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CRNLA: Who did you know in the old Berkeley crowd such as Danny Rosenthal, Sharon Presley, Tom McGivern? How about Kerry Thornley?

RAW: I never heard of any of those people except Kerry Thornley and Sharon Presley. Kerry is one of the co-creators of Discordian atheology, which is why volume one of *Illuminatus* is co-dedicated to him. Sharon is a fine person who I've only met twice but liked vastly. I'm sure all those others are excellent people, too, but I've never met them.

CRNLA: The editor of *New Libertarian Weekly*, SEK3, would like you to write for them — ". . . we're a hell of a lot better than SRAF and can even pay a token amount, and can run stuff he can't get past *Playboy* and *Oui*."

RAW: I'd be delighted.

CRNLA: Do you have any concluding thoughts for our readers?

RAW: Absolutely not. As Korzybski said, nothing is conclusive, and every sentence should end with an *et cetera.* Or perhaps Woody Allen said it better: "Not only is there no God, but you can't even get a plumber on weekends." The answer to that, of course, is to become your own god and your own plumber. That may be the fundamental secret of the Illuminati.

Robert Anton Wilson, who along with Robert Shea wrote the *Illuminatus* trilogy, is the creator of yet another cult. The really neat part is that this is a cult of hard-core libertarian-anarchist-occult-mind expansionists whose demand for the *Illuminatus* books is making SF retail history. Walk into your corner bookstore and chances are excellent the books have been back-ordered. Borrow a copy or wait in line if you must — it's worth it. The trilogy is truly mind-boggling, outrageous, and curiously familiar. With this in mind we set out to interview one of its authors, Robert Anton Wilson (hereafter R.A.W.)

Interviewing him by mail was an exciting, albeit frustrating job. His provocative answers triggered seemingly never-ending digressions. We had to more or less learn to limit our responses. Several of the questions in the following interview appear to be asked by R.A.W. himself. These are not misprints — he does give himself questions. To give you some insight into Wilson's psyche we offer you this tidbit of data — to wit, his return address rubber stamp has his name misspelled "Robert Antoon Wilson." Make of this what thou wilt. — Jane Talisman and Eric Geislinger (hereafter the CRNLA).

CRNLA: Tell us a little about your background.

RAW: I was born into a working class Irish Catholic family in Brooklyn 44 years ago, at the brutal bottom of the Great Depression. I suppose this early imprinting and conditioning made me a life-long radical. My education was mostly scientific, majoring in electrical engineering and applied math at Brooklyn Tech and Brooklyn Polytech. Those imprints made me a life-long rationalist. I have become increasingly skeptical about, or detached from, the assumption that radicalism and rationalism are the *only* correct perspectives with which to view life, but they remain my *favorite* perspectives.

CRNLA: What are your favorite novels, movies, TV shows and music?

RAW: The novels would be, I suppose, *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake, The Magus* by Fowles, *The Roots of Heaven* by Gary, *Don Quixote* and anything by Mark Twain. Movies: *Intolerance, Broken Blossoms* and everything else by David Mark Griffith, *Citizen Kane, The Trial, King Kong, 2001.* TV: *Star Trek* and *Mary Hartma*n. Music: Beethoven's Ninth and his late quartets, Bach, Bizet, Carl Orff, Vivaldi, the less popular and more experimental stuff by Stravinsky.

CRNLA: What do you think of M*A*S*H, the Freak Brothers, Bob Dylan?

RAW: I loved Altman's film of *M*A*S*H* but I can't stand the TV series. The Freak Brothers are funny, but I deplore the lifestyle it celebrates. Of course, Einstein and Michelangelo were sloppy, too, but only because they were too busy with real *work* to fix their attention on sartorial status games. Hippies generally aren't busy with anything except feeling sorry for themselves. Dylan seems to me a totally pernicious influence — the nasal whine of death and masochism. Certainly, this would be a more cheerful world if there were no Dylan records in it. But Dylan and his audience mirror each other, and deserve each other; as Marx said, a morbid society creates its own morbid grave-diggers.

CRNLA: How about Anderson, LeGuin and Heinlein?

RAW: I haven't taken Anderson seriously since 1968, when he wrote an account of the police-riot at the Chicago Convention which was totally false, according to my observations on the scene. I decided Poul loved the Vietnam War so much, that he could actually

need to be shaken a bit and awakened. As Jesus said, "Ye are all gods, ye are all children of the Most High."

CRNLA: Have you ever walked into some public place like a shopping center and said to yourself something like, "Christ, it's solid earthlings! You'd think there'd be at least a couple of aliens strolling around looking at the shops, etc." ?

