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Hoppe and the Current Stage of Austro-libertarianism in Brazil

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This is the second *festschrift* awarded to Hans-Hermann Hoppe. The first[[1]](#footnote-1) featured 35 authors who gave testimonies about their friendship with Hans-Hermann Hoppe and/or took the opportunity to comment on or develop some of his theses. Among these authors were the world’s greatest libertarians and economists, such as Lew Rockwell, Jesús Huerta de Soto, Joe Salerno and Guido Hülsmann. The book was published in 2009 and given to Hoppe in celebration of his 60th birthday. Today, 15 years later, with the publication of this second *festschrift*, I am grateful to have the opportunity to modestly insert myself among the constellation of great stars who are in some way associated with Hoppe and tell a little about his influence on libertarianism in Brazil.

I became interested in the ideas of liberty in the early 2000s, and at the time there was no work by Hoppe translated into Portuguese; thus Milton Friedman’s books were my “gateway.” A little later I came across Ayn Rand, and then Mises and other Austrian Economists who had their works translated by the *Instituto Liberal*. And I arrived at the dead end of Classical Liberalism, since the libertarian content in Portuguese was practically non-existent. That’s when I started reading the Mises Institute’s English-language articles and books, which made me a libertarian in a short period of time.

The Austro-libertarian content had a very strong impact on the formation of my ideas, and I felt an urge to spread them to the Brazilian public. It was to supply the lack of Austro-libertarian material in Portuguese that my brothers and I founded the Instituto Mises Brasil, in 2007, which was renamed in 2015 as Instituto Rothbard, after disagreements with other founders who wanted to change this original mission. I will come back to that later. And in the midst of such rich content from a number of brilliant authors, it soon became clear to me that one of them managed to stand out, with deep erudition in many subjects, a clear and direct expression of ideas, and seminal contributions to the advancement of theories; clearly, Hoppe was the living successor to the tradition of Mises and Rothbard.

As a translator of many of Hoppe’s works, something that caught my attention was his precision in the use of words and his refinement in the construction of sentences; Hoppe says exactly what needs to be said and in the way it needs to be said, not a comma too much or too little. Something like the precision of German engineering in the construction of machines. I believe he must think in German and write in English, and in that process, *voilà*, the magic happens. However, prior to this perfection in writing there is his intellectual rigor, which, without making concessions, does not let the slightest detail of an idea to escape, and builds his thought in solid blocks, one on top of the other, making sure there is no defect in the lower block before placing the upper one. In this way, with ideas consistent as a bunker and clear as crystal, Hoppe profusely developed Austro-libertarianism while demolishing many adversaries, gaining many admirers as well as many enemies along the way.

Being one of those admirers, I had the opportunity to meet my idol in person in 2011, when I organized the Second Seminar on Austrian Economics, in Porto Alegre, in which we were honoured to have Hans Hoppe as keynote speaker at the event. And I was able to confirm that all the testimonies I had read from the first *festschrift* about Hans’s personal charisma are true. Nice, good-humoured, helpful and kind to everyone, he is *almost always* willing to answer from the simplest to the most complex questions. “*Almost always*” because before the two speeches he gave at our seminar, he asked to remain isolated while getting ready, focusing on the presentation. And what presentations they were! One on the Austrian Theory of Business Cycles and another one on Private Law[[2]](#footnote-2) left the public stunned. One story of the effect of Hans’s lectures on the public is worth telling here.

We had set up a shop in the lobby of the theatre to sell books during breaks, and minutes before the Q&A session—that would end Hoppe’s first lecture—was over, I headed to our little shop to prepare to serve the customers who would soon be arriving there. When I got there, I ran into one of the other speakers at the event, Professor Ubiratan Iorio—an Austrian Hayekian economist, but also heavily influenced by Mises. Iorio was there alone and had already made a pile with all the Hoppe books we had available and asked me, flustered, as I rummaged through the shelves, if there were any other books of his or if those piled up were all. He told me that this was the first time he had heard Hoppe, that he was not familiar with his work; and he was so impressed that he wanted to make up for the lost time as fast as possible.

