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Friday, 31 JAN. 1992 . LONDON

Dear Professor Hoppe,

I've been meaning to write you for quite some time now, to tell you how much I enjoyed your book A Theory of Socialism and Capitalism. I think it is one of the most important books I've ever read. If I recall, in the November 1988 Hoppe symposium in Liberty, Professor Rothbard was the only one to recognize the importance and novelty of your "argumentation ethics." I agreed with his comments, especially after having read the book (as well as the related article in Man, Economy and Liberty).

I am a 26-year old postgraduate law student, from Louisiana. I'm here in London for about a year, till July, getting an LL.M. in international business law, at King's College London. Afterwards, I have a job, practicing corporate law, at a law firm in Houston, Texas. Living the relatively ascetic life of a student over here, I unfortunately don't have ^{easy} access to a word processor, hence the handwritten form of this letter.

I am also writing because I thought you might be interested in seeing a paper I - 11

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wrote, based on the idea of estoppel, which is similar in many respects to your argumentation ethics. I had the germ for most of the ideas therein in my first year of law school (around 1988), but, when I wrote it down finally, recently, after having devoured your argument, I did use and incorporate some of your ideas, especially in Part II of the paper, where the activity of arguing is discussed. Also, the "universalizability" requirement, which you so deftly used, is ~~an~~ incorporated into my Part III.A.

For a quick summary of my argument, see the Conclusion, Part IV. Also, in footnote 6, I attempt to explain the difference between my approach and yours.

I have submitted the article for publication to several journals, magazines etc., but I do not, frankly, expect it to be published. Thus I decided to send a copy to you, for your own edification.

Before I close, I would like to mention a thought to you. Your argument seems to show why no one could disagree, argumentatively, with the claim that all individuals have a right to self-ownership and a right to homestead. But it seems to me that perhaps there is another interesting question, concerning the source of right. I'm not so sure if your theory attempts to explore this seemingly separate issue of why we have rights--it ~~an~~ instead shows that we have rights.

For example, one may show that consciousness is axiomatic — no one may deny his consciousness without contradicting himself. But this does not explain why we are conscious. Later scientific experiments might then shed light on this further question — the structure and nature of the brain, the course of evolution, etc. help us to understand the why of consciousness.

Similarly, I wonder if we could wonder why, and how, men have rights, aside from your argumentation-ethics-defense of the fact that we have rights. Well, I just wanted to call this idea to your attention. Perhaps this question I am posing may be said to have already been answered by your argumentation-argument; maybe there is no difference between showing that men have rights, and why they have them, unlike in the consciousness example shown above — perhaps because rights-talk is normative, whereas consciousness-talk is not.

I do not request a reply, as I understand how busy one's schedule can get. I did want to tell you how much I admired your work, and to mention these related ideas to you. Of course, I would be happy to discuss any of this further. In any event, good luck with your pursuits, and have a great 1892!.

Yours sincerely,
~~N. Stephen~~ Knisely