

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF HOPPE'S "GETTING LIBERTARIANISM RIGHT"

Walter E. Block*

Abstract

Hoppe (2018) attempts to set the philosophy of libertarianism on the "right" path. By this he means to locate it on the right side of the political economic spectrum, totally renouncing left-wing libertarianism. I enthusiastically join Hoppe in his rejection of left-wing libertarianism. But I also reject his own right-wing version of this philosophy. I reject this author's geographical placement, in favor of what might be characterized as centrist, or plumb-line, or thin libertarianism, neither of the right nor the left.

Key words: Libertarianism; Right; Left; Thin; Thick; Libertinism; Immigration.

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* Walter E. Block holds a Ph.D. in economics (Columbia University). He currently holds the Harold E. Wirth Eminent Scholar Endowed Chair at Loyola University New Orleans. E-mail: wblock@loyno.edu

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Resumen

Hoppe (2018) intenta situar la filosofía del libertarismo por la senda "correcta". Para el autor, ello significa ubicarlo a la derecha del espectro político-económico, lo cual excluye totalmente al libertarismo de izquierda. Me uno con entusiasmo a Hoppe en su rechazo del libertarismo de izquierda, pero también rechazo su propia versión de derecha de esta filosofía. Rechazo esta ubicación que hace el autor, a favor de lo que podría caracterizarse como libertarismo centrista, aplomado, o *fino*, el cual no es ni de derecha ni de izquierda.

Palabras clave: Libertarismo; Derecha; Izquierda; Libertarismo fino; Libertarismo grueso; Libertinismo; Inmigración.

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1. Introduction¹

As can always be expected from anything written by this author, the output is scintillating, challenging, courageous and magnificent. If Hoppe were a machine, he would be a steam roller. Virtually nothing stands after he has gone over it. If he were an animal, he would be a rhino; irresistible. If he were a musical composer, he would be Johann Sebastian Bach: inexorable, logical, brilliant, magical. His chapter 4, “Coming of Age with Murray,” brought actual tears to my eyes, and I expect, this will be the same reaction of anyone who loves liberty.

But I am not here only to praise my friend and several times co-author.² If I were, I would be tempted to paraphrase virtually everything he wrote in this book, and perhaps pile on by adding more examples to buttress his many crucially important insights. His bashing of left-wing libertarianism is nothing short of magisterial. Instead, I wish to devote large sections of this review to critically assessing his otherwise splendid essay.³ There are several areas of disagreement between the two of us, which will comprise the majority of this review. I think it is important to lay these out, hopefully so as to reach a resolution on these divergences.

This short book of Hoppe’s contains four chapters. They are, in order, 1. A Realistic Libertarianism; 2. On Democracy, De-Civilization and the Quest for a New Counterculture; 3. Libertarianism and the Alt-Right: In Search of a Libertarian Strategy for Social Change and 4. Coming of Age with Murray. In this review, I shall comment on all four, in that order.

2. A Realistic Libertarianism

Hoppe (2018, 23)⁴ starts out on the right foot. Not “right” as in direction, nor, yet, as a place on the political economic spectrum, but, “right” as in correct. He states:

Libertarianism is logically consistent with almost any attitude toward culture, society, religion, or moral principle. In strict logic, libertarian political doctrine can be severed from all other considerations; logically one can be — and indeed most libertarians in fact are: hedonists, libertines, immoralists, militant enemies of religion in general and Christianity in particular — and still be consistent adherents of libertarian politics.

¹ The author thanks the Mosquito, Michael R. Edelstein and Richard Gaylord for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. The usual caveats of course apply.

² See Hoppe and Block, 2002; Hoppe, Hulsmann and Block. 1998.

³ For very positive reviews of this book, see Rockwell, 2019, Katz, 2019. For very positive assessments of Hoppe’s “rightism” see Engel, 2018, 2019. The latter misconstrues Hoppe as a “thin” libertarian, an assessment I dispute below. Rockwell, 2014, came down, squarely, on the side of thin libertarianism. But Rockwell, 2019, in his support of Hoppe, 2019, is incompatible with his earlier view of this matter. That is, I maintain that Hoppe, 2019 supports thick, not thin, libertarianism, and Rockwell, 2019 in his positive evaluation of Hoppe, 2019, is inconsistent with his affirmation of thinism, in Rockwell, 2014

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all references to this author will be to this one publication of his.

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If I can put words into his mouth,⁵ this is a ringing endorsement of thin libertarianism. Namely, this is the view that this political economic philosophy consists of and two and only two things: the non-aggression principle (NAP) and private property rights, based on homesteading.⁶ This means that “hedonists, libertines, immoralists,” etc., can be libertarians in good standing, since even though they hold these views, and act on them, they are not thereby violating either of the two foundational principles of libertarianism.

However, it would be difficult to reconcile this statement of Hoppe's (2001, p. 218) with the following material:

[t]here would be little or no ‘tolerance’ and ‘open-mindedness’ so dear to left - libertarians. Instead, one would be on the right path toward restoring the freedom of association and exclusion implied in the institution of private property...

In a covenant concluded among proprietor and community tenants for the purpose of protecting their private property, no such thing as a right to free (unlimited) speech exists, not even to unlimited speech on one's own tenant-property. One may say innumerable things and promote almost any idea under the sun, but naturally no one is permitted to advocate ideas contrary to the very purpose of the covenant of preserving and protecting private property, such as democracy and communism. There can be no tolerance toward democrats and communists in a libertarian social order. They will have to be physically separated and expelled from society. Likewise, in a covenant founded for the purpose of protecting family and kin, there can be no tolerance toward those habitually promoting lifestyles incompatible with this goal. They — the advocates of alternative, non-family and kin-centered lifestyles such as, for instance, individual hedonism, parasitism, nature-environment worship, homosexuality, or communism — will have to be physically removed from society, too, if one is to maintain a libertarian order.⁷

It is difficult not to see a blatant logical contradiction in the two statements of this author. In the first, Hoppe allows that these deviants can be libertarians in good standing, no matter how abhorrent he finds their other stances, their non-rights-violating behaviors. In the second, he calls for them “to be physically separated and expelled from society.” But this would be an obvious violation of the very libertarianism Hoppe has worked to develop for so long, and so hard, and so successfully. It is a rights violation to exclude anyone from anything unless they are a criminal, and Hoppe explicitly allows that they are not.⁸

Is it possible to give a more sympathetic interpretation to this quotation from Hoppe? After all, consider the context in which he is speaking private condominium associations. Of course, they have the right to exclude anyone they regard as undesirable. But I have two

⁵ And who else can? Hey, I am now writing.

⁶ In my opinion, Hoppe has done more to establish these two principles than any other scholar now active.

⁷ Source: Hoppe (2001, p. 211). This is repeated on pp. 13-14, from Sean Gabb's “Introduction” to the book by Hoppe now under examination.

⁸ Of course, all property owners may “exclude” from their holdings anyone they wish. This is part and parcel of the doctrine of free association, yet another basic building block of libertarianism. But Hoppe is not calling for them to be “separated and expelled from” private property. Rather, he is taking the position that they should be “separated and expelled from *society*,” a very different matter.

misgivings about such an overly sympathetic interpretation of our author's words. One, he speaks of excluding gays, democrats, "alternative, non-family and kin-centered lifestyles such as, for instance, individual hedonism, parasitism, nature-environment worship, homosexuality, or communism etc.," not from conservative condos, but, rather, from "society" a horse of an entirely different color. Two, the gays, democrats, etc., can rightfully exclude straights, those with conservative lifestyles, from their condos, but Hoppe never acknowledges any such thing. A thin libertarian would certainly say precisely that in this context; indeed, he would bend over backwards to do so, so as to be deserving of his thin "cred."

This is not the first time this author has articulated this position. He also did so, previously in Hoppe (2001, p. 218):

As soon as mature members of society habitually express acceptance or even advocate egalitarian sentiments, whether in the form of democracy (majority rule) or of communism, it becomes essential that other members, and in particular the natural social elites, be prepared to act decisively and, in the case of continued nonconformity, exclude and ultimately expel these members from society. In a covenant concluded among proprietor and community tenants for the purpose of protecting their private property, no such thing as a right to free (unlimited) speech exists, not even to unlimited speech on one's own tenant-property. One may say innumerable things and promote almost any idea under the sun, but naturally no one is permitted to advocate ideas contrary to the very purpose of the covenant of preserving and protecting private property, such as democracy and communism. There can be no tolerance toward democrats and communists in a libertarian social order. They will have to be physically separated and expelled from society. Likewise, in a covenant founded for the purpose of protecting family and kin, there can be no tolerance toward those habitually promoting lifestyles incompatible with this goal. They—the advocates of alternative, non-family and kin-centered lifestyles such as, for instance, individual hedonism, parasitism, nature-environment worship, homosexuality, or communism—will have to be physically removed from society, too, if one is to maintain a libertarian order.