RAW: Curiously, I belong to a loose association of skeptical Contactees — people who have had a Contact experience but are too skeptical to take it literally. There are over a hundred of us in the U.S. alone, most scientists, and I think that the gradual surfacing of this story will be one of the major cultural shocks of our time. Right now, Martin Gardner has already registered his viewpoint and I trust that MIT will have the courtesy to print Dr. Sarfatti's rebuttal. I must add that most of us who are involved in this have grown extremely doubtful about the now-conventional extraterrestrial explanation and are trying out various explanatory models that are even more mind-blowing. Those who are interested in this subject might look up my article, "The Starseed Signals," in *Gnostica* for June 1975, and Dr. Jacques Vallee's book, *The Invisible College.* As the divine Mullah Nasruddin said, "If you haven't seen me before, how do you know it*is* me?"

CRNLA: What are your plans for future books?

RAW: *Prometheus Rising* will be published by Llewellyn next year. It's a collection of my essays on space age occultism and post-LSD consciousness. I hope it will knock holes in the Christian revival, the Hindu revival, the Buddhist revival and all the other neolithic metaphysics going around these days. A book on immortality research, possibly entitled *Death Shall Have No Dominion*, is going around New York seeking a publisher. A book on Dr. Timothy Leary, and a new novel called *Schrödinger's Cat*, about quantum paradoxes and parapsychology, are also in the works. Leary and I are working on a collaborative venture called *The Game of Life* which started out as one volume and became three. It modestly attempts to deduce the next four billion years of evolution from the data of Leary's brain-change research.

RAW: Every nervous system creates its own "reality," minute by minute — or, in the language of Don Juan Matus, we live inside a "bubble" of neural abstractions which we identify with reality. In metaprogramming systems like Tibetan Tantra, Crowleyanity, or Leary's Exo-Psychology, you can make this neurological fact into conscious experience, and you will never be bored or depressed again. Just reading the scientific evidence that this is true, in social psychology or general semantics or neurology or whatever, will not liberate you; one needs actual re-training, in Tantra or Crowley or Leary, to experience what I'm talking about here. It is a great privilege to be conscious in this universe. Those who understand, shine like stars.

CRNLA: I was just speaking in relative terms. Actually, I'm quite excited about reality — it's probably my favorite thing. I was just wondering if sometimes all the fnords tend to get you a little pissed-off.

RAW: Never. As Tim Leary says, the universe is an intelligence test. The things that hinder me are opportunities to learn more and develop further. That's where amoral thinking is distinctly superior to moral thinking. If you recognize that your latest problem is totally without moral significance — for instance, you have a disease which you can't, by the wildest stretch of imagination, *blame* on anybody — then it's just a question of coping with the situation as best you can. When you realize that people are just as automated as bacteria or wild animals, then you deal with hostile humans the same way you deal with infections or predators — rationally, without claiming you're "right" or they're "wrong." Then you begin to understand Crowley's great Law of Thelema (Do What Thou Wilt) and you're free, really free, instead of being an actor in a soap opera written by the superstitious shamans who created morality 30,000 years ago. You are also free of anger, hatred and resentment, which are great burdens to drop. They live happiest, my friend, who have understood and forgiven all.

CRNLA: Are there real people, alive or in history, who resemble any of your characters (Hagbard in particular)?

RAW: Absolutely. There are hundreds of thousands of Hagbards around, and all the sleep-walkers are potential Hagbards. They only

watch a cop hit an old lady and remember it as a young communist hitting the cop. I haven't bothered keeping up with Anderson's hallucinations since then. LeGuin is great already, and getting better book by book. Heinlein has been an idol to me for more than 20 years. He can do no wrong, no matter how much he loves wars and hates pacifists. (I'm the kind of anarchist whose chief objection to the State is that it kills so many people. Government is the epitome of the deathist philosophy I reject.)

CRNLA: Are you a pacifist?

RAW: Hell, no. I *like* pacifists, as a rule, and people who have a heavy emotional identification with deathism and war would probably *call* me a pacifist, but I am a non-invasivist rather than a non-violentist. That is, I believe that an invaded people have the right to defend themselves "by any means necessary" as the expression goes. This includes putting ground glass or poison in the invaders' food, shooting at them from ambush, sabotage, the general strike, armed revolution, all forms of Gandhian civil disobedience, etc. It's up to the invaded to decide which of these techniques they will use. It's not up to some moralist to tell them which techniques are permissible. As Tucker said, "There is nothing sacred in the life of an invader."

CRNLA: What magazines and newspapers do you read?