Another example of such impact was when I started reading the book *Economic Science and the Austrian Method*,[[3]](#footnote-3) which comprises a series of lectures that Hoppe delivered at the Mises Institute and that later were compiled into this volume. After reading the first chapter I stopped reading and was impelled to promptly start translating the work; I had been dominated by a strong conviction that the Portuguese-speaking public could not go another minute without access to this precious gem. And it was also a way for me to spend more time on each paragraph, on each sentence, to try to better absorb all the knowledge compressed there. In these lectures Hoppe explained praxeology amazingly well and made important advances on Mises’s *Human Action*. Since then, it has become a habit; I have been translating all the texts by Hoppe that I can.

Hoppe is not just the leading exponent of Misesian economics and Rothbardian Austro-libertarianism; he is also, like his masters Mises and Rothbard, the heir of an uncompromising spirit in the pursuit and dissemination of truth that never relativizes its principles to conform to the Zeitgeist. And like them, he also paid a price for it. By challenging the tenets of mainstream academic economics, all three lost many opportunities, with denied positions and reduced earnings. Even so, they never altered or watered down their views to please anyone. In the days of the Political Correctness Empire, Hoppe faced serious problems while he was a professor at the University of Nevada: a battle against the Thought Police[[4]](#footnote-4) cost him an enormous amount of time and energy. In the end Hoppe ended up winning and keeping his job, but losing the desire to continue in an academic environment without liberty.

But if this radical stance is the cause of the loss of prestige, influence, fame and money, it may ultimately be the cause of the victory of the Austro-libertarian ideal,[[5]](#footnote-5) and that was one of the things that Hoppe inspired in me. Basically, it was this attitude that caused the split in our Institute in 2015. Back in 2007, when my brothers and I were looking for some form of funding for our idea of translating and disseminating Austro-libertarian content, we found the magnate Helio Beltrão who liked the idea and agreed to be that funder, founding the Instituto Mises Brasil together with us. Everything was going well; as we made Austro-libertarian books and articles available in Portuguese, the institute gained many followers. But, increasingly, Beltrão interfered against this radical intransigence, making concessions and bowing to the mainstream. The breaking point was in 2015, shortly after former communist terrorist Dilma Rousseff was re-elected president of Brazil, winning in some states and in others being overwhelmingly defeated. The background was very propitious for us to further publicize the Hoppean idea of secession, but Beltrão used his funding power to ban the subject, claiming that the idea of secession was not very well regarded and could generate associations of the institute with xenophobia, extremism etc. Of course, this association was made by the mainstream media and the academic mainstream, and Beltrão chose to bow to them instead of pursuing the defence of the truth. At that moment, we gave up the substantial funding and preferred to continue on our original path, without resources, but with uncompromising radicalism guiding us in the renamed Instituto Rothbard.

Today, nine years later, the other side has grown a lot in audience and we, after a restart with many difficulties, continue with a small reach. But as influence is not our parameter, we consider that we are being much more successful. In this regard, it is worth making a statement here of the current state of some people who were linked to the institute in its early years. In the early 2010s Joel Pinheiro da Fonseca was a Master’s student in Philosophy at USP, a member of *Students For Liberty*, used to write articles for our institute and participated in libertarian meetings in São Paulo. In 2013, Joel interviewed Hoppe for his magazine *Dicta & Contradicta*[[6]](#footnote-6) and asked the following question:

**Joel:** Is academic life in its current state a healthy environment for an intellectual? Is it possible for him to survive in any other environment?

**Hoppe:** It depends on the intellectual. Academic life can be very comfortable for someone who spews left-wing politically correct platitudes for years on end.

Perhaps Joel is the person in the world who took Hoppe most seriously, as he followed his advice to the letter. Today Joel is a columnist for the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper who daily “spews out politically correct leftist platitudes.” A comfortable academic life goal successfully achieved. Of course, only someone who reaches a high level of intellectual depravity can become a *Folha* columnist. Worse than Joel is Helio Beltrão, who, today, in addition of being a columnist at *Folha*, is a commentator at *CNN*, an absolute demerit. This fact alone shows how much he had nothing to do with the institute we founded. The case of Kim Kataguiri is also noteworthy. A regular reader of our institute, as a teenager, he began to gain fame by making liberal/libertarian videos on YouTube. Kim was such a fan of the institute that during our 2014 Austrian School Conference he wittily asked to take a picture with my mother, as she was the one who gave birth to me and my siblings. However, his intellectual evolution passed far from uncompromising radicalism; today he is a Congressman defending the worst types of atrocities, such as lockdowns, mandatory masks and vaccination, and even a rigid Orwellian Ministry of Truth with prison time from 2 to 8 years for spreading “fake news.”