But the same error occurs here. Yes, he does indeed speak in the context of private property, such as home ownership associations, condominiums, cooperatives, etc., but when push comes to shove, his undesirables are not to be excluded from such areas, as would be fully justified in the libertarian viewpoint, but, rather, from "society," which most certainly would not be compatible with this philosophy.

So much ink has been shed over this point that a little more repetitiveness may not come amiss: If Hoppe had said that these folks, democrats, commies, gays, hedonists, etc., should physically be removed from condominiums which are dedicated to a different lifestyle, that would be fine and good. After all, free association is one of the very bedrocks of a civilized (e.g., libertarian) order. But he did not say this. Instead, he averred, they should be "expelled from society" a very different matter. This is fallacious on his part. Of course, under libertarian law, those who reject the conservative life-style Hans favors would be equally able to exclude, not from "society" but from their own condominiums, given restrictive

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covenants, people with whom they do not wish to associate, who are more straight, family oriented, etc.

I regard Hans Hoppe as one of the most gifted libertarian theoreticians who ever graced this planet. However, on this issue, I think he is mistaken.

A minor point of departure with Hoppe (2018) arises from this statement (p. 24):

... the direct body-controller cannot give up his direct control over his body as long as he is alive.” To be sure, A, the owner of the body A, in which he, A, resides⁹ cannot give up *most* bodily functions as long as he lives. For example, he cannot control sneezing, the knee jerk reflex, breathing, peristalsis, etc. But, surely, he can give up *some* control over his body. He can agree to be raped, whipped, punched, brutalized, tortured, etc. He may not be able to refrain from crying out in pain when treated in such a manner, but that is a different matter.

Consider this statement of Hoppe's (p. 26):

The difference between the Right and the Left ... is a fundamental disagreement concerning an empirical question. The Right recognizes, as a matter of fact, the existence of individual human differences and diversities and accepts them as natural, whereas the Left denies the existence of such differences and diversities or tries to explain them away and in any case regards them as something unnatural that must be rectified to establish a natural state of human equality. (Emphasis added by present author)

Please allow me to engage in a quibble with Hoppe. It concerns the word “The” which I have italicized. If he had substituted an “A” for the “The” that he actually used, I would have no quarrel with the distinction he draws. One might conceivably come up with a leftist who is sensible on this issue, or a rightist who is not, but this would be very rare indeed. Hoppe nails it here, certainly in terms of an accurate broad generalization, that is, had he employed an “A,” here. But the “The” he actually uses misconstrues matters. It makes it sound as if this is a crucially important distinction, and it is not. Also, Hoppe's rendition biases us in favor of right vis a vis left, and, as a centrist, I am an equal opportunity rejecter of both ends of the libertarian political spectrum.¹⁰

What, then, is *the* important distinction between the two? Libertarianism is not on the right. Nor is it on the left. Instead, it is unique, sui generis, an aspect of neither left nor right (Rothbard, 2019). It cannot be denied that there are overlaps between libertarianism and the right. For example, conservatives are significantly better on economic issues than are members of the port side. But it is equally true that there is a stronger kinship between the port side and libertarianism on other important questions. For example, regarding victimless crimes such as drugs, pornography, prostitution, etc. Both are equally non-libertarian insofar as foreign policy is concerned. Although here it is possible to give a very slight nod in the direction of the left. It was only from this source that the unjust war in Viet Nam was ended. There are often anti-war movements on the left, but nary on the right. True, this

⁹ So, to speak

¹⁰ They do not call me Walter Moderate Block for nothing.

mainly acts in opposition to Republican, not Democratic wars¹¹ but at least the left has an anti-war movement. A right-wing anti-war movement, at least in the modern era, is rarer than hen's teeth.

Consider this oversight on the part of our author (pp. 28-29):

Every libertarian only vaguely familiar with social reality will have no difficulty acknowledging the fundamental truth of the Rightist worldview. He can, and in light of the empirical evidence indeed must agree with the Right's empirical claim regarding the fundamental not only physical but also mental inequality of man; and he can in particular also agree with the Right's normative claim of 'laissez faire,' i.e., that this natural human inequality will inevitably result also in unequal outcomes and that nothing can or should be done about this.

Certainly, something *can* be done about the inequality of wealth or income that is compatible with libertarianism: voluntary charity. The rich may donate money to the poor. "Should" they do so? Here, the libertarian really has no answer, at least not the thin libertarian who strictly limits this philosophy to the NAP and private property rights, and thus rigorously excludes any and all other considerations from his purview. However, in our capacity as non-libertarians, we can recognize both pros and cons of such voluntary transfers of capital. The former? Satisfaction in helping the (deserving) poor. The latter? Some might claim it is dysgenic. But strictly speaking as libertarians, we simply can have no view on this matter whatsoever.

Hoppe's analysis of immigration is problematic.¹² He states (p. 45)¹³:

...on what grounds should there be a right to unrestricted, 'free' immigration? No one has a right to move to a place already occupied by someone else, unless he has been invited by the present occupant. And if all places are already occupied, all migration is migration by invitation only. A right to 'free' immigration exists only for virgin country, for the open frontier.

But there are tons of acreage, at least in the US, that qualify as "virgin country." There are thousands of square miles in the Rocky Mountains and in the middle of Alaska that have never been touched by human hands or feet. On what ground would Hoppe preclude immigrants from settling there and engaging in the homesteading of this never-before-been-

¹¹ Departure from Viet Nam is an exception to this general rule.

¹² But before we get to that, let me engage in a strong tip of the hat to Hoppe (fn. 4) where he declares one is views on Ron Paul to be a sort of litmus test for libertarianism. He quite properly notes that Cato, Reason, George Mason dismally failed. Happily, for me, if I say so myself, I passed this test with flying colors. Block (2012) is my love-letter to Ron Paul.

¹³ Nor can I allow to pass without congratulations to Hoppe this splendid passage of his: "... why is it in particular the small minority of white, heterosexual males, and especially its most successful members that owes some extra-kindness to the vast majority of all other people? Why not the other way around? After all, most if not all technical inventions, machines, tools, and gadgets in current use everywhere and anywhere, on which our current living standards and comforts largely and decisively depend, originated with *them*. All other people, by and large, only imitated what they had invented and constructed first. All others inherited the knowledge embodied in the inventors' products for free." Tell it like it is, brother!

touched-territory? He is on weak (logical) ground here. Our position should be to support open borders at least for those willing to set up shop in these areas.¹⁴

Further, if the "someone else" is a criminal, or a statist, then it no longer follows that "No one has a right to move to a place already occupied by" him. It might well be justified, depending upon the type of the crime, for the newcomer to occupy these premises without any invitation from the present occupant.

He now offers a slightly more powerful argument (p. 46):

The second possible way out is to claim that all so-called public property — the property controlled by local, regional, or central government — is akin to open frontier, with free and unrestricted access. Yet this is certainly erroneous. From the fact that government property is illegitimate because it is based on prior expropriations, it does not follow that it is un-owned and free-for-all. It has been funded through local, regional, national, or federal tax payments, and it is the payers of these taxes, then, and no one else, who are the legitimate owners of all public property. They cannot exercise their right — that right has been arrogated by the State — but they are the legitimate owners.

There are problems here. Yes, at first blush, Hoppe is correct: the buildings, the parks, the roads, emanated through tax payments. But the government claims ownership over vast tracts of land which have never been developed; territory with which tax funds never came within a million miles. Yes, de jure, the taxpayers are the rightful owners of the capital out of which their taxes was created. As Hoppe correctly maintains, the state is the actual¹⁵ owner of these amenities. The citizens are too weak, scared, cowardly, to "seize a street" and claim it for their own.¹⁶ But suppose an immigrant did just that. For example, he pitches a tent somewhere in the middle of New York City's Central Park, or Fifth Avenue, starts to put in a crop right there, and claims an acre of it as his own. He is relieving the government of a small part of what both Hoppe and I would consider its ill-gotten gains.¹⁷ This immigrant is even willing to share most of this single acre with local taxpayers as a sort of finders' fee or salvage payment. We know what would be the reaction of the local government: off to the hoosegow for this usurper. But on what ground would the libertarian

¹⁴ I have written on this issue before: Block, 1998, 2004B, 2011A, 2011B, 2013, 2016A, 2016B, 2017; Block and Callahan, 2003; Gregory and Block, 2007; see also Deist, 2018. These journal articles of mine, Block 2004B, 2011A, 2011B, directly addressed Hoppe's work on this matter.

