Altruism, capitalism not exclusive

Mark Hunter's letter in last Friday's Tech: "Morality should preclude the law," Oct. 18, dismissing my views, was most distressing. I am writing to set the record straight.

Hunter begins his letter by saying: " moral problems must be addressed by the political system." I was hoping for a more valid criticism of my column, "Our human rights have been eroded by society," then Oct. 8. He resorted to maligning me rather than presenting a coherent argument. Hunter also quoted me out of context, creating false ideas to me.

Columnist Mark Kantrowitz

In my column I was providing reasons why the individual ought to take the rest of the world into account when making important decisions. Important decisions are those which have a capacity to hurt or help others. This includes one's choice of profession.

Hunter's statement that self-interest is an ethical principle is incorrect. Self-interest is an example of ethics, not ethics. Hunter also stated that moral rights have "their source in the nature of man." What is it in "the nature of man" that gives him these rights? Hunter, like Honig, did not provide us with any reasons to believe his claims. Stating that something is so doesn't make it true.

Hunter confuses the difference between the words "society" and "State" and between the words "rights" and "power." A society is a body of individuals living as members of a community; a State is any political or governmental unit. Power is the capacity or strength to control and influence others' rights are things, powers and privileges to which one has a just claim.

Contrary to what Hunter claims, society does not have the power to remove or "violate" the rights of the individual. This is a simple fact. (Please turn to page 6)

Feedback

Respect other opinions

To the Editor:

I am dismayed by the responses I have seen in recent weeks to my column. I have often asked, "Need a case? Protecting at MIT?" I have been assured by Akira system messages demanding the withdrawal of the occasional student from the class. And I have heard whispers of disapproval - "It shouldn't be such a big deal if they didn't draw as much attention to it," or "But another protest!"

I address my self as those in the community who embody and spread this attitude: Have some respect.

This is an academic community, based on the supremacy of ideas, yet you are ridiculing those who express them. If someone feels strongly enough about an issue to publicly express his beliefs, you owe it to that person to listen with an open mind, and to consider whether his or her beliefs have any validity in the world as you see it.

If you want to wrap yourself in apathy and shy from social conscience, that is your right, but you must respect the opinions of others.

David Flanagan '89

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