

THE MORALITY OF MICROBREW

Imagining, reasoning, flourishing

Beer is proof God loves us and wants us to be happy.— Ben Franklin

Morality is a code of values to guide man's choices and actions. — Ayn Rand

Okay, so basically what happens is my favorite brew pub[1] back here in the SE Michigan region of the VAW (Vast Authoritarian Wasteland) goes corporate. Bonfire Bistro, winner of awards and sporting a generous happy hour from 4-6 p.m. where a pint of premium fresh brew costs you a measly \$2(!), is selling to an outfit named Groucho's.

Bummer.

The owners of Bonfire are Michigan-based independent businessmen; they've created here a local-colored brewski masterpiece with Cheers-like potential. Apparently, Groucho's offers Chicago-inspired very expensive fine dining. I feel high-roller appeal may be subdued tho, as the restaurant sits on the ass end of a Home Depot parking lot.

But my mission today is not to gripe about another quality neighborhood establishment going down the tubes. Rather, the Bonfire's sad demise inspires me to discuss the overall wondrousness of the "brew pub" phenomenon.

Few of my readers were born during, much less lived during, that All-American "preacher with a club" nightmare known as Prohibition (1920-1933)... which federally outlawed alcoholic beverages and turned half the population into felons. (My grandmother brewed beer on her farm in Greenville, MI.) It also set the stage for the modern global-corporate police superstate by turning cops from citizen protectors into brutish aggressors.[2]

Happily Prohibition was repealed by the 21st Amendment in 1933. But in its haste, the government failed to remove a phrase that prohibited home brewing. On October 14, 1978, perhaps as a sop to his beer-swilling brother (remember Billy Beer?), Jimmy Carter signed legislation that removed the homebrewing restriction.

Let's make October 14 a national holiday!

As a consequence of removing a few words of coercive law, the American homebrewing industry was off like a prom dress, followed shortly by the crafted-brew or microbrew industry as a whole.

Not having any statistics handy, I did some educated-guess calculations/estimates for gross revenue of the crafted brew industry over the previous 29 years. I guesstimate, including homebrewing, this industry has generated \$100 billion of revenue in the US alone. Perhaps someone can email to me the actual data.

\$100 billion is equivalent to 2,000,000 people receiving \$50,000 each. And—especially when voters remove recent draconian police-state infringements on driving with small amounts of blood-alcohol—the brew pub and microbrew business should double that number within the next decade.

Hence, my QED for the "flourish" component of the subtitle.

The "reasoning" and "imagining" parts are not far behind. When you release humanity from its chains, even ties so miniature as beer prohibition, the most creative and ambitious souls move to the leading edge of life's grand locomotive.

Then in a world where property and rights are respected, reason—I mean reason here in the sense of hard (mental) work, respecting facts and evidence, seeking knowledge despite obstacles and distractions—prevails. The most creative, rational individuals win. Everyone's genuine wealth and well-being are enormously incremented.

(Freedom -> Imagination -> Reason -> Wealth) = Morality

Note that Freedom is Job 1.

Next time you take that slow aromatic, sumptuous draw on your favorite independently crafted India Pale Ale (IPA), pause for a moment to salute the moral achievement it represents, a simple manifestation of the

best within us. Then celebrate and renew your commitment to the art of freedom on which such exemplary human endeavors hinge.

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Note: I'm focusing my next book review, movie review, and the column next Monday (which will be a special movie review) on the BIG PICTURE of healing our world.[3] I wanted to lead into the series with a beer column because I honestly feel a world without general access to quality beer is a world without hope of quality.

[1] A brew pub in America is normally defined as a (beer) microbrewery that is also a restaurant. Someone once defined a microbrewery as a commercial brewery that produces fewer than 50,000 gallons of beer annually. In this column I use the phrase microbrewer or "crafted brewer" to mean in general any small-scale maker or retailer of fresh beer.

[2] Today, for the last three quarters of a century, we have a worse instance of wholesale state interference in personal biochemistry with Drug Prohibition. It, too, has led to hundreds of thousands of deaths, as well as millions of lives seriously damaged and hundreds of billions of dollars in property crimes and property destruction. It, too, we will soon bring to an abrupt end. Read *Ain't Nobody's Business if You Do*, by Peter McWilliams (R.I.P.).

[3] Highly recommended standard libertarian primer: *Healing Our World in an Age of Aggression*, by Dr. Mary Ruwart. I usually recommend her book along with the classic *Libertarianism in One Lesson*, by David Bergland. Both these remarkable freedom fighters have an association with *Advocates for Self-Government*, a fine site for learning the basics of liberty.