¹⁵ Of course, illegitimate

¹⁶ True confession: I have not broken the law in this manner either, nor do I intend to. Call me a hypocrite if you will. I do not think this a good means to promote liberty no matter how justified it might be.

¹⁷ Hoppe p. 34: "... a libertarian would recognize and insist that some present property holdings, and all (or at least most) State-holdings, are demonstrably unnatural and unjust and as such require restitution or compensation." I regard the modifier "(or at least most)" as a typographical error. Surely, both Hoppe and I and all proper anarcho-capitalist libertarians regard *all* not *most* government property as patently unjust.

Hoppe say him nay? Enquiring minds want to know. My fear is that Hoppe would side against such an immigrant.¹⁸

Consider the following case. A libertarian breaks into Hitler's garage. He is about to blow up all the vehicles therein. The legitimate owner of one of the jeeps¹⁹ objects on the ground that he is the rightful owner of this vehicle and does not want it to be destroyed. Of course, the jeep owner has a de jure right to it. But, de facto, it is now, in 1943, in the hands of the German Army, which is the actual owner. Were Hoppe to act consistently in this scenario, with his analysis of the immigrant who settles in Central Park and claims part of it for his own, he would have to support the position of the de jure private owner of the jeep. This, I maintain, would be an awkward position for a libertarian. After all, the jeep owner is now acting, in effect, in support of the evil Nazis.

No words were better said by Hoppe than these (p. 46):

In a world where all places are privately owned, the immigration problem vanishes. There exists no right to immigration." However, this is not the world we presently occupy. There is virgin territory galore all throughout the west, particularly in Alaska, Wyoming, Nevada, etc. Here, Hoppe's position does not have a leg to stand on. He has a slightly better position regarding taxpayer "owned" lands, parks, buildings, but even in this case his stance is problematic.

Now consider the weakest of the three points that can be made of his analysis of immigration. He writes (p. 47):

What would immigration policies be like if the State would, as it is supposed to do, act as a trustee of the taxpayer-owners' public property? What about immigration if the State acted like the manager of the community property jointly owned and funded by the members of a housing association or gated community?"

But it is more than passing curious for a distinguished anarcho-capitalist to adopt such a position. What is the government supposed to do from the perspective of this radical libertarian perspective? Quit. End. Dissolve. Vanish. Disassemble. It is not supposed to remain as a "trustee." It is not supposed to continue in any manner shape or form whatsoever. When Murray Rothbard contemplates "pushing that button" it is to banish the government, not to install it as a "trustee."

Just as nature abhors a vacuum, libertarian theory is repulsed by unowned virgin territory as long as there are would-be homesteaders, ready and willing to take over such lands. Let us now analyze this from the perspective not of anarcho-capitalism, but from the minarchistic limited government position laid out by such scholars as Rand (1963, 1967), Paul (2008), Nozick (1974). The limited state would not stand in the way of anyone – immigrant or domestic citizen or resident – who wishes, in the words of Locke (1960), to

¹⁸ This immigrant I have painted would be taking on the role, roughly, of my favorite character in Rand (1957): Ragnar Danneskjold, a hero who attacked government property. No immigrant, he, but, in all other relevant respects he fits this bill.

¹⁹ Which has been stolen from him by the Nazis.

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"mix his labor" with the empty acreage. As for public land, such a limited government would return just about all of it to the long-suffering taxpayer. It would retain only that which was necessary to fulfill its limited role, of providing safety to its "clients" via armies, courts, and police forces.

There are two main libertarian views on the character of immigrants. According to one of them, they are by and large non-violent. They are the salt of the earth. They will be productive members of US society, we will be the richer for their presence economically, spiritually, and in every other way imaginable. Therefore, we should welcome them with open arms. We should have completely open, porous, borders. Call that the left-wing libertarian viewpoint. The right-wing view is that yes, many immigrants will inure to the benefit of Americans, but there is a significant minority amongst them of terrorists, assassins, rapists, thieves and murderers. Therefore, our immigration policy should be not to exclude them all, but rather to strictly limit entrants to our country to the former group.

My own view is an amalgamation of both. I maintain, along with Hoppe, that the left-wing libertarian is living in a sort of la la land, replete with lemonade fountains and cotton candy trees located on streets paved with gold. They are tragically mistaken in their assessment. The right-wing libertarians, as exemplified by Hoppe, are 100% correct in their evaluation of the character of would-be new entrants. Many are perfectly alright, but there are a small but significant number of them who are cruel, brutal and vicious. So far, I am a rightist.

Now for my leftism: I claim we should have completely open borders.

How do I reconcile these two seemingly incompatible statements? Do I really want to see more murderers, rapists, "truck-fugees"²⁰ in our midst? How, then, given that I am as fully aware of the horrid danger presented by a small but significant percentage of would-be immigrants to our country as any right-wing libertarian on this matter, up to and including Hoppe himself, do I want to allow them admission to our nation?

I really do not want them here, holus bolus. I think Hoppe's conclusion very sensible; yes, let them enter, but only after being carefully vetted. But he is willing to violate libertarian principle to this end, I am not.

I am a staunch libertarian. I think that (thin) libertarianism is the last best hope for us in many ways, certainly safety amongst them. I do not want to jettison libertarianism for any reason, including the one we are now considering: danger from new entrants. Libertarianism is our safety net. Libertarianism is our life preserver vest. We abandon it at our peril. There is no real bifurcation between a libertarianism based *solely* on the NAP and private property rights, on the one hand, and safety, prosperity, well-being, on the other. The two go together. They are inseparable. The best way to insure ourselves against the

²⁰ Those who engage in mass murder by mowing down crowds of people with a truck. Joke: these people set up a suicide hot line. When a person calls them asking for help, they ask him: "Can you drive a truck?"

threats imposed upon us by evil immigrants is to cleave to libertarianism, not dispense with it, as per Hoppe.

Why is it contrary to libertarianism to prohibit full free entry of all and sundry? Consider the following scenario. An immigrant from China, or Africa, or Central or South America, or Mars for that matter, enters into virgin land in the middle of Alaska, or in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming, or somewhere in the vast desert of Nevada. He begins to homestead virgin territory therein. Has he thereby engaged in any act that proper, limited, thin, libertarianism would consider a crime? Of course not. It is a crucially important aspect of our views on homesteading²¹ that no one, no one at all²², be violently prohibited from mixing their labor with hitherto untrammelled land. Indeed, anyone who forcibly stops such an outsider, who is not himself a criminal according to libertarian law, from mixing his labor with this acreage is himself violating libertarian law.

It will be objected that most immigrants, 99.99% of them, will not confine themselves to any such virgin territory in any such out of the way places. Instead, they will head for the big cities, there, all too many of them, to prey upon the rest of us. This is an invalid objection. There need not be a single immigrant who will so confine himself. As long as we can *think* of one who *might* so limit himself, our beloved theory would disallow us stopping *any* immigrant from entering our country.

In Block (1976) I made the case that pimping is not a per se violation of libertarianism. But suppose that each and every pimp, without exception, kidnapped innocent girls, beat them to within an inch of their lives, in order to compel them to engage in prostitution in his behalf. Would, then, pimping be a per se illegal profession insofar as libertarianism is concerned? No, not even then. For we could still *think* of a non-existent pimp who engaged in no rights violation whatsoever, and functioned, only, as a voluntary booking agent for his prostitutes. In like manner, immigration too is a victimless crime. The immigrant, like the pimp, is not per se a criminal. Anyone interfering with either of them, until and unless they commit an actual crime, is himself a criminal.

How, then, can we have our cake and eat it too? How can we refuse to abandon libertarianism, as does Hoppe, and yet attain safety for ourselves and our loved ones? It is simple. Let us privatize all the land in the US.²³ Then, when a new entrant shows up at our border, we reject him on the ground that he is committing trespass, unless he has a specific invitation from a property owner, who will serve surety for him. Case closed.

²¹ See on this Block, 1990, 2002A, 2002B; Block and Edelstein, 2012; Block and Yeatts, 1999-2000; Block vs Epstein, 2005; Bylund, 2005, 2012; Grotius, 1625; Hoppe, 1993, 2011; Kinsella, 2003, 2006, 2009A, 2009B; Locke, 1948 (pp. 17-19), 1955 (chapter 5); Paul, 1987; Pufendorf, 1673; Rothbard, 1973, 32; Rozeff, 2005; Watner, 1982. You will search in vain amongst this sterling libertarian literature for an exception, for immigrants, that they alone not be allowed to homestead virgin land.

