ANTI-’68ers and the RACIST-LIBERTARIAN ALLIANCE

How a Schism among Austrian School Neoliberals Helped Spawn the Alt Right

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Abstract This article shows that the incorporation of right-wing libertarians into the Alt Right coalition was the end result of a schism in the neoliberal intellectual movement in response to the egalitarian challenge of the 1960s. In a symmetry with developments on the post-Marxist Left, one group of Austrian School economists associated with F. A. Hayek took a cultural turn. Performing their own critique of “economism,” they perceived human nature as rooted primarily in culture, adaptable over time through social learning and selective evolution. The other group of Austrian economists, linked to Murray Rothbard and culminating in the racist-libertarian alliance of the Alt Right, saw difference as rooted in biology and race as an immutable hierarchy of group traits and abilities. While many observers have described the Alt Right as a backlash against the excesses of neoliberalism, this shows that an important current of the Alt Right was born within and not against the neoliberal movement.

Keywords neoliberalism, Alt Right, libertarianism, Murray Rothbard, F. A. Hayek

Half a century after the international protest wave of 1968, some of its most attentive students are its staunchest enemies. The Far Right in the United States and Europe has gleaned lessons from the Left (Nagle 2017; Wagner 2017; Weißenstephaner 2017). Tactics of transgression, direct action, counterculture building, messaging, and the willingness to make radical
demands recall the standard repertoire of social movements since the 1960s. Saul Alinsky’s 1971 book, *Rules for Radicals*, long used to defame center-leftists like Hillary Clinton, is now taken up by the radical Right (Harkinsson 2017). The founder of the anti-Semitic blog the *Daily Stormer* claims to have been drawn to one quote in particular: “Ridicule is man’s most potent weapon” (O’Brien 2017).

The principles associated with 1968 also offer a constitutive counterpoint for the Far Right. The subtitle to a recent polemical book is “A Declaration of War against the Sixty-Eighters.” Its Austrian author writes, “The ideology of the ’68ers has infected Europe. . . . It is a sickness that will kill us if we don’t find the cure” (Willinger 2013). Cultural Marxism, feminism, multiculturalism, and egalitarianism are cast as ideologies corrosive of the foundation of social order (Jamin 2014; Neiwert 2017; Slobodian 2018a). In place of cosmopolitan egalitarianism, the Far Right reaffirms exclusionary racial and national identities and speaks of “sex realism” and “race realism” to emphasize the biological difference supposedly obscured by the post-60s leftist vision of human nature (Hawley 2017).

One of the most high-profile right-wing mobilizations in recent years is the so-called Alt Right in the United States. Using a shortened version of the “alternative right” moniker coined in 2008 by Paul Gottfried and Richard Spencer, the Alt Right gained public attention in the course of the 2016 presidential election as a heterogeneous collection of white nationalists, neo-Nazis, male supremacists, neoreactionaries, paleoconservatives, online trolls, and anarcho-capitalists existing to the right of the mainstream conservative movement (Gottfried 2008; Mulhall, Lawrence, and Murdoch 2017). Scholars have identified different origins for the Alt Right. Some connect it to the European New Right associated with the French thinker Alain De Benoist, whose response to 1968 was a conscious attempt to adapt the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s tactic of what he called “metapolitics” to the causes of the Right (Taguieff 1993; Williams 2017). Others find its origins in the welter of patriot groups and conspiratorial publics expanding in the United States since the 1990s (Neiwert 2017). Others follow Gottfried’s own cues to emphasize the “right wing critics of American conservatism” since the Cold War’s end; the Alt Right becomes a more overtly racist heir to the Old Right and the “populism” of Patrick Buchanan (Ganz 2018; Hawley 2016; Lowndes 2017).

The explanations are not mutually exclusive. All are necessary to make sense of a diverse coalition. This article offers its own analysis by focusing on the Alt Right’s anarcho-capitalist or right-wing libertarian faction. Existing accounts explore the influence of right-wing libertarians on the Alt Right but fail to delve into how one wing of the movement swerved rightward while another did not (Ganz 2017; Hawley 2017). I show that the incorporation of right-wing libertarians into the Alt Right coalition was the end result of a schism in the neoliberal movement in response to the egalitarian challenge of the 1960s. As the welfare state expanded, civil rights were institutionalized, and the New Left condemned domestic and international inequality, neoliberals attacked what they saw as the Left’s faulty premises: the perfectibility of humans through state intervention and the possibility of a future equality of not only starting points but outcomes. Taking aim at what they saw as the “collectivism” and “blank slate” ideology of both student radicals and mainstream...
social democrats, neoliberals emphasized the basic inequality of human capacity and the stubborn persistence of individual and group differences.

Yet neoliberals split in identifying the key variable of difference. In a symmetry with developments on the post-Marxist Left, one group of Austrian economists associated with F. A. Hayek took a cultural turn. Performing their own critique of "economism," they perceived human nature as rooted primarily in culture, adaptable over time through social learning and selective evolution. The other group of Austrian economists, linked to Murray Rothbard and culminating in Alt Right libertarianism, saw difference as rooted in biology and race as an immutable hierarchy of group traits and abilities.

On the surface, finding a link between the Alt Right and organized neoliberalism is surprising, given that many observers have described the Alt Right—and right-wing populism more generally—as a backlash against the excesses of neoliberalism (Birch 2017: 180; Klein 2016; Streeck 2017). The Alt Right has adopted the narrative itself, claiming the mantle of "the only true opposition to Neoliberalism" (Ahab 2017). This article challenges the dichotomy by showing that an important current of the Alt Right was born within and not against the neoliberal movement. By following how, why, and when dissident neoliberals became key thinkers and coordinators of the Far Right, we can see right-populist thought as not so much a backlash against neoliberalism but the realization of possibilities latent within it. The apparent clash of opposites reveals itself as, at least in part, a dispute within the "family of neoliberalisms" (Plehwe, Walpen, and Neuenhoeffer 2005: 2). Alt Right libertarianism shows how one perverse legacy of 1968 was the campaign to undo its egalitarian promise.

**Hayek and the Atavism of 1968**

The schism that produced Alt Right libertarianism can be traced to the differing reactions of neoliberals to the politics emerging from 1968. On the surface, the specific neoliberal responses to the New Left were few and far between (Hamburger and Steinmetz-Jenkins 2018: 1). The most common interpretation of campus unrest asserted by the neoliberals associated with the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) reflected on what they saw as the perverse incentive structures of the publicly funded university. In a coauthored trade press book on what he called "academia in anarchy," future MPS president James M. Buchanan's "economic diagnosis" was that the rebellion sprang from the fact that students at public universities were effectively parasitical on the public purse that subsidized the institutions (Buchanan and Devletoglou 1970). Only market-rate tuition would cultivate the correct relationship to education. His book was dedicated to "the taxpayer" (MacLean 2017: 107). Another MPS president, Milton Friedman, also saw the roots of the rebellion in the status of students as "