RAW: I read everything, including the labels on canned food. I'm a hopeless print addict, a condition alleviated only by daily meditation which breaks the linear-Aristotelian trance. (Most rationalistic libertarians would do well to try the same circuit breaker, or LSD.) *National Lampoon, Scientific American* and *Green Egg* are what I read most obsessively. I also read at least one periodical every month by a political group I dislike — to keep some sense of balance. The overwhelming stupidity of political movements is caused by the fact that political types never read anything but their own gang's agitprop.

CRNLA: Any more artistic opinions?

RAW: If I must. James Joyce is more important than Jesus, Buddha and Shakespeare put together. Pound is the greatest poet in English. Thorne Smith should be reprinted immediately, and would be enormously popular with the current generation, I wager. The novels

that get praised in the NY Review of Books aren't worth reading. Ninety-seven percent of science fiction is adolescent rubbish, but good science fiction is the best (and only) literature of our times. All of these opinions are pompous and aggressive, of course, but questions like this bring out the worst in me. Artistic judgments are silly if expressed as dogmas, at least until we get an "artometer" which can measure objectively how many micro-michelangelos or kilo-homers of genius a given artifact has in it. Do you know that at UC-Berkeley, Dr. Paul Segall has a lab full of rats who are twice the age at which rats normally die of senility? And these rats are not only alive but still reproducing. This may be the most important fact I know. Dr. Segal hopes to have a life-extension formula for humans ready in the early 1980s.

CRNLA: Has Dr. Segall published any papers on his research? If so, where?

RAW: A good, non-technical article by Dr. Segall on his own work and on other approaches to longevity, is in the new issue of *Spit in the Ocean*, edited by Dr. Timothy Leary and published by Ken Kesey. That issue, incidentally, is also worth reading for Sirag and Sarfatti on quantum consciousness, and Leary himself on higher intelligence.

CRNLA: Speaking of Ken Kesey, What did you think of Cuckoo's Nest, and where can I get a copy of *Spit in the Ocean*?

RAW: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is certainly one of my favorite recent novels, but I like Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion* even better. In fact, a great deal of the structural rhythms of *Illuminatus*, especially the space-time warps, were suggested by Kesey's similar techniques in *Sometimes a Great Notion.* The way the producers of the movie of *Cuckoo's Nest* swindled Kesey is entirely typical of the way producers and publishers rob writers — it's perfectly normal Capitalist ethics and typically mammalian.

The last I heard, Kesey was supposed to have the new *Spit in the Ocean* out by mid-Summer. (Write: 85829 Ridgway Road, Pleasant Hill, OR 97401).

CRNLA: What route did you travel to get to libertarianism?

RAW: Arlen, my wife, discovered Kropotkin's article on anarchism in the *Britannica* and it immediately convinced us both (1961).

parallels in *Illuminatus.* Unfortunately, that section was particularly mauled and truncated by the editors. Originally, it was trans-Melvillian satire on all ideology and morality, including my own lapses into ethical thinking. I also wrote the Appendices on various occasions when very stoned as a parody on my style in my more academic essays.

CRNLA: What was Hagbard doing in a government printing office?

RAW: Hagbard was visiting the Discordian agents who have infiltrated the government and sneaked parodies into the bureaucratic forms: SMI2LE = infinity. (Space Migration plus Intelligence Increase plus Life Extension = cosmic consciousness.

CRNLA: Any word on how sales are doing?

RAW: Fine. I might not have to take up highway robbery and murder to get rich after all.

CRNLA: That's good. Who is Tarantella Serpentine and why is she working for Limit newsletter?

RAW: The Discordian conspiracy has been radically decentralized from the beginning, in accordance with Malaclypse the Younger's principle that "We Discordians must stick apart." The last I heard, Tarantella was a fictional character, working in a San Francisco massage parlor (in my other novel, *The Sex Magicians.*) It doesn't surprise that she has a life of her own, outside my imagination. *Illuminatus* is only part of a total art work, or "happening" known as Operation Mindfuck. A group of New York Discordians, for instance, celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Illuminati with a public reading of Principia Discordia (which also exists) outside the UN building on May 1 this year. A lodge of Crowleyan magicians in Texas has officially changed their name from the Temple of the Hidden God to the Ancient Illuminated Good Old Boys of Houston. Emperor Norton posters, endorsed by the Illuminati, are for sale through Solidarity Books in Chicago. Everything the Birchers ever claimed about the Illuminati is gradually coming true.