²² there are no exceptions, not even for undocumented, illegal immigrants,

²³ Water too. See on this Block and Nelson, 2015

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But, splutter, splutter, the objections to this "modest proposal" will come thick and fast. First, it is unlikely in the extreme that all land and water will become privatized. And if the hordes of immigrants are allowed entrance into our fair land, all honest men will suffer severe repercussions. True enough! But that will not be our fault! Our job, qua libertarian, is to offer a *libertarian* analysis, which we have just done.

Look it, this would not be the first-time libertarians use private property rights to solve a dilemma. Should school children be compelled to wear uniforms or not? Should restaurants use red, blue or no tablecloths? Should smoking be allowed indoors? What is our libertarian answer to all these questions? Privative, privatize and privatize some more. Then, let the private owners of these schools, restaurants, buildings, answer these questions for themselves, and consumer and individual sovereignty will determine the answer to uniform wearing, tablecloths, smoking practices. Hoppe would undoubtedly agree. Indeed, he has been in the forefront of making this sort of point. However, were he to apply the reasoning he uses to immigration, to the cases, he would start wafting eloquent about how uniforms mold character, white tablecloths are best since they show dirt, and smoking is harmful. Or he would take the opposite stance on each of these three questions, it matters not. The point is, in doing so, he takes his "eye off the ball" as we say in sports. He engages in irrelevancies. It is not for libertarians to immerse ourselves in empirical issues of tablecloths, smoking and school uniforms. Nor should it be a libertarian concern to even consider *the character and propensities of immigrants*. In doing so, Hoppe is going off the reservation. Just as we apply private property rights, private property rights, private property rights, to tablecloths, smoking and school uniforms, *we should do so for immigration challenges as well*.

Suppose a doctor, in the year, oh, 1920, told everyone that smoking tobacco causes cancer, and that whoever values his life should stop such a practice immediately. The objection would be that no one but a few weirdos would follow such advice. Should the doctor therefore cease and desist making his analysis known to all and sundry? No, of course not. The doctor should continue to prescribe against cigarettes, just as all libertarians should advocate full and complete privatization of all US territory. He is a doctor. Just because his advice is impractical in that it will not be implemented, is no reason to stop shouting it from the rooftops. He wants to be true to his medical profession. Similarly, the true libertarian will insist upon open borders, coupled with full and complete land (and water) privatization, no matter how unlikely it is that this policy will actually be implemented. It is the only policy fully compatible with libertarianism.

Let me try again. It is now 1840 and there are abolitionists who favor the complete elimination of slavery. They are told it is impossible to do any such thing. And the critics are absolutely correct; at that time, it would indeed be impossible for the abolitionists to attain their goal, let us at least stipulate, *arguendo*. Does it follow there was even a scintilla of error in their articulation of this goal? Of course not. In like manner, there is nothing

wrong with advocating full privatization along with open borders even though it bloody will not occur, at least not right away.

There is of course one practical difficulty with this analysis of mine. Much of the virgin land in the US is submarginal.²⁴ But this is only a practical difficulty. If we want to adhere to libertarianism, and, also, protect ourselves, we would do well to homestead it, all of it,²⁵ even at a financial loss, if need be.²⁶

Let us, following the pattern set up by Hoppe, move onto a different topic. Here is a long quote²⁷ from this author defending his right-wing libertarian view (53-54):

True enough, the libertarian doctrine is a purely aprioristic and deductive theory and as such does not say or imply anything about the rival claims of the Right and the Left regarding the existence, the extent, and the causes of human inequalities. That is an empirical question. But on this question the Left happens to be largely unrealistic, wrong, and devoid of any common sense, whereas the Right is realistic and essentially correct and sensible. There can be consequently nothing wrong with applying a correct aprioristic theory of how peaceful human cooperation is possible to a realistic, i.e., fundamentally rightist, description of the world. For only based on correct empirical assumptions about man is it possible to arrive at a correct assessment as regards the practical implementation and the sustainability of a libertarian social order.

Realistically, then, a right-libertarian does not only recognize that physical and mental abilities are unequally distributed among the various individuals within each society and that accordingly each society will be characterized by countless inequalities, by social stratification and a multitude of rank orders of achievement and authority. He also recognizes that such abilities are unequally distributed among the many different societies coexisting on the globe and that consequently also the world-as-a whole will be characterized by regional and local inequalities, disparities, stratification, and rank orders. As for individuals, so are also not all societies equal and on a par with each other. He notices further that among these unequally distributed abilities, both within any given society and between different societies, is also the mental ability of recognizing the requirements and the benefits of peaceful cooperation. And he notices that the conduct of the various regional or local States and their respective power elites that have emerged from different societies can serve as a good indicator for the various degrees of deviation from the recognition of libertarian principles in such societies.

²⁴ Not all of it. The US government lays claim to vast virgin acreage. A goodly portion of it is not at all submarginal.

²⁵ If we fail to do this, we open ourselves to immigrants righteously homesteading these territories.

²⁶ We are now treading upon the so-called “market failure of “public goods.” But this is a well-developed literature on this, emanating from Austro-libertarians to the effect that this challenge can be overcome by the free enterprise system, and, you guessed it, private property rights. See on this: Barnett and Block, 2007, 2009; Block, 1983, 2000, 2003B; Cowen, 1988; De Jasay, 1989; Holcombe, 1997; Hoppe, 1989; Hummel, 1990; Osterfeld, 1989; Pasour, 1981; Rothbard, 1985, 1997; Schmidtz, 1991; Sechrest, 2003, 2004A, 2004B, 2007; Tinsley, 1999. Rothbard’s (1997, 178) *reductio absurdum* of public goods is as follows: “A and B often benefit, it is held, if they can force C into doing something. [A]ny argument proclaiming the right and goodness of, say, three neighbors, who yearn to form a string quartet, forcing a fourth neighbor at bayonet point to learn and play the viola, is hardly deserving of sober comment.”

²⁷ Another problem I have with this book is that he does not quote anyone; certainly not anyone with whom he disagrees. I am herein doing him the honor of citing his exact words, often and in full.

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF HOPPE'S "GETTING LIBERTARIANISM RIGHT"

This is erroneous, for two reasons. First and foremost, thin libertarians such as myself full well recognize the brilliance of these insights of Hoppe's. I enthusiastically subscribe to them. I applaud the eloquence with which these points are stated and completely appreciate the courage it takes to articulate them, especially in the modern era. Thus, one hardly need be a right-wing libertarian to accept them, to glory in them. Truth is truth. One can also be a thin libertarian, as am I, and acquiesce in them. These discernments are thus by no means a "monopoly" of right-wing libertarianism.

Second, while Hoppe is right on the bull's eye on the target in mentioning the benefits of right-wing thick libertarianism vis a vis the left-wing variety thereof, he overlooks the fact that in some other contexts of political economy, it is the left that has the advantage, not the right. For example, the left thick libertarian is far closer to the correct thin libertarian position on the issue of exclusion. For example, he states (2001, p. 128): "There can be no tolerance towards democrats and communists in a libertarian social order. They will have to be physically separated and expelled from society." He is here ambiguous at best. On the one hand, he speaks in the context of a voluntary condominium contractual agreement. There, to be sure, anyone may properly exclude anyone else for any reason, or no reason at all: communists, democrats, gays, whoever. But on the other hand, that sentence quoted immediately above truly constitutes what the philosophers call a "howler." He says, "excluded" not from the condominium association, but, from, horrors! "Society." Nor does he acknowledge that restrictive covenants undertaken by such folk would have the same right to exclude from their premises, straight white toxic males, family men, churchgoers, etc.

Hoppe now opens a powerful argument against his own position on immigration. He notes (p. 51):

What left-libertarians typically ignore in their nonchalant or even sympathetic appraisal of the predictable crisis is the fact that the immigrants who caused the collapse are still physically present when it occurs. For left-libertarians, owing to their egalitarian preconceptions, this fact does not imply a problem. For them, all people are more or less equal and hence, an increase in the number of immigrants has no more of an impact than an increase of the domestic population via a higher birthrate. For every social realist, however, indeed for everyone with any common sense, this premise is patently false and potentially dangerous. A million more Nigerians or Arabs living in Germany or a million more Mexicans or Hutus or Tutsis residing in the US is quite a different thing than a million more home-grown Germans or Americans.