There are several other examples of figures who were close to the Institute who gained space in the media and in politics by abandoning their defense of libertarian ideas, which, over time, softened their discourse in order to be accepted in media or political circles, some of them have become what libertarians call “the lesser evil.” I am not one of those libertarians, and I consider this path innocuous. Henry David Thoreau said that “*for every thousand men dedicated to cutting the leaves of evil, there is only one attacking the roots*,” and although a pruned evil tree is preferable to a leafy one, only uncompromising radicalism can bring it down. Or, as Hoppe puts it,

Theoretical compromise or gradualism will only lead to the perpetuation of the falsehood, evils, and lies of statism, and only theoretical purism, radicalism, and intransigence can and will lead first to gradual practical reform and improvement and possibly final victory.[[7]](#footnote-7)

These examples serve to show that uncompromising radicalism comes at a price, while malleable condescension can pay off, depending on the point of view of what success would be.[[8]](#footnote-8) Not that I, myself, would be a TV commentator or newspaper columnist or politician today if I weren’t an uncompromising radical. I don’t think I have a vocation or talent for any of these things. But certainly, other intransigent radicals have such talents, and even then, that is not the reward they get. In Brazil today, the few uncompromising Austrolibertarians with this vocation are unable to reach a wider audience, not even on the internet, due to the constant censorship of Big Techs. The self-described libertarians who have the greatest online reach are a far cry from radical Hoppeans. Only those who mix a little Austrolibertarianism with progressive, democratic and multiculturalist agendas—and therefore immune to politically correct censorship, reach any audience, representing a major setback for Brazilian Austrolibertarianism. Even more serious is to see what our old institute has become after we left. Taken over by classical liberals, Randian Objectivists, Hayekians and statist conservatives, it has become a can of worms that accepts just about anything. Today we find there the books by Hoppe, Rothbard and Mises of our time mixed with new publications praising Ayn Rand,[[9]](#footnote-9) a book extolling none other than the genocidal, arsonist and occultist Churchill as a hero of liberty,[[10]](#footnote-10) and even a book by a congressman glorifying democracy.[[11]](#footnote-11) The sad debacle of Instituto Mises Brasil could be noticed from the time of the split by anyone who was paying attention, but a recent episode can sum up all these degrading years. It is enough to compare the performance of the Rothbard Institute and the Mises Brasil Institute during these two years of the terrible sanitary dictatorship that shattered freedom in a way never seen before. While we have published incessantly, since the 1st of scamdemic, articles defending freedom against government assaults, they have been silent in the face of Covidian tyranny, capitulated with the mainstream narrative issuing a note supporting shelter-at-home and even became Covid “vaccine” propagandists[[12]](#footnote-12) and personalized face mask sellers.[[13]](#footnote-13) Evidently—someone who refused to defend secession for fear of being considered xenophobic by the mainstream would never have the courage to face the scamdemic tsunami and be considered a “granny killer” denialist by this same mainstream that tries to please.

Nevertheless, we understand that the primary factor that limits our scope is the very content of the authentic libertarian message, since it is a constant finger in the wound of the “statist quo”; it’s the boy telling everyone, all the time, that the king is naked.

Hoppe himself shows us what an uncompromising radical on a TV show is about. Hoppe is an academic intellectual who, in addition to preferring written communication, considers that his scarce time would not be well spent on the never-ceasing repetition of the same ideas that constant television appearances would require. But even though television is a totally inappropriate place for serious intellectual discussion, such the ones Hoppe is used to, in 2019 he agreed to participate in a program on the Austrian channel *Servus TV*, *Conversations in Hangar 7*,[[14]](#footnote-14) only because he knew the host and it would be a live show, that is, with no chance of being edited. Hoppe unloaded a truckload of truths that left the other guests on the show shocked and outraged, among them a judge and member of the European Parliament, who was not happy with Hoppe mentioning the fact that she has lived parasitically off the state her entire professional life. He also released truths such as these: “The European Union is a continuation of the victorious forces of the Second World War to weaken the German currency,” “The state is a group of thieves that takes from the productive people and gives to the unproductive, including their unproductive friends,” “Despite the migration policies of the EU, Europeans do not want their borders open to all types of immigrants,” “Bavaria must be able to separate from Germany” and “The idea of a centralized Europe comes from conquerors like Charlemagne, then Napoleon, then Hitler; It’s a fantasy nobody wants.” It is easy to see why the mainstream media closes its doors to uncompromising Austro-libertarian radicalism.