CRNLA: Do you feel frustration living in the "real" world? After reading *Illuminatus* it's a downer to get back to reality — even my usual escapist literature is depressing. How do you feel about that?

whatever. Contrary to the last 2,500 years of "philosophy" among the domesticated and neurotic carnivore species we adorn, there is nothing noble or beautiful or dignified about dying. Like poverty, it is ugly, nasty, brutal and primitive. The function of intelligence is to do better than those mammalian norms.

CRNLA: Could you give us a bibliography on everything you've had published and who published it and if it's still in print?

RAW: Hell, no. I've got about 1,000 articles in print and I can't remember where most of them were printed and don't really care to. The things I'm willing to stand by, in addition to *Illuminatus*, are the essays being collected in *Prometheus Rising: Sex and Drugs*, a Playboy Press paperback; my piece on "The Future in Sex" in *Oui*, November 1975; the article on brainwashing by Leary and me in *Oui* for June 1976, (which I especially commend to those who thought the consciousness-warps, ego-fissions, reality-mutations and sex-role roulette in *Illuminatus* were "fantasy"); "Scientific and Experimental Magic" in *Gnostica*, January 1975; and two pieces on Caryl Chessman and the Marquis de Sade in *The Realist*, dates unknown. Most of what I wrote before last week bores me.

CRNLA: What kind of stuff was the 500 pages that got edited out of Illuminatus?

RAW: It was sacrilegious, blasphemous, obscene, subversive, funny, surrealistic, trippy and much like what did get published. The portion of hard anarchist propaganda in what got cut is perhaps somewhat greater than in what got printed, but I do not attribute that to a government conspiracy. Editors always amputate the brain first and preserve a good-looking corpse. I knew that, and told Shea they'd do it, so we put in so damned much anarchist material that a lot would be left even after the ceremonial castration.

CRNLA: Is Bob Shea a hard-core libertarian?

RAW: More or less. I really don't want to categorize Shea, who can certainly speak (eloquently) for himself.

CRNLA: Who wrote the *Atlas Shrugged* parody in *Illuminatus*? Who wrote the appendices?

RAW: I wrote the *Telemachus Sneezed* section — which is not just another kick at poor old Rand, but also a self-parody of *Illuminatus*, and of *Moby Dick*, and of my arcane Joycean use of *Moby Dick*

We were both highly cynical about the alleged values of Capitalism and State Socialism already, and happy to find an alternative.

CRNLA: What is your present involvement in "movement" activities?

RAW: I'm more involved in space migration, intelligence increase and life extension which seems to me more important than any mammalian politics. What energy I have for terrestrial brawling goes into Wavy Gravy's Nobody for President campaign, the Firesign Theatre's Papoon for President campaign, and the Linda Lovelace for President (which I invented myself, since we ought to have a *good-looking* cocksucker in the White House for once.) I think these campaigns have some satirical-educational function, and, at minimum, they relieve the tedium of contemplating the "real" candidates, a more-than-usual uninspiring lot this year. Voting wouldn't excite me unless it included electing the directors of the big banks and corporations, who make the real decisions that affect our lives. It's hard to get excited about the trained seals in Washington. Of course, if voting could change the system, it would be illegal. Teachers would be handling out pamphlets for children to take home proving that voting machines cause chromosome damage, and Art Linkletter would claim that a ballot box drove his daughter to suicide.

CRNLA: There's another Vote for Nobody Campaign being run by Malibu. Have you heard of it? Are you interested in it?

RAW: Glad to hear it. There's a third "Nobody for President" headquarters in Washington, D.C. The more the merrier. One of my friends, the ArchDruid of the Berkeley Grove of the Reformed Druids of North America, is running George III for President — although I admit that the satirical point there is a bit obscure for me. I've also heard, vaguely, about a Who-the-Hell for President campaign. There's also a Bonzo for President poster going around, Bonzo being a chimpanzee who once co-starred with the egregious Ronald Reagan in a rather dumb movie. The American people, who elected Richard Nixon twice, should not find any of these choices absurd. But before leaving this subject, I should mention the sanest political proposal I've heard in years, the Guns and Dope Party proposed by my good friend, Rev. William Helmer (who, like many of the characters in *Illuminatus*, exists also in so-called consensus reality.) The Guns and

Dope Party, as the name suggests, would be based on a platform demanding an end to all government interference with guns and dope. Now, while the gun-nuts tend to be paranoid about the dopers, and *vice versa*, the Guns and Dope Party is a possible libertarian coalition that would constitute a clear majority and could really win an election. All that's needed for success, then, is for the gun-people and the dope-people to understand fully the advantages of affiliating — that is, the very good chance of real success at the polls. Hopefully, this might be enough to persuade them to drop their mutual animosity. If this can be accomplished, we will have the first majoritarian libertarian party in American political history. It certainly seems worth thinking about.

