around to accomplishing very much of what he set out to do. He is well remembered for what he did, perhaps not for what he dreamed to do.