Although in Brazil these doors are still completely closed, in other parts of the world the situation is a little different. In neighboring Argentina, Javier Milei has just been elected, a declared Rothbardian anarcho-capitalist who run for office proclaiming libertarian principles and an uncompromising defense of private property, with ample space in the local and now international media. Although Milei is not a Hoppean libertarian and has some vexatious positions, such as his defense of the Palestinian genocide perpetrated by the State of Israel, the election of a president with an Austrolibertarian discourse represents a turning point in the history of world libertarianism. The closed doors are increasingly irrelevant as the relevance of mainstream media erodes. The circulation of newspapers and magazines and the audience of the large networks are plummeting every day, although they still have a lot of strength in Brazil and in the world: see of the mass formation psychosis that they managed to create and maintain through the population during the Covid-19 *scamdemic*. Other means of reaching the masses and shaping public opinion are increasingly available, and shaping public opinion is the path Hoppe points out in his strategy for achieving a free society.

Like La Boétie, Hume, Mises and Rothbard, Hoppe understands that the legitimacy and power of the state depend on public opinion. And as Ortega Y Gasset puts it, this public power exists even without a state:

the form of social pressure that is public power works in every society, including those primitive ones in which there is still no special body in charge of managing it. If this differentiated body to which the exercise of public power is entrusted is to be called the State, let it be said that in certain societies there is no State, but do not say that there is no public power in them. Where there is public opinion, how can a public power be lacking if it is nothing more than the collective violence provoked by that opinion?[[15]](#footnote-15)

The state is just the institutionalization of a public opinion that supports or tolerates the initiation of violence. A common but incorrect perception is that being libertarian is all about being against the state. In fact, to be libertarian is simply to be against initiated violence, whether collectively or individually initiated. The state is simply the incomparably greatest initiator of violence in society, so libertarians focus their efforts on fighting the state. Considering that public opinion is shaped by intellectuals, Hoppe called his strategy “anti-intellectual intellectualism.”[[16]](#footnote-16) It consists of bypassing the academic world and reaching the public directly, using moral arguments rather than utilitarian ones.[[17]](#footnote-17) Uncompromising Austro-libertarian radicalism, embedded in anti-intellectual intellectualism, is what inspires Instituto Rothbard to join the Mises Institute and the Property & Freedom Society in “developing an anti-statist intellectual counterculture.”[[18]](#footnote-18) This *festschrift*, besides being another addition to this development, is a way for us to participate in the tribute paid to Professor Hoppe on his 75th birthday, and to thank him for providing us not only with knowledge and strategy, but also with a model of intellectual posture for life. Thanks, Hans.