CRNLA: Could you tell us more about your politics — such as how you evolved from Kropotkin to Illuminatus?

RAW: After Prince Peter, I read Tucker, who was being reprinted by Mildred Loomis in a journal called, of all things, *Balanced Living*. (I later became co-editor of that, and changed the name to *Way Out.*) After Tucker, I read all the major anarchists and then began writing anarchist essays myself. I soon discovered that, in addition to the 99.8 percent of the morons who make up any political movement, every gang has its own intellectuals defending it (with every variety of sophistry the Jesuits ever devised.) To defend anarchism more effectively, I had to read Marx and Douglas and Gesell and H. George and William Buckley Jr. and so weirder, on and on into the depths of ideological metaphysics — "the great Serbonian bog where armies whole have sunk," as Burke (the best conservative) once said. Such omnidirectional reading, alas, tends to produce a certain degree of agnosticism, but my basic axioms have remained that (1) a system which consigned me to poverty at birth and Nelson Godawful Rockefeller to riches, is demonstrably insane, and (2) I will do anything, including highway robbery and murder, to avoid leaving my children in poverty. In that sense, the political thinker I probably agree with most is Bernard Shaw, who presented that position, with equal bluntness, in his *Major Barbara*. I might add, to be even more offensive, that I regard morality and ideology as the chief cause of human misery. I am even more committed to unmitigated skepticism than

feeling, "This is the answer to our disagreements" — it would not be accepted. I speak with some experience here, being part of an occult order who do indeed govern themselves that way. My only general rules are Crowley's "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law" and Leary's Three Commandments for the Neurological Age, to wit: "Thou shalt not alter the consciousness of thy neighbor, 2. Thou shalt not prevent thy neighbor from altering his or her own consciousness, 3. Thou shalt make no more commandments." The so-called "resources" problem is a terracentric delusion. The Universe is a Big Mother.

CRNLA: To return to life extension, space migration and higher intelligence, I worry about the potential of all that being screwed up by the politicians. How do you feel about that?

RAW: If the oncoming mutation to interstellar immortality is screwed up by the politicians (or the corporations), it will be because those of us who see the opportunities in modern science are not adroit enough to outmaneuver the forces of inertia, stupidity and greed. Well, if we're not intelligent enough to overcome such obstacles, then we don't deserve to carry off the mutation at this stage of evolution. The thing to do, in that case, is to sit down and have a good Taoistic laugh at our own presumption. Meanwhile, until the game is over, I happen to think we're winning. The other side is very, very stupid. Concretely, I say that if we have colonization of L5 by 1990, and longevity at about the same time, I think the game is won; some human seed will become cosmic and immortal. Robert Phedra, M.D., has already predicted life extension to 1,000 years.

CRNLA: A thousand years is OK for a start, but it's not enough. Would you settle for "indefinite life extension" if it means transferring your thoughts to a synthetic storage system?

RAW: I'd consider it, but temperamentally I'd rather blast off for the stars when lifespan reaches about 400 years. I think in a 400 year cruise around the galaxy we'd contact races who have immortality already and we might arrange a trade for the technology of it. (Maybe they'd want an unexpurgated*Illuminatus*. I'm for space, actually, whether there are immortals out there or not. Aside from that bias, I'd support life extension by whatever means, from cryonic suspension to cyborgism to coding ourselves into our computers or

in The Dispossessed. She chose to do it collectively. Ultimately, this results in some system of voting or representatives or syndics which bear striking resemblance to governments (in addition to being very inefficient.) So the so-called "anarchy" in *The Dispossessed* is actually a widespread proliferation of governments and poverty. If the determination of the use of resources is placed in the hands of the individual who makes the resources useful (i.e., grows, finds, fertilizes, builds on, digs up, etc.) this provides him with a good deal of independence from the rest of the herd. Seems like a natural for any anarchistic society. This is basically the idea behind my concept of ownership. Could you give a summary of what you consider to be a good method of allocating resources and any concepts similar to ownership that might be contained therein?