Let us consider, carefully, that additional "million more" Americans who will soon be born to American parents. From whence do they spring? Some people think they emanate from sexual intercourse. But this only demonstrates to paucity of public education. No, as all good biological scientists know full well, new-born babies are brought to us via the stork.²⁸ And where, in turn, does the stork come from? Why, of course from the country called

²⁸ This bird carries the boy babies in blue blankets, the girl infants in pink ones.

Storkovia.²⁹ Thus, these babies are, wait for it, immigrants! If Hoppe rejects open borders for immigrants from India, Mexico, Africa, Mars too, he is logically compelled to take the same identical position vis a vis newborn babies.

Further, while our author is quite correct to assert that Germans are “quite different from Nigerians, Arabs, Mexicans, Hutus or Tutsis” he must acknowledge there are “homegrown ... Americans” whose crime rate is quite a bit above that of some in other demographics. Let us extend the logic fearlessly employed by Hoppe. If we do so, we inevitably reach the conclusion that libertarian rightists should feel about a higher domestic birth rate, at least for this demographic, in roughly the same manner as they would immigrants from these other countries with millions of new babies (18 years later). They will also be “... present when the crisis hits and the paychecks stop coming in, it is highly unlikely that a peaceful outcome will result and a natural, private-property-based social order emerge” (p. 51). Namely, Hoppe should reject one million babies from this domestic demographic as forthrightly as he does immigrants from these other countries. The point is, free immigration and free domestic births are in the same legal category, or at least, they should be, if we are to conduct a systematic libertarian analysis. If Hoppe wants the government to pick and choose which immigrants to be allowed into the country, but not all of them then the same should apply to domestic births. We should not have open immigration, according to this logic, from Storkovia either. Rather, we should set up a licensing system for natural births, a sort of “birth control.” This is a very strange position for a libertarian to adopt, and, yet I do not see how Hoppe can escape from this *reductio*.

We now move on to a different topic. According to our author (p. 53):

... I consider myself a right-libertarian — or, if that may sound more appealing, a realistic or commonsensical libertarian — and a consistent one at that.” This sounds, only, like an unimportant matter of semantics, but “realistic” or “commonsensical,” or for that matter “plain old ordinary,” or “centrist,” or “vanilla” libertarian are much better, more accurate, modifiers of “libertarian” than are “right” or “right-wing.

Why? This is because there are right-wing libertarians who literally, and scrupulously, follow the bible, and call for the death penalty for homosexuality, fornication and other practices denounced in most western religions. Surely, that sort of thing is more than just a little bit incompatible with the libertarianism Hoppe and I share. He only wants to “exclude” them from “society,” not impose the death penalty on them. I, as a centrist libertarian, or a plain old libertarian, or a thin libertarian, want to reserve the use of violence for those who first initiate it, and these biblical incompatible practices come nowhere near qualifying.

My claim is that this “exclusion” is contrary to the NAP of libertarianism. As long as all these worthies, the commies, the gays, the libertines, the supporters of, ugh, democracy, etc., refrain from initiating violence on behalf of their perspectives, life-style choices, if we

²⁹ This is located just a bit after the beyond.

were to "exclude" them it would be us who would be acting incompatibly with the NAP. Yes, of course, we may set up condominium associations, gated communities, in which none of them are allowed to enter. Free association, of course, is one of the basic building blocks of libertarianism. But they may also set up restricted areas of their own, in which straights, libertarians, conservatives are not at all welcome, and their exclusion of us would be equally justified, according to our own libertarian principles. If it be right libertarianism that we may exclude them from "society", but they may not turn around and do the same to us, as unfortunately it is at least according to Hoppe, then we must renounce it, if we are to be true to the tenets of anarcho-capitalist libertarianism, thin-style.

Let us now consider an entirely different topic, also raised in this book. In my view, there are two types of libertarians: thick and thin. The latter is correct, not the former. The thin version of libertarianism is predicated on the NAP and private property rights based on homesteading. And that is it. That is all she wrote, folks. There is no more to thin libertarianism than those two mainstays.³⁰ Thin libertarianism has no views, none whatsoever, about anything else other than what is narrowly related to the NAP and private property rights. None at all.

In contrast to this correct, narrow type of libertarianism is the thick variety thereof. Adherents of this view also adhere to the two tenets of thin libertarianism.³¹ It is for that reason supporters can be properly characterized as "libertarians" in the first place. But then, they add all sorts of irrelevancies to the mix. At this point the thicksters separate into two groups: left-wing thick libertarians and right-wing thick libertarians. They are now distinguished by what they add to the thin position. The left thicksters may be found amongst the "Beltway libertarians" and are members of the Bleeding-Heart Libertarian Blog. In order to be a member of this tribe, some additions to thinism³² include the following: racially mixed marriages are to be encouraged; the intelligence of all racial, sexual and religious groups is roughly the same;³³ egalitarianism is a proper goal of

³⁰ The law of free association is always basic building block of the freedom philosophy; all associations should be agreed upon by all participants. No one should be compelled to associate with anyone else against his will. This rules out, in one fell swoop, slavery, rape, kidnapping. It also proscribes compulsory affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws. Strictly speaking, free association may be deduced from the other two pillars of libertarianism.

³¹ Not in all cases, but, at least, pretty much so.

³² Rothbard was a thinnist (emphasis added): "From these twin axioms – self-ownership and 'homesteading' – stems the justification for the *entire* system of property rights titles in a free-market society" (Rothbard, 2018, p. xix). In contrast, Ayn Rand was a thick libertarian, but she was unique, at least in my categorization scheme. She was neither a left-wing libertarian thickster (e.g., gays are great), nor a right-wing one (e.g., gays are horrid), but for want of a better terminology, she was a philosophical libertarian thickster. She never counted herself as a libertarian; indeed, she had harsh things to say about this school of thought. But insofar as she adhered to the NAP and private property rights, and she did, avidly, she cannot be counted as anything other than a libertarian. But she, too, added irrelevancies to her libertarian perspective: numerous philosophical ones, e.g., views on metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, even music and, of all things, smoking cigarettes. See Gordon, 2019, on this matter.

³³ Or at least would be, but for the brutalization by straight white toxic males of everyone else.

society;³⁴ homosexuality and gender alterations are not merely to be tolerated, but also revered. Hoppe is magnificently scornful of such leftish thick “libertarianism”³⁵ and quite properly devotes much of his effort in this book to thoroughly castigating them.

But then there is also right-wing thick libertarianism. This perspective, too, adopts the major tenets of proper, thin, libertarianism, but also, like its left-wing thickist brethren, adds irrelevancies. However, the addendums are entirely different than those added by their left-wing cousins and are often in the exact opposite direction. For instance, instead of embracing homosexuality, the very opposite tack is taken. Libertinism is rejected, not embraced.³⁶ And Hoppe’s willingness to exclude undesirables such as democrats, communists, etc., is part and parcel of this failure of his to appreciate real, full, valid, legitimate, correct, *thin* libertarianism. His exclusionism from society of such people, is every bit as invalid as the left libertarian’s support for interracial marriage, or homosexuality, *as a matter of libertarianism*. Both are mistaken, and equally so. I diverge from the right libertarianism of my friend Hans. I condemn it. I reject it. I maintain it besmirches, denigrates, undermines, true (e.g., thin) libertarianism. I have the exact same attitude toward thickism at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Our author is entirely correct when he writes that once the thin libertarian provisos are satisfied that (55) “anything goes.” Well, yes, as long as the NAP and private property rights are complied with, “anything” *should* “go” in the sense that all such acts should be *legal*. But they should not “go” in the sense that civilized people should engage in them. An awful lot rests on this short word “go” and Hoppe should be more careful with his language. Surely a basic element of political philosophy is to distinguish between what should be *legal* and what is nice, civilized, reasonable, moral, etc. That distinction seems lost on this author.

Hoppe (55) is also very wide of the mark when he asserts that thin libertarians are “cultural relativists... at least implicitly.” Nothing could be further from the truth. I am a thin libertarianism. I personally subscribe, broadly, to Hoppe’s cultural tastes. Like him I am a straight white male,³⁷ a family man, etc. Again, he is confusing that which should be *legal* with that which is desirable. Thin libertarians encompass people with widely divergent cultural tastes. They have but one thing in common; two: adherence to the NAP and private property rights. Hoppe is mistaken in thinking we also share anything else whatsoever, certainly not culture, mores, ethical standards, etc.

³⁴ The pursuit of this goal is by no means to be limited to voluntary income transfers from rich to poor but also include statist redistribution schemes.

³⁵ Note the violations of the NAP and private property rights.