1. Jörg Guido Hülsmann & Stephan Kinsella, eds., *Property, Freedom, and Society: Essays in Honor of Hans-Hermann Hoppe* (Auburn, Ala.: Mises Institute, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hans-Hermann Hoppe, “Economic Crisis: How to Cause Them and How to Make Them Worse by ‘Curing’ Them.” and “State or Private Law Society?”, available on https://rothbardbrasil.com/ii-seminario-de-escola-austriaca. See also Hans-Hermann Hoppe, “State or Private-Law Society,” in *The Great Fiction: Property, Economy, Society, and the Politics of Decline*, Second Expanded Edition (Mises Institute, 2021; www.hanshoppe.com/tgf); and the related vídeo at *idem*, “Hoppe in Brasil on the State versus the Private Law Society,” *HansHoppe.com* (May 5, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *Economic Science and the Austrian Method* (Auburn, Alal.: Mises Institute, 1995; www.hanshoppe.com/esam). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hans-Hermann Hoppe, “My battle with the Thought Police,” *Mises Daily* (April 12, 2005; https://mises.org/mises-daily/my-battle-thought-police). See also Stephan Kinsella & Jeffrey A. Tucker, “The Ordeal of Hoppe,” *The Free Market* 25 no. 4 (April 2005; https://mises.org/free-market/ordeal-hoppe). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Philipp Bagus, “Uncompromising Radicalism as Promising Strategy,” in Hülsmann & Kinsella, eds., *Property, Freedom, and Society*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Culture and freedom—an interview with Hans-Hermann Hoppe,” available at https://rothbardbrasil.com/cultura-e-liberdade-uma-entrevista-com-hans-hermann-hoppe. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hans-Hermann Hoppe, “Rothbardian Ethics,” in *The Economics and Ethics of Private Property: Studies in Political Economy and Philosophy* (Auburn, Ala.: Mises Institute, 2006 [1993]; www.hanshoppe.com/eepp). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. An appropriate measure of success can be obtained by comparing the libertarian movement with the abolitionist movement. Slavery and the State are millenary institutions of aggression that have accompanied humanity since its beginnings. Abolitionist ideas emerged many centuries ago and abolitionism as an intellectual movement extinguished slavery globally by changing public opinion, which took over a hundred years. Modern libertarianism began with Murray Rothbard, and as a movement it is far from achieving its goal, but if public opinion ever turns against the institutionalized aggression of the state, this success will be credited to thinkers like Hoppe, while all intellectual statists, no matter how much recognition they have today, will be forgotten by history. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Dennys Garcia Xavier, *Ayn Rand and the Daydreams of Collectivism: Brief Lessons* (Editora LVM, January 2019), and *Ayn Rand’s Pharmacy: Doses of Anti-Collectivism* (Editora LVM, February 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ricardo Sondermann, *Churchill and the Science Behind Speeches: How Words Become Weapons* (Editora LVM, January 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Marcel van Hattem, *It’s Us with a Voice: From the Megaphone to the Tribune Defending Freedom, The Rule of Law and Democracy* (Editora LVM, April 2018). The publisher of Instituto Mises Brasil even released a book by the politician who created the Central Bank and BNDES, Roberto Campos, cited in note 6 above: *The Constitution Against Brazil: Essays by Roberto Campos on the Constituent and the Constitution of 1988* (Editora LVM, January 2018).

    Faced with this editorial catastrophe of the Mises Brasil Institute, and with the Rothbard Institute without resources managing to publish new books only sporadically, it is initiatives of Austrolibertarian enthusiasts that are helping us in the mission of making Austrolibertarian works available in Portuguese. Editora Konkin and the Hoppe Institute have already translated important works such as Rothbard’s *Man, Economy and State*, Mises’s *Socialism* and *The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, and *The Myth of National Defense*, edited by Hoppe, among others. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Helio Beltrão & Anthony Geller, “Todas as vacinas importam—inclusive as importadas por empresas privadas,” *Mises Brasil* (Aug. 4, 2021; https://mises.org.br/article/3339/todas-as-vacinas-importam--inclusive-as-importadas-por-empresas-privadas). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. To be fair, in April and May 2021, perhaps not to look too ugly and try to claim that they were always against the sanitary dictatorship, they published two books on the subject, one by our former friend Jeffrey Tucker, *Liberty or Lockdown*, and another by Jay W. Richards, William M. Briggs, and Douglas Axe, *The Price of Panic*. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Available at “Hoppe on Austrian TV: On Brexit and the EU,” *HansHoppe.com* (Jan. 24, 2019; www.hanshoppe.com/media). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. José Ortega Y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, foreword to the French edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *What Must Be Done* (Auburn, Ala.: Mises Institute, 2009 [1997]; https://mises.org/library/book/what-must-be-done), p. 12; also *idem*, “Libertarianism and the Alt-Right: In Search of a Libertarian Strategy for Social Change,” *VDare* (Oct. 20, 2017; https://www.hanshoppe.com/2017/10/libertarianism-and-the-alt-right-pfs-2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Hoppe, “Rothbardian Ethics.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Hans-Hermann Hoppe, “PFP046 | Hans-Hermann Hoppe, The Property And Freedom Society—Reflections After Five Years (PFS 2010),” *Property and Freedom Podcast* (available at https://propertyandfreedom.org/pfp); see also published transcript in idem, “My Life on the Right,” in *The Great Fiction.* [↑](#footnote-ref-18)