

MISES CIRCLE SONG
by Felix Kaufmann

free translation by J. Huston McCulloch

Dearest children, since Friday is hyar,
We must all go down to Mises' Seminar.
Nothing ever could keep me away,
Not even the balmiest day in May.
For the scents of spring are passing,
While the Truth is everlasting;
And Truths you find in that very place,
Every evening, by the bushel and hundredweight.
When full debate gets underway,
We all jump in and join the fray.

Refrain:

I'm going off to Mises' this evening,
Because to be there is so appealing.
Nowhere else in Vienna do they speak with such feeling
Of Economy, Society, and of Meaning.
If it's Understanding you would understand quite,
You must à tout prix go hear Mises tonight,
Since nowhere but in von Mises' sight
Is anyone's grasp on it quite so tight.

There is no problem, however resistant,
Dares enter those doors, for even an instant,
For it knows full well the danger it might
Be totally solved without even a fight.
There is no nut that he cannot crack
In his bare hands, with some clever smack,
So that it kernel melts in your mouth
In the manner of a chocolate éclair
That some good soul might offer to you
To make your silence more easy to bear.

Refrain...

By ten o'clock the spirit is full of wisdom,
But the stomach is empty and restless.
Promptly it receives its import duty,
When we adjourn to the Green Anchor.
There is gaity our motto,
With a side of Spaghetti and Risotto.
No one notices how the time flies by,
Until suddenly the clock strikes midnight,
But then someone hits on the greatest idea:
We'll all go over to Kunster's Café!

Refrain...

MISES CIRCLE SONG (Cont'd.)

Every once in a while, we get fed up
With all this problem solving.
Outside, life is gaily flowing by,
While we take so little part in it.
Wouldn't it be smarter to go swim in the stream,
Than to collect statistics on water power?
Wouldn't we be better to put all this thought aside,
And frolic freely in the sunshine outside,
And enjoy the ecstasy of the moment?
But then we know full well, we would never exchange!

Refrain...

"Understanding" and "Meaning" are in the sense introduced by Wilhelm Dilthey in various writings, 1882-1910. For excerpts, see his Pattern and Meaning in History, Harper Torchbooks, 1962. See also "Die geistesgeschichtliche Bedeutung der Österreichischen Schule in der Volkswirtschaftslehre," Zeitschrift für Nationalökonomie, 1966. Translation forthcoming in a volume of Lachmann's writings.

According to Oskar Morgenstern, the Grüner Anker restaurant is still in operation.

Kaufmann published an English version of one of these songs in the journal of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1960 or 61.

THE GRENZNUTZEN SCHOOL

by Felix Kaufmann

fairly close translation by J. Huston McCulloch

A young economist went off to Germany
To obtain a professorship
On the basis of his
Course of study in Vienna.

There our hero heard the terrible story,
The Grenznutzen school was defunct;
It had scarcely a dozen adherents left,
And its doctrine was completely in ruins.

The poor economist wept
Over the tragic news,
"I wish I had never been born;
Now I am thrown to the dogs!"

What will now become of my books?
No one will ever heed them,
The print will never see the light of day,
I may as well just burn them.

No, They give me such a slap in the face,
Destiny so insults me,
That I will, as a proud protest to the World,
Resort to Hari Kari.

I do not do this in haste;
It can be rationally explained:
I trade my life for the offense,
In well-thought-out exchange.

On my heart have them place
A tome of Menger's Works!
In my hand a sharpened feather,
To serve the Spirit as dagger.

There I will silently lie and wait
Amidst my unsold wares,
Until I hear the trumpet call
Of Complementary Goods.

Then through the sky will gallop Böhm-Bawerk,
Polemics will thunder and flash.
Then armed with my quill I'll rise up from the grave,
To fight for the Grenznutzen school!

Excerpt from UNDERSTANDING AND GRENZNUTZEN
by Felix Kaufmann

free translation by J. Huston McCulloch

"Say, Mrs. Blaschke, have you heard the awful news?
Poor Grenznutzen dropped dead yesterday!
At noon he was lively as you'd choose,
And by six they had taken him away!"

"Goodness gracious, with who've you been talking?
Somebody's putting you on, my dears.
I saw him myself, this morning, out walking,
Looking like he'd live another hundred years!"

In my paper "The Austrian Theory of the Marginal Use and of Ordinal Marginal Utility" I argue that "Grenznutzen" should be translated as Bell's "marginal use", a concept which does not appear in the English literature, instead of as "marginal utility", as is customary.

THE DEPARTURE OF PROFESSOR MISES
by Felix Kaufmann

fairly close translation by J. Huston McCulloch

What will become of the Mises Circle
In the coming year?
We cannot all go along
To Geneva by the dozens!
I'll tear my hair out the whole year;
What will I do without the Seminar?

O woe, o woe, o woe,
The World's about to go!

Soon, with dire forebodings,
The High Faculty will grasp,
That along with the one who is now leaving,
Many more will abandon Vienna,
For the United States and for England.
Vienna will seem remote, but Geneva close at hand.

Refrain

The students who strove so mightily
To sit at Mises' feet,
Who launched such bold attacks
Against every import duty,
They'll all end up in foreign lands
Since no one here now understands.

Refrain

Now the Master himself goes forth
And teaches before other benches,
And builds another center there
For the old Vienna School.
We hope that his strong spirit
Will show the world the way,

And think of him faithfully,
And think of him faithfully.

Mises left Vienna in October 1934 according to his wife's book,
but these may have been written in 1935.

THE LAMENT OF THE CENTERLESS CIRCLE
by Felix Kaufmann
literal translation by J. Huston McCulloch

The Circle falls deathly ill
When its Center goes away,
Leaving only a wan
And empty Perimeter.
Soon there build up Cyclic crises,
Since the Radii, the convergent Radii,
No longer have a single Point
To draw them together.

In tears Pi cries out:
"All ye transcendental Numbers
Cannot measure the agony
Of my melancholy.
Many of my Approximations
Will soon exhaust their sorrow,
But I am wounded
To the thousandth decimal place!"

O Center, come back!
We will restore you
To the old accustomed place in your Circle.
We miss you so much.
All we Radii and Diameters
Will recover at once
And Pi will rejoice
As never before!