

INTRODUCTION

Richard Cornuelle died on April 26, 2011 at the age of 84. In the essays and book reviews presented in this tenth volume of *Conversations on Philanthropy*—the journal Dick and I cofounded in 2004 to engage new intellectual companions in our quest to understand how a free society, properly understood, might be the most humane society, properly understood—you will learn more about Dick’s life’s work on behalf of his unique vision of a good society. Here I shall simply try to pay tribute to a mentor and friend whom I continue to miss.

After graduating from Occidental College in 1948, Dick followed the footsteps of his older brother Herb to New York City, enrolled in graduate school to study economics with Ludwig von Mises at New York University, frequented the libertarian salons of Ayn Rand, and improved his writing skills while working for Old Right journalist Garet Garrett. Eventually concluding that life as a college professor did not appeal to him, Dick became one of the handful of staff members at the California-based William Volker Fund. The Volker Fund, following a strategy commended by Loren “Red” Miller (who ran the privately funded Bureau for Governmental Research in Detroit), deployed its philanthropy to support the livelihoods of émigré scholars such as Mises and F.A. Hayek and to revive and build up a serious intellectual interest in the classical liberal tradition of political and economic thought.

The old liberalism had suffered serious body blows during the century between 1848 and the end of the Second World War, as apologists for socialism, communism, fascism, and Progressive liberalism swept into positions of academic influence and political power. With the advent of the Cold War, the struggle for the future of freedom had turned into a heavyweight match between the Soviet bear and those who had become more bullish on behalf of the political, economic, and social liberty embodied in the free-market, constitutional order of the United States. Unfortunately, even America had been succumbing to the temptations of “big government,” and Cornuelle and his colleagues set out to find scholars who could strengthen the eroding foundations on which their hopes for a free and humane society rested. A serious intellectual defense of liberty needed more than the cult of personality that was then emerging around the dogmatic, demanding, and philosophically selfish Rand.

The work required experimentation—could citizens devise better alternatives to the programs of the metastasizing welfare state? It also required the opening of new frontiers of social thought that could illuminate horizons beyond the constraints of disciplinary scholarship and the tired canards of twentieth-century statism. Cornuelle became the champion of what he believed was an imminent and elemental reawakening of individual initiative and creativity. He believed that as people began to experience success by taking personal responsibility in millions of small spheres of action, they would demand and create a diffusion of responsibility away from hierarchy and regimentation, toward decentralization and self-management.

Bureaucracy became for Cornuelle the antithesis of liberty. A favorite movie of his was *A Thousand Clowns* (1965), in which Jason Robards played the eccentric and affable Murray Burns, a single man trying to raise his nephew, who is confronted by a social worker (played by Barbara Harris) over his idiosyncratic methods of child-rearing. Murray has little interest in raising a child, seeking rather to raise a man:

I just want him to stay with me until I can be sure he won't turn into Norman Nothing. I want to be sure he'll know when he's chickening out on himself. I want him to get to know exactly the special thing he is, or else he won't notice it when it starts to go. I want him to stay awake and know who the phonies are, I want him to know how to holler and put up an argument. I want a little guts to show before I can let him go. I want to be sure he sees all the wild possibilities. I want him to know it's worth all the trouble just to give the world a little goosing when you get the chance. And I want him to know the subtle, sneaky, important reason why he was born a human being and not a chair.¹

When I watched this film for the first time after Dick's death, in many ways it brought something of my friend back to me. Editing this volume has had the same effect. In his contribution to this symposium on Dick's work, Bill Schambra notes the importance of building bridges where common concerns can be explored. This volume not only testifies to Dick's ability to serve as a bridge builder but also, we hope, exemplifies the practical ways in which this can transpire.

¹ *A Thousand Clowns*, directed by Fred Coe (1965; A Harrell Production), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059798/quotes>.

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In *The Four Loves*, C. S. Lewis reflected on the ways in which true friendship serves to build communities. Whereas lovers revel in being just two, friendships are enriched when more people join the club. “In each of my friends,” Lewis wrote, “there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets.... Hence true Friendship is the least jealous of loves. Two friends delight to be joined by a third, and three by a fourth, if only the newcomer is qualified to become a real friend. They can then say, as the blessed souls say in Dante, ‘Here comes one who will augment our loves.’ For in this love ‘to divide is not to take away.’”²

All of the contributors to this volume had the pleasure of working with Dick and getting to know him at some point in their professional careers. All have been taught and inspired by him, not merely in shared intellectual or political interests but at a level of personal connection. It is apt to say that in the questions that concern us in the pages of this journal, you are encountering the conversation of friends. The reader will discover here the many facets of Cornuelle’s intellectual and personal influence, but taken as a whole, we most hope these reflections will help you encounter not only ideas about the meaning of liberty and community but also the man behind these ideas, the deeply gentle and curious man who was born to Hoosier parents and became a true cosmopolitan, a man for whom nothing that concerned humanity was not also of concern to him—truly a man for all seasons.

—Lenore T. Ealy
Editor

² C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, 1960).