RAW: Since ownership is a social fiction, it should obviously be fluid and sensitive to decentralized feedback, to match the evolving needs of the persons involved in whatever social game is being played. In other words, I do not propose one "right way" of doing it; that has to be found pragmatically in each new situation. The traditional feudal-Capitalist system in which one hereditary group of Great Pirates "owns" everything is not acceptable to me, and obviously would not be acceptable to any band of Stirnerite egoists; and, of course, the altruistic forms of socialism and communism are equally unacceptable to me, and I predict they would be equally unacceptable to a band of self-owners in the Stirnite, Tucker or Crowley sense. What would emerge in such a rationalistic-egoistic context would, in a general way, probably follow the guidelines suggested by Stirner, Spooner, Proudhon and Tucker — except that this would only be in a general way, as all of those writers realized. The specific individuals in each situation would define their own demands according to the specific situation always. The only contracts that would be acceptable to them, as Tucker indicated, would be those that require no enforcement — that is, those that are so obviously in the enlightened self-interest of each member that their wording would be accepted with the satisfaction the scientific world feels when a hard question is finally answered. If the proposed contract did not have that self-evident feeling character about it — if it didn't provoke the general

I am to anarchism — or to life extension, space migration or high intelligence. With doubt all things are possible. Doubt and courage.

CRNLA — Your economic views still seem very much in the Benjamin Tucker tradition (especially on rent and interest.) Have you read any of the "Austrian" economists, such as Von Mises and Rothbard? What do you think of them?

RAW: Tucker is certainly a major influence. My economic ideas are a blend of Tucker, Spooner, Fuller, Pound, Henry George, Rothbard, Douglas, Korzybski, Proudhon and Marx. I always try to be inclusive, rather than exclusive. Read to see what I can learn from every school, rather than condemning any idea in its entirety. "Every man has the right to have his ideas examined one at a time," as Ez Pound once wrote. Rothbard is, like Marx and Pound, a brilliant closed mind: excellent for stimulation but anybody who gets dragged into a Rothbardian dogmatic trance should take LSD and try looking at the world through another grid. Von Mises is another who is excellent for stimulation, pernicious if erected into dogma. By and large, the Austrians remind me of a parable by Laurance Labadie, in which a certain tribe has the custom of allowing high-caste individuals to kick low-caste individuals in the butt whenever they pass them in the street. A philosophical school, much like the Austrians, naturally arises to prove rationally that the kicking is not only necessary but just, inevitable, beautiful and altogether glorious. If there were big profits in cancer, there'd undoubtedly be an Austrian school of medicine, proving that carcinoma is good for us.

CRNLA: Tucker is one of my favorite people — but one of his views with which I can't agree is that in a free society interest rates and rent would disappear. I think the Austrians have advanced economic knowledge sufficiently since Tucker's day to show why these things exist and how they would come about even in an economy consisting totally of free trade. Your reply?

RAW: You can "prove" anything on the verbal level, just be accepting the necessary axioms at the beginning. Empirically, I don't think they can produce a single case in history where a free people elected landlords to own the land; the land monopoly always starts with conquest. Shot and shell are the coins of purchase, as Herbert Spencer said. Except by force of arms, nobody "owns" the earth, anymore

than the moon, the planets, the stars themselves. When did God disinherit the majority of humanity, and turn all space over to the "ownership" of the Rockefellers and their friends? Without armed power threatening us, why would anyone but a fool continue to pay these conquistadores the extortion they demand? And, even if the Austrians could convince me that rent is legitimate, I still wouldn't voluntarily pay it to the present landlord class who remain*receivers of stolen property.* I would pay it to the nearest Indian tribe.

As for interest, I'm not aware of any case in which the credit monopoly has allowed a free currency to compete with them. In fact, every case I know of (e.g. Wörgl in the 1930s), ended when the Capitalists used the armed might of the State to stop the competition. The one laboratory experiment in this field, by Don Werkheiser at Central State University in Ohio, confirmed Tucker and refuted the Austrians. Money, after all, is an *abstract artifact,* like language — merely *symbolized* by the paper or coin or whatever. If you can fully grasp its abstractedness, especially in the computer age, it becomes quite clear that no group can monopolize this abstraction, except through a series of swindle. *The average primate cannot distinguish the symbol from the referent*, the map from the territory, the menu from the meal. If the usurers had been bolder, they might have monopolized language as well as currency, and people would be saying we can't write more books because we don't have enough words, the way they now say we can't build starships, because we don't have enough money. As Bucky Fuller says, you might as well argue we can't build roads because we lack kilometers.

CRNLA: I think our differences in "rent" are basically in "land-rent" — you don't see anything wrong if someone wants to rent out power tools and U-haul trailers — true? Your main argument with land-rent seems to be with the lack of legitimate owners. I'm assuming legitimate (i.e. non-conquistador) owners when I speak of legitimate rent. If two people went to Mars or the bottom of the ocean and one of them spent his time clearing rocks and fertilizing a section of land and the other spent his time assembling a tractor, and they reach an agreement to exchange the use of the land for one season for the use of the tractor for one season — has anyone been harmed or exploited or extorted? Should some third party

corporations in every position from office boy to middle executive, I have not been shocked or surprised in the slightest by the Watergate or post-Watergate scandals.