³⁶ See on this Block (1994)

³⁷ therefore toxic

3. On Democracy, De-Civilization and the Quest for a New Counterculture

Again, in this chapter, we find vintage Hoppe: brilliant, insightful, inspiring. But I will not dwell on the positive elements of this chapter, lest I be tempted to merely repeat them, since I cannot say them as well as he does. Instead, I will focus on areas of disagreement.

First off, he maintains (58):

... while every person is the exclusive owner of his own physical body as his primary means of action, no person can ever be the owner of any other person's body. For we can use another person's body only indirectly, i.e., in using our directly appropriated and controlled own body first. Thus, direct appropriation temporally and logically precedes indirect appropriation; and accordingly, any non-consensual use of another person's body is an unjust misappropriation of something already directly appropriated by someone else.

One obvious error here is imprisonment. Serious criminals have lost the right to their freedom. They should be in effect slaves, in that other people may properly use their bodies against their will, to compel them to engage in hard labor, the proceeds of which can be used to compensate their victims.

Another is voluntary slavery. In the view of Boldrin and Levine, 2008, p. 254:

Take the case of slavery. Why should people not be allowed to sign private contracts binding them to slavery? In fact, economists have consistently argued against slavery – during the 19th century David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill engaged in a heated public debate with literary luminaries such as Charles Dickens, with the economists opposing slavery, and the literary giants arguing in favor.

There is no "unjust misappropriation" in either of these cases.³⁸

Uh, oh, right-wing thick libertarianism once again rears its ugly head, if only (semi) implicitly. Opines Hoppe (64-65):

... as Helmut Schoeck above all has amply demonstrated, the feeling of envy is one of the most widespread and powerful of de-civilizing motivational forces. All major (high) religions have therefore condemned the desire for the property of one's neighbors as sinful. In a natural order or a system of natural law and justice, people too, some more and others less, are tempted to expropriate the property of others to their own advantage. But in a natural order, quite in accordance with religious prescriptions, such temptations are considered immoral and illegitimate, and everyone is expected to suppress any such desires.

To be sure, Hoppe does not come straight out and maintain that envy should be prohibited by law, but with thick libertarianism, you can never be sure of how many irrelevancies its

³⁸ This is neither the time nor the place to engage in a full-bore defense of this even more than ordinarily "curious" institution. Instead, I content myself by mentioning the libertarian case in favor of it: Andersson, 2007; Block, 1969, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003A, 2004A, 2005, 2006, 2007A, 2007B, 2009A, 2009B; Boldrin and Levine, 2008; Frederick, 2014; Kershnar, 2003; Lester, 2000; Mosquito, 2014; Nozick, 1974, pp. 58, 283, 331; Steiner, 1994, pp. 232-233; 2013, pp. 230-244; Thomson, 1990, pp. 283-284.

advocates wish to unjustifiably import into their philosophy. Would Hoppe entrench in law this biblical commandment? It reads as follows:

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

But under the thin variety of this philosophy, people may “covet” all they want. They can be envious until the cows come home, and longer than that too. They can drool to their heart’s content about anything associated with their neighbor or anyone else. As soon as they actually *do* anything about any of this, as soon as they *act* so as to steal³⁹ anything of their neighbor’s, then and only then does thin libertarianism kick into gear with a legal prohibition. The problem with thick libertarianism, whether of the right or left wing, is that there is an open season about packing more and more into libertarianism. I love Mozart and detest Shostakovich. If and when I convert to libertarian thickism, I shall call for compulsory listening to the former, and ban the latter, all in the name of liberty, perish the thought.

Here is one further verbal dispute, at least for this chapter. According to our author: “discrimination the PFS, after ten years of its existence, has established itself as a veritable monopoly in the world of intellectual societies...” No, this magnificent organization is by no means a “monopoly.” Rather, it is unique, crucially important for the survival of civilization, one of the last best hopes for promoting liberty. Of course, it discriminates against those who aim to undermine a civilized order. Free association is one of the very bedrocks of libertarianism. But a *monopoly* necessarily utilizes initiatory violence to restrict entry into an industry, or a given activity. The salt monopoly imposed by the British on the Indians was a monopoly, since anyone who engaged in this activity faced imprisonment. The taxicab organizations constitute a monopoly in cities that prevent competition from start-ups such as Uber. Were the PFS to be a true monopoly, it would compel the termination of such inferior competitors as the Mont Pelerin Association. Rather, the two groups are in competition with one another, something that necessarily cannot occur were there to be any monopoly in this field.

Pithily states Rothbard (2018, p. 11) on this matter: “The only viable definition of monopoly is a grant of privilege from the government.” The PFS has no such grant, nor would Hoppe ever accept any such thing. Therefore, this world-class organization, thanks to this author, simply cannot be considered a “monopoly.”

³⁹ Your neighbor does not literally own his wife, so you cannot steal her from him. However, under thin libertarianism, you may indeed attempt to woo her away from her husband, and into a relationship with you. Would Hoppe prohibit this in the name of thick libertarianism? One can only wonder.

4. Libertarianism and the Alt-Right: In Search of a Libertarian Strategy for Social Change

In this chapter our author searches for a strategy for social change in order to promote libertarianism. But he starts off on the wrong foot by mischaracterizing what constitutes this movement. My claim is that he defines libertarianism far too narrowly (77):

If you want to live in peace with other people and avoid all physical clashes and, if such clashes do occur, seek to resolve them peacefully, then you must be an anarchist or more precisely a private property anarchist, an anarcho-capitalist, or a proponent of a private law society.

And by implication, then, and again without much further ado: Someone, anyone, is not a libertarian or merely a fake libertarian who affirms and advocates one or more of the following: the necessity of a State, any State, of 'public' (State) property and of taxes in order to live in peace...

But this would remove from the ranks of libertarians, stellar supporters of liberty such as Ayn Rand, Ludwig von Mises, Ron Paul, Robert Nozick and "Many of the leading lights associated with the AltRight (who) have appeared here at our (PFS) meetings in the course of the years... (such as) Paul Gottfried, ... Peter Brimelow, Richard Lynn, Jared Taylor, John Derbyshire, Steve Sailer..." (78). To be sure, none of these people are pure anarcho-capitalist libertarians, but surely, they deserve the honorific "libertarian." Perhaps most egregiously, apart from Mises, Hoppe's definition of libertarianism excludes Ron Paul, about whom Hoppe quite properly had this to say (81):

Ron Paul during his primary campaign for the Republican Party's nomination as presidential candidate, all the while many self-proclaimed libertarians attacked and tried to vilify Ron Paul for his supposedly (you already know what's coming by now) 'racist' views.

In effect, Hoppe is calling Paul a litmus test. But a litmus test for what? For libertarianism, of course. But his misconceived definition would rule out the former Congressman as a libertarian since he is not an anarchist.

I offer an alternative five-part definition of libertarianism. First, at its apex, where Hoppe of course not only belongs, but has done more than practically anyone else⁴⁰ to defend, elaborate, expound upon, and explain, is anarcho-capitalism. This is the purest variety, since it applies the NAP to the state itself, something most libertarians are loath to do. Second comes the minarchism, or extremely limited government, this is the viewpoint of scholars such as Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick. These people certainly deserve to be counted as members of our libertarian movement. As do supporters of, third, constitutionalism such as Ron Paul and Andrew Napolitano.⁴¹ When I am in an expansive "big tent" mood, I would count as libertarians, fourth, the classical liberalism of Milton

⁴⁰ Except Rothbard

⁴¹ A rank this third in the hierarchy since the US constitution allows for post offices and post roads, something in addition to the armies, police and courts of limited government libertarianism. Of course, the constitution would have to be interpreted along the lines that Andrew Napolitano has so eloquently laid out.

Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, Charles Murray, and Richard Epstein. I even go so far, when I want to define libertarianism as inclusively as I can, to include, fifth, the thick libertarians of both left and right, but further than this I cannot go. Members of the former are contributors to the Bleeding-Heart Libertarian blog, and most members of the beltway think-tanks, such as Cato, Reason, Perc. They all proclaim themselves to be libertarians and are widely seen as such. And they are, in many ways, despite their thickness. The most prominent right-wing thick libertarian is of course the author of the book presently under review.⁴² Hoppe's stipulative, idiosyncratic definition of "libertarian" only encompasses anarcho-capitalists, thus a far too narrow scope.⁴³

So, which is it that Hoppe seeks to develop a promotion strategy? All of libertarianism as I have defined it? Most of it, say, stages one, two and three? Only stage one, anarcho-capitalism? Surely the optimal strategy will be different for each of these. I suspect it is only for his (and my) beloved anarcho-capitalism, but if so, why not say so?

