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A Father

Nick Hoppe

Nick Hoppe lives with his family in Austria.

It’s been a question asked by friends and fans of my father’s for as long as I can remember… “What’s it like being the son of Hans-Hermann Hoppe?” I have a memory of having one of my father’s former students ask me this at a Christmas party at our home in Las Vegas, where students were frequently invited for various gatherings, dinners, etc. I must have been in my early teens and remember thinking, “What kind of a stupid question is that? He’s my dad. Why would you even ask that?” To me that seemed like a question you’d ask the children of Paul McCartney or Michael Jordan, not me.

The question arose again when, in my junior year of college, I took my father’s microeconomics class after his comment that taking anyone else’s class was an utter waste of time. This time it came from a friend of mine who was also in the class, and a fan of my father’s. And while by this time I had a bit more insight into who my father was by virtue of sitting in a large lecture hall watching him command the stage with humor and intellect, I still thought the question was strange as in my mind he was still just my father, who happened to also apparently be a pretty hilarious audience-commanding university professor. I knew of course that he’d written a book or two. I knew he was invited to go speak here and there from time to time. I knew Murray Rothbard, who had been a staple figure in our home until his passing, was also somehow important. But my father’s role in all of this still wasn’t fully clear. I didn’t yet fully understand the gravity of the situation… the weight of who he was and what he was doing. I hadn’t grasped the mark he was trying to leave on the world and the level of notoriety he had already attained.

Truth be told, being the son of my father was not always easy. For someone to be as dedicated to their ideology and prolific in their work as my father has been throughout his career naturally means other things usually have to take a back seat. That meant he was not always as present as perhaps I needed him to be. And even when he was physically around, in his study etc, he wasn’t always “there” there. He was focused on his work. And as a boy, trying to find his way, that was not easy to understand, indeed it was sometimes a source of contention. And as I grew and began to rebel this only furthered the complications of the father-son dynamic. But children don’t always understand who their parents are and, let’s be honest, most children’s fathers aren’t prolific Austrian economists and scholars. Statistically speaking I think we’re a pretty exclusive group. Most children’s fathers haven’t dedicated their lives solely and with every fiber of their being to trying to not only explain the world and how it works from a fundamental level, but to changing it. Most children’s fathers aren’t driven by a moral compulsion so great that to ask them to deviate from their life’s mission would be akin to asking them to just stop existing. It would be like removing the air they breathe.

Alas, time moves on and decades pass. And what once was not to be understood suddenly becomes clearer and clearer. I’m in my 40s and I have a family of my own; my wife of nearly 10 years, Rebecca, and my two daughters Evie and Isa. And, having moved back to Europe in 2019, I am closer to my father than I have ever been. And while he’s the first to say it took long enough, I eventually found my way to his work and the Austrian school of thought on my own time. Where political and economic theory were not of much interest in my younger years, they now continue to occupy more and more space in my mind. Where once I only cared about sports and music, now I ferociously consume Misesian-minded libertarian works, hoping to expand my understanding of the world and make sense of the senseless. Where once my concerns about politics were narrow, I now understand that my father’s work, and the work of his predecessors, exists to help current and future generations see the truth behind politics and economic decision making. They are the fundamental principles guiding the way we should view the world.

Sadly and yet somehow poetically, the things my father has been warning of are only becoming more and more apparent every day. And I realize what an island my father must have felt like he was on for so many years, the overwhelming stress and frustration it must have caused being ignored and written off by so many “mainstream” thinkers. I sympathize with what that must have felt like and admire his dedication and determination to push forward and not be deterred, no matter what the cost. After all, it is his life’s purpose. And with the benefit of hindsight I know he didn’t have a choice.

So I can say without question that being the son of Hans-Hermann Hoppe is something I’m immensely proud of and humbled by. I’m proud of my father’s contribution to the world. I’m proud that he has stuck to his beliefs and has refused to compromise for the sake of political correctness or groupthink. I’m proud that he never sold out or took the easy road, even at the expense of his professorial career.  
And as the world continues to drastically change, I’m proud that his conviction and resolve remain as steadfast as ever. I’m proud he’s not a communist. When most of us are forgotten in the decades and generations to come, his words will remain in the classrooms, on the bookshelves, and across the digital realm. When curiosity leads future generations searching for truth, looking to make change, looking to rebel against the machine, I hope they’ll be led to the works of my father, his predecessors and his contemporaries. And when they find his words I hope they’ll use them as a cause for good. We all owe my father a debt of gratitude and in that regard I’d like to say from the bottom of my heart, thank you and happy 75th birthday. May you keep pushing the envelope for many more years to come.