Austrians believe what they write, they must be somewhat abashed, I should think. For instance, David Friedman has published views about the corporate elite that would be flattering if applied to Jesus and his angels. However, this is turning into a diatribe against the group I find least obnoxious in the whole politico-economic spectrum (because you keep asking me questions that harp on my differences with them.) The orthodox conservatives and liberals, not to mention nazis and marxists, are really pernicious, and the Austrian libertarians are basically okay.

CRNLA: Regarding our Rent Interest discussion: I think that our differences regarding money stem from a difference in definitions. I would include wealth that is used in certain ways under the heading "money," while you limit the definition to just its transactional functions. OK, as long as we know where we are. Once we start dealing with this "wealth-money" as wealth (and forget the word "money"), the problem of interest becomes just a special case of rent. Which really brings us back to property and ownership. I've never attempted to tie the concept of ownership to the metaphysical framework of the universe. I realize that it's merely a human invention — much like language (which is not to say that other inhabitants of the planet don't use it also) that's purpose is to make the allocation of resources go as smoothly and efficiently and with the least amount of head-cracking as possible. Like the use of language, the use of the concept of "property" doesn't necessarily have to be enforced. When people discover it they use it because it's in their long-range self-interest to do so. (This is not to say that particular instances don't require enforcement — just that the concept is usually retained without it.) The whole system of ownership/division of labor/rent transactions etc. is merely designed to allocate resources so that they maximize the "vector sum" of everyone's satisfaction — or more accurately, that this system has the potential to maximize. You don't have to use it. Without this system some alternative method must be found to determine who gets the use of what. LeGuin faced this problem

Revolution is still proceeding and more and more people are waking up to the difference between our economic game-rules and the real existential situation of humanity.

Don Werkheiser might sell you a Xerox of his thesis on the Central State experiment if you write to him c/o General Delivery, Ponca, Arkansas. Similar experiments are recounted in Josiah Warren's *True Civilization,* involving four communes in 19th Century America. Let me conclude this answer by emphasizing that I do not *blame* the money-monopologists for any of their hoarding behavior. I am sure you will find similar absurdities in the primitive stages of anthropoid civilizations on most planets of G-type stars. Mammalian patterns persist in many other aspects of our society, especially in organized religions.

In my experience, I might add, virtually all adherents of the Austrian economic theories are academics who have never had any dealings with Capitalist corporations. The rosy view the Austrians have of these matters, I think, would collapse in two weeks if they had to deal with the damned corporate pirates as an ordinary worker does. When Joyce went into business briefly, he told Italo Svevo after a while, "You know, I think my partners are cheating me." Svevo answered, "You only *think* your partners are cheating you! Joyce, you are an artist!" Nixon is the typical Capitalist mentality, entirely identical in all aspects with every businessman I have ever encountered; his only real distinction is that he got caught. Of course, I'm not complaining — part of the humor of living on this backward planet is listening to the hominids rationalize their predations.

CRNLA: I don't think that the Austrians have a particularly "rosy" view of business. I know a lot of them (Mises and Rothbard for two) consider a total separation of the economy and the government to be the best means of keeping these clowns from becoming too powerful. Most consider a totally free market to be the ultimate in "consumerism" — not "capitalism" (at least as it's come to be known.)

RAW: Well, there is certainly a kinship between the Austrians and myself on the level of ultimate goals. I merely feel that their views of Capitalism-as-practised-in-the-past-and-present could only be held by college professors. After more than 20 years of working for the

come onto the scene and say, "Hey stop that, you're committing rent?"

RAW: Land-rent, or ground-rent, is the most illegitimate aspect of the rent con, of course, and the main target of Tucker's criticisms. The whole concept of any rent, however, appears somewhat dubious to me, since it seems to presuppose "the accumulation of property in a few aristocratic heaps, at the expense of a great deal of democratic bare ground in between," as Ezra Heywood said. (Heywood's writings on this subject, and other aspects of libertarianism, are at least as important as Tucker's and Spooner's.) People*rent,* chiefly, when they cannot afford to purchase outright — when ground-rent, interest and other inequalities haver already created a master-class of aristocrat-owners and a servile class of peasants or proles. I would expect to see rent wither away as the democratization of credit abolishes poverty.

I fail to see how your hypothetical "legitimate (i.e. non-conquistador) owners" would achieve "ownership." (I also don't see the bearing of such hypothetical, or fictitious, cases on the real issues of the real world, where all the landlords are conquistadors, or are receivers of stolen property from the original conquistadors, but that is another question.)

Ownership, in the real world, is a social agreement, a social fiction almost, and is produced only by force or by fraud or by contract. In practice, land ownership is produced only by force or fraud.

This may sound polemic, but it is literally true. The Henry George Schools have a book,*Land Title Origins: A Tale of Force and Fraud,* in which you can look up, wherever you live in the United States, exactly the acts of force and fraud (murder and robbery) by which land "ownership" was transferred from the Indian tribes to the current receivers of the stolen property. Now, the third alternative, contract, has never been tried, to the best of my knowledge. The only land contracts which I, or any other Tuckerites or Sternerites, would sign in freedom, without force being used against us, would be to our own interest, not to the interest of the landlords. In other words, we simply would not sign a contract giving up ownership of this planet, or any other, to a small group of the Elite who claim they have some better title to ownership than the rest of us have. If you

would sign such a contract, I can only hint gently that you are more easily defrauded than we are.

The barter arrangement in your paradigm has nothing to do with *perpetual tribute*, which is the essence of *rent* — indeed, the factor distinguishing barter from rent.

Of course, since Austrian ideas exist as factors in human behavior, I will admit that some people, hoodwinked by those ideas, will continue to pay rent even in freedom, for a while at least. But I think that, after a time, observing that their Tuckerite neighbors are not submitting to this imposture, they would come to their senses and cease paying tribute to the self-elected "owners" of limitless space, on this and other planets, and in interplanetary communities.

Of course, I myself would not pay rent one day beyond the point at which the police ("hired guns, on guard to see that property remains stolen" as Emma Goldman said) are at hand to collect it via "argument per blunt instrument."

CRNLA: Regarding interest: again I assume a totally free market, where there are no legal tender laws and anyone is free to mint, mine, print or grow anything that they feel the market will accept for money. I think that under these conditions the interest rate would be dramatically lower than it presently is but that it would not tend toward zero. Money generally performs at least three interrelated functions: (1) indirect exchange media, (2) provides a common "measuring scale," (3) stores wealth. In the first two money is definitely an "abstract artifact" — a "cashless" society could exist merely using bookkeeping entries. But when it's used to store wealth it causes trouble as an "abstract" — bank-runs and the like. Wealth isn't an abstract. It may be subjectively appraised, but it actually exists. When A wants to use B's wealth for a period of time, B is generally compensated for his loss of its use for that period by A — interest. Among corporations (admittedly, a legal fiction) the issuing of "Tucker-money," (i.e., stock) is a fairly unfettered means of obtaining credit — but the people who give it to them still expect a return and the corporations still expect to pay it. I'd be interested in seeing the Central State experiment. Usually because of the multiplicity of ever-changing factors involved in

the market, it's difficult if not impossible to ever prove anything empirically.

RAW: Of course, my position is based on the denial that money does store wealth. I think it's a semantic hallucination, the verbal equivalent of an optical illusion, to speak at all of money containing or storing wealth. Such thinking should have gone out with phlogiston theory. The symbol is not the referent; the map is not the territory. Money symbolizes wealth, as words symbolize things, and that's all. The delusions that money contains wealth is the mechanism by which the credit monopoly hof study. as gained a stranglehold on the entire economy. As Colonel Greene pointed out in Mutual Banking, all the money could disappear tomorrow morning and the wealth of the planet would remain the same. However, if the wealth disappeared — if squinks from the Pink Dimension dragged it off to null-space or something — the money would be worth nothing. You don't need to plow through the dialects of the debate between the Austrians and the free credit people like Tucker and Gesell to see this; any textbook of semantics will make it clear in a few hours of study. Wealth is nature's abundance, freely given, plus the exponential advance of technology via human intelligence, and as Korzybski and Fuller demonstrate, this can only increase an an accelerating rate. Money is just the tickets or symbols to arrange for the distribution — either equitably, in a free money system, or inequitably, as under the tyranny of the present money-cartel. As you realize, a cashless society could exist merely by keeping bookkeeping entries or computer tapes. Money is a primitive form of such computer tapes, serving a feedback function. If we are not to replace the present banking oligopoly with a programmer's oligopoly, in which the interest will be paid to computer technicians, we must realize that this is all a matter of abstract symbolism — that it exists by social agreement and nobody owns it, anymore than Webster owns the language. Why is it, incidentally, that the Austrians don't follow their logic to its natural conclusion and demand that we pay interest to the dictionary publishers every time we speak or write?

You have to watch people playing Monopoly, and see them begin to "identify" the paper markers with real value, to understand how the mass hypnosis of Capitalism works. Fortunately, the Head