Hoppe forthrightly and explicitly rejects the thin libertarianism I favor. He writes (82-83):

Many libertarians hold the view that all that is needed to maintain a libertarian social order is the strict enforcement of the non-aggression principle (NAP). Otherwise, as long as one abstains from aggression, according to their view, the principle of 'live and let live' should hold. Yet surely, while this 'live and let live' sounds appealing to adolescents in rebellion against parental authority and all social convention and control (and many youngsters have been initially attracted to libertarianism believing that this 'live and let live' is the essence of libertarianism), and while the principle does indeed hold and apply for people living far apart and dealing with each other only indirectly and from afar, it does not hold and apply, or rather it is insufficient, when it comes to people living in close proximity to each other, as neighbours and cohabitants of the same community.

A simple example suffices to make the point. Assume a new next-door neighbour. This neighbour does not aggress against you or your property in any way, but he is a 'bad' neighbour. He is littering on his own neighbouring property, turning it into a garbage heap; in the open, for you to see, he engages in ritual animal slaughter, he turns his house into a 'Freudenhaus,' a bordello, with clients coming and going all day and all night long; he never offers a helping hand and never keeps any promise that he has made; or he cannot or else he refuses to speak to you in your own language, etc., etc. Your life is turned into a nightmare. Yet you may not use violence against him, because he has not aggressed against you.

Consider the front lawn fornicator. He scares the horses and the neighborhood children, but the FLF does not violate rights. He engages in this practice on his own property. Is there no way we more traditionally minded libertarians can have our cake and still eat it too? Is there no way to refuse to jettison pure NAP and private property rights libertarianism, as Hoppe is all too willing to do, and still protect ourselves from what mainstream economists would

⁴² Note that in my calculation Hoppe is a member of both the first and the fifth ranking of libertarians.

⁴³ If I had to guess, here is my estimate of the proportions of self-proclaimed libertarians who fit into the various categories: 1. An-cap, 2%; 2. Minarchist, 20%; 3. Constitutionalist, 30%. 4. Classical liberal, 40%; 5. Thicksters, I know, I know, I've only got 8% left, but I'll credit this category with 25%, due to overlaps.

call external diseconomies or negative externalities? Is the only way to deal with this challenge to give up on our magnificent philosophy of thin libertarianism?

Of course not. Hoppe should have dug deeper. The solution rests with the condominium association or the gated community.⁴⁴ With this sort of private property arrangement, market forces will move us in the direction of protecting us from the scourge of the FLF.

I own a square mile of land. I want to develop it into 640 residential units of housing, perched on one acre each. I can do so in one of two ways. First, I can sell these parcels on an "as is" basis, with no encumbrances on these properties at all. But that amounts to an engraved invitation to the FLFs of the world to come on in and ruin things for most homeowners.

Secondly, far more rationally, I can sell these holdings with the proviso that FLF behavior is strictly forbidden. That is a big improvement, but not an elegant solution. For it is all but impossible to anticipate every problematic behavior, with only this one proviso. For example, the Front Lawn Masturbator will be able to do his thing in the sight of all if only the FLF is prohibited entry. So, in addition to anticipating as many of these types of disrespectful behavior as I can, I set up a condominium association, the board of directors of which can rule on all such conduct, as it presents itself. These trustees of the association can be elected on a democratic basis.⁴⁵ This is the elegant refutation of the FLF fornicator objection to thin libertarianism.

Contrast this to Hoppe's further comments on this issue (84):

And moreover: Just as a libertarian order must always be on guard against 'bad' (even if non-aggressive) neighbours by means of social ostracism, i.e., by a common 'you are not welcome here' culture, so, and indeed even more vigilantly so, must it be guarded against neighbours who openly advocate communism, socialism, syndicalism, or democracy in any shape or form. They, in thereby posing an open threat to all private property and property owners, must not only be shunned, but they must, to use a by now somewhat famous Hoppe-meme, be 'physically removed,' if need be, by violence, and forced to leave for other pastures. Not to do so inevitably leads to — well, communism, socialism, syndicalism, or democracy and hence, the very opposite of a libertarian social order.

This simply will not do. This is what philosophers call a "howler": a stupendous error. For saying this, I demote Hoppe all the way down from the first an-cap order of libertarianism, to the fifth and last, thick libertarianism of the right-wing variety, of course. He advocates the actual use of initiatory violence against the extremely annoying, but peaceful, FLF. This can barely be considered libertarian at all. This at least as far off course from true (thin) libertarianism as the thick left-wing claim that we must welcome and support gays, inter-

⁴⁴ See on this Boudreaux and Holcombe. 2002; Foldvary, 1994; French, 2005; MacCallum, 1970, 2002, 2015; Makovi, 2018. Restrictive covenants also play a role in this regard.

⁴⁵ Hoppe (2001) wrote eloquently on the evils of political democracy, but, here, all voters have explicitly agreed to be bound by the decision of the majority.

racial marriage, etc. A case can be made that Hoppe's mistake is even worse, for it blatantly contradicts the NAP while theirs does not, or at least not as directly.

Moreover, in this he blatantly contradicts what he said in the text cited in fn. 1, *supra*. There, he wrote:

Libertarianism is logically consistent with almost any attitude toward culture, society, religion, or moral principle. In strict logic, libertarian political doctrine can be severed from all other considerations; logically one can be — and indeed most libertarians in fact are: hedonists, libertines, immoralists, militant enemies of religion in general and Christianity in particular — and still be consistent adherents of libertarian politics.

Given this, Hoppe is guilty of advocating the use of violence against innocent, wait for it, libertarians!

However, what is sauce for the thick right-wing libertarian goose is also sauce for the thick left-wing libertarian gander. That is to say, just as the righties might well, ok, definitely will, exclude the FLF from the domains, the left wingers may do the same *vis a vis non* FLFs. That is, mandate that this sort of behavior be encouraged or even made *mandatory*. The *non* FLFs would be booted out, but not physically brutalized from these societies.

As for the thinnists, we wish the best of luck to both types of condo associations. *Qua* libertarians, we are completely indifferent on this matter. We have no dog in this fight between the left and the right thickists. We oppose *all* thickism, equally, emanating from either end of the political spectrum. We insist, only, contrary to Hoppe, that the NAP be respected.

We now move to a new subject that arises in this chapter. What is Hoppe's strategic suggestion for promoting libertarianism. I think it can be best characterized as "first grabbing the low hanging fruit" (88-89):

White married Christian couples with children, in particular if they belong also to the class of taxpayers (rather than tax-consumers), and everyone most closely resembling or aspiring to this standard form of social order and organization can be realistically expected to be the most receptive audience of the libertarian message (whereas the least support should be expected to come from the legally most 'protected' groups such as, for instance, single Black Muslim mothers on welfare).

Focusing the message on those who are most likely to accept it seems eminently reasonable. And, maybe "Christian couples" will find to their liking something in the fourth lowest category of libertarianism, classical liberalism, But I very much doubt this group will constitute fertile ground for those who Hoppe defines as the only libertarians, anarcho-capitalists. In my view, more likely candidates would be young students in their late teens or early twenties.

Hoppe rejects (89):

... the so-called Hayekian strategy for social change, that envisions the spread of correct libertarian ideas starting at the top, with the leading philosophers, and then trickling down from there to journalists and finally to the great unwashed masses, must be considered fundamentally unrealistic. Instead, any realistic libertarian strategy for change must be a populist strategy. That is, libertarians must short-circuit the dominant intellectual elites and address the masses directly to arouse their indignation and contempt for the ruling elites.

I am not at all as quick to reject this as is our author. My own career has followed, roughly, this path. There are now about a dozen of my former undergraduate students who are now professors of economics, or still studying for their Ph.D. degrees in this subject. They will likely, in turn, convert at least some of their own students to Austrian economics with a libertarian twist. I just recently discovered I have an intellectual grandchild: a professor of economics who was himself mentored by a former student of mine. So, I am loath to give up on this strategy, perhaps due to this bias of mine, despite Hoppe's very cogent criticism. As he writes, most academics are indeed part of the problem, not the solution. On the other hand, Hoppe is correct in that both Ayn Rand and Ron Paul, our most successful advocates, have indeed "short-circuit(ed) the dominant intellectual elites and address(ed) the masses directly."

Stated Fuller (Rothbard, 2018, xxi) on this matter:

... Rothbard thought ideas are the determining factor in history. Ideas are the proverbial weapons used in the battle for liberty against tyranny. Consequently, the individuals who generate ideas – the intellectuals – ultimately determine the course of human history. In the final analysis, the fate of humanity depends on whether the intellectuals who advance the idea of nonviolence can overcome those intellectuals advocating the idea of violence.

I am more of a fan of my man Mao, who said let a thousand flowers bloom. I do not think, few as we are, we are in any position to disallow, diminish, deprecate, *any* strategy for promoting liberty,⁴⁶ let it be academia, newspapers, blogs, letters to the editor, politics, magazines, think tanks, the Libertarian Party, whatever.

I am also an Austrian economist, and one of the important elements of that school of thought is subjectivism. That is, different strokes for different folks. What works for one type of person need not succeed for another. Who are the most successful people in terms of converting massive numbers to our banner? That is easy to answer: Any Rand through her novels and Ron Paul in his capacity as a congressman.⁴⁷ They stand head and shoulders over any other libertarian in this regard. However, right off the bat, they employed two very different strategies, one politics, the other fiction, and had almost the very opposite personalities. Ron Paul is widely and accurately known, in Rothbard's felicitous phrase, as

⁴⁶ Always within reason

⁴⁷ Mises and Rothbard should never be left out of any discussion of successful libertarian leaders, but their contribution was more along the Hayekian line. They cannot be credited with mass conversions, only with mass conversions of intellectuals.

a “sweetie pie.” You call Ayn Rand that, no one would dare, and she would smack you upside the head, at least metaphorically. From this example I learn that there is no one, or even few best ways to promote liberty. My suggestion to the next generation of libertarians who want to expand our movement: do whatever it is that is the most *fun* for you (Block & Chávez, 2018). William Buckley once characterized Murray and his group as a merry band. Precisely. We can use some more joy in our movement. We should all emulate Rothbard in this regard, and in pretty much in every other way as well.

Hoppe lists ten strategies: Stop mass migration; stop bombing foreigners; defund the ruling elites; end the Fed; abolish “affirmative action”; crush the Antifa mob; crush gangs; end welfare programs; separate education and the state; “don’t put your trust in politics or political parties.” But none of these are really strategies to promote liberty, except for the last one. Rather, they are goals in the way station in the direction of liberty. And the tenth is really a blooper. Do not utilize politics? This is contradicted by the *vast* success of Ron Paul. The Libertarian Party, unhappily, is another matter entirely. Yet even this organization has publicized our philosophy to many people, some of whom have become excellent libertarians, even anarcho-capitalists.

There is yet another good reason to abandon this talk of right-wing libertarianism, even apart from the foregoing mentioned in previous chapters. It is strategically unwise. In the view of the major media, we libertarians are part and parcel of the right. Yes, we can be distinguished from conservatives other than ourselves, but we are located cheek by jowl next to them. No, no, no, we must, if we are to be successful, engage in a bit of product differentiation. Not only do we diverge from the conservatives, the Republicans, we must be *seen* to do so, and all this talk of libertarianism being on the right is counterproductive. We are *not* junior partners of the conservatives. We are special. We are as far apart from them on the right as we are from our friends on the left, as a matter of fact, and, as a matter of strategy, it behooves us to say so, loudly, and clearly.

How are we doing strategy-wise? When I first Murray, in 1966, I asked him how many libertarians there were altogether. He said 25. He would be in a position to know, since he was then, and all through his adult life, “Mr. Libertarian.” How many libertarians are there now, on the entire planet. My rough estimate, based on nothing at all, is 25 million. So, we have been *wildly* successful in terms of percentage increase. If we keep going at this rate, our species will one day enjoy the fruits of liberty. On the other hand, at that time, the world’s population was about 3 billion; it is now some 7 billion. So, while we have added (25 fewer than) 25 million to our roster, the non-libertarian total has risen by roughly 4 billion. Ouch. This just means we have more work to do, plenty of it.

5. Coming of Age with Murray

As I say above, and I will say it again, this chapter brought actual tears to my eyes. It was so poignant, heartfelt, lovely. Hoppe has the unwarranted reputation of being a cold fish. I have never experienced him in this way. Those who think so should read this chapter, as an antidote.

I have nothing critical to say about a single word in this chapter. Instead of ending my comments here, I shall take a page from Hoppe's script and relate my own interaction with my friend, my mentor, my guide in all things, Murray Rothbard.

I started out my political-economic career as a leftie, and not a member of the thick libertarian left. I was no libertarian at all. My views were very similar to those of my high school track teammate Bernie Sanders. As a Jew growing up in Brooklyn in the 1940s-1950s, this perspective permeated the atmosphere. I was converted to minarchism by Ayn Rand, Nathaniel Branden based on two books recommended to me by the latter: Rand, 1957 and Hazlitt, 1946, and discussing them with Rand, Branden, Alan Greenspan and other members of the Randian "senior collective."

I first heard the name "Murray Rothbard" from my Columbia University Ph.D. program class-mate Larry Moss. He wanted to introduce me to Murray but made the mistake of mentioning him as an anarchist. I was Randroid enough at that time to refuse to meet him due to that fact. But one day, in a weak moment, Larry and his room-mate Jerry Woloz ganged upon on me and prevailed upon me to meet Murray. He converted me to the an-cap position in about 10 minutes, using Hazlitt type arguments regarding armies, police, and courts.

I was very taken with Murray and his living room crowd: we stayed up late, often all night, playing risk, talking politics and economics, and laughing, laughing, laughing. I still blame Murray for the stomach cramps I developed then.

I have a lot in common with Murray. We are both short fat Jews from New York City who married Christian girls taller than us. We both earned Ph.D. degrees in economics from Columbia University, with great difficulty; it took me seven years, and Murray a similar amount of time. I am one of the very few people honored by Murray for allowing me to substitute teach for his class at then-Brooklyn Poly Tech.⁴⁸ I think I am Murray's only coauthor.⁴⁹ I have been told that I, too, like him, have a sense of humor. My time spent in New York City with Murray and his merry band was from 1966 to 1979, when I took a job at the Fraser Institute in Canada. I try to emulate Murray in every way I can. I write a lot, and do not at all confine myself, narrowly, to economics. I am proud and honored to have been a friend and associate of Murray Rothbard's.

⁴⁸ I share this honor with Hans.

⁴⁹ Rothbard and Block, 1987

Conclusion

There are two separate issues that simply must be separated from each other; rigidly distinguished between. First, which is the cultural practice, if widely held, most likely to bring about a libertarian society in the first place, and, if ever achieved, to promote its longevity: the left-wing, hippie, multicultural, gay-is-good, opposes “bossism,” inter-racial marriages should be encouraged, democracy-uber-allies, bleeding-heart egalitarian one, or, the right-wing variety, which features traditional families, hierarchies, white male, western, conservative and religious traditions? Here, Professor Hoppe clearly and strongly inclines in the latter direction. I tend to agree with him on this matter, although far less powerfully. I see benefits in this regard from both sides, but more so from the right. Second is the issue of what is libertarianism. May members of the former be excluded from “society” as Hoppe avers? Certainly not. May people of this sort be rejected by conservative condominiums? Are restrictive covenants which preclude them compatible with libertarianism? Of course, they are. But what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander as well: culturally leftist gated communities are just as entirely justified in dismissing membership applications from those on the right who they deem offensive.

Hoppe is one of the preeminent libertarian theoreticians not just now actively writing, but he is a seer for the ages. His original and seminal work on argumentation ethics places a strong foundation under all of libertarianism. His herculean contribution in the disparagement of democracy (2001) similarly contains insights that will last as long as there is any such thing as libertarianism as a going concern. But these accomplishments are only the tips of the iceberg of his decades-long contributions to our philosophy. He has also made sterling contributions to intellectual property analysis, to fractional reserve banking, to the genesis of private property rights (homesteading), has emphasized that we can only own physical property, not its value, has offered a brilliant critique of positivist methodology as applied to the social sciences and much, much more. A renaissance man, he has made sterling contributions to sociology, economics, philosophy, and history.

When one criticizes Hoppe, as I do, above, one takes to task a master craftsman of the freedom philosophy. Yet, no one is perfect. We all commit errors. To refrain from correcting even a leading theoretician such as Hoppe is to hold back from adding a few more pebbles to that great edifice which is libertarianism.⁵⁰

I have been critical of some small amount of the contents of this book. Yet, I enthusiastically recommend it to all interested in liberty and freedom. The overwhelming majority of it is vintage Hoppe: brilliant, informative, inspirational.

⁵⁰ Other critiques of mine of this author include the following: Block, 1998, 2004, 2007C, 2009C, 2010, 2011A, 2011B; Block and Barnett, 2010; Block, Barnett and Salerno, 2006; Block and Callahan. 2003; Gregory and Block. 2007.

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