20

From the Foundations to the Overlooked Problems of Today

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I first met Hans-Hermann Hoppe in Auburn in the mid-1990s, when, after years of discovering authors of the Austrian School, I finally made it to the Mises Institute’s summer university. There, I witnessed something I had never seen before. On one hand, there was the students’ insatiable desire to learn, explore, discuss, and debate. On the other, there were teachers and lecturers who were deeply passionate about their subjects, eager to lecture, explain, answer questions, and engage in debates—not only during formal sessions but also informally, often late into the night. And among them Hans. He spoke on a wide range of topics including economics, political philosophy, ancient and modern history, the theory of law, the methodology of science, the history of thought, the modern Austrian school, and the recently deceased Murray Rothbard.

It was then that I resolved to bring him to Prague to introduce him to Czech students, journalists, and university colleagues. I wanted them to see how the sciences of man and society could be interconnected and how a radical, logically consistent argument for a free society could be presented. After the fall of communism in my country, the Czech Republic, there was a period of strong reformist ethos, and Austrian economists like Mises and Hayek were part of the public debate. However, this ethos gradually waned. Local economic reformers, initially vocal about freedom and the importance of private property, began to resemble typical social-democratic political *routiniers*. Academics, confined to their unreformed and likely unreformable public universities, were mainly trying to disguise their former Marxist leanings, which were incompatible with the “new age.” They were unable to present a vision of a meaningful alternative to an unfree society and central planning. To do so would have required insight into a range of social sciences, often beyond the boundaries of conventional Western mainstream. And they were mostly unfamiliar with even the mainstream theories of their time. Exactly what local academics didn’t have, Hans had, and he was able to build from his vast and broad knowledge an intellectual corpus like no other. And on top of it his unique way of presentation, which always exemplified the practice of a priori deduction. No one could ever possibly claim that he did not know what the argument or the idea presented was and why.

And it did not take long for Hans-Hermann Hoppe to accept the invitation and come to the Czech Republic. Not only once. He kept coming repeatedly. He spent weeks with students at summer schools (later held in Slovakia as well), where, as in Auburn, the most engaging discussions occurred late at night over a beer. It became evident that Hans had a profound understanding of Central Europe and its history, which Czech and Slovak students appreciated perhaps even more than their American counterparts, allowing for new directions and deeper discussions. Additionally, these debates highlighted Hans’s willingness to set aside a formal professorial demeanor, engage with the curiosity of students, and tackle questions such as summarizing the Austrian business cycle theory in two sentences—a feat I now know is possible!

But Hoppe’s activities were not limited to summer events with students. He also lectured at major universities, such as the University of Economics, Prague, where in 2009 he delivered a series of lectures culminating in the annual “The Cuhel Memorial Lecture” to hundreds of students in the audience. He played a pivotal role in introducing the works of his mentors, such as Ludwig von Mises, Murray Rothbard, and Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, to the Czech book market. As a professor of economics, he supported the academic careers of local economists dedicated to the Austrian tradition; as a popularizer of Austrian School ideas, he gave interviews to Czech journalists; and as the founder of the Property and Freedom Society, he extended invitations to its annual conference to academics, students, and entrepreneurs eager to join this unique community. Most importantly, through Czech translations of his books, he spoke to the general public for decades. That is Hoppe’s strength. He never spoke primarily to those for whom thinking about social relations is a way of making a living. Experts—who often live in their echo chambers and whose research and the questions they ask are often influenced by currently fashionable political views and affected by the ways in which research is funded—are not Hans’s target audience. Prior profound knowledge of economics, political philosophy, or history is usually not necessary to understand his texts. All that is needed is curiosity, concentration, and a willingness to be led by the power of the logical analytical argument of Hoppe’s ideas to radical conclusions that demolish myths and the prevailing status quo. Even for those who may diverge from his line of reasoning at some point, Hoppe’s approach offers an exhilarating intellectual journey, compelling them to more   
robustly justify their differing viewpoints.

Over the decades, Hans-Hermann Hoppe’s work has invigorated the academic and public debates in the Czech Republic and Slovakia regarding the nature of a free society. His rarely seen ability to often unite ideological adversaries and divide allies with his arguments underscores the impact of his views on major social issues—ranging from the nature of freedom and social development to democracy, discrimination, migration, and international politics. Through his penetrating insights, we are encouraged to revisit the foundations of classical liberalism and libertarianism from fresh perspectives, seeking more satisfying answers to the implications of asserting that the basis for harmonious human coexistence must necessarily be a society founded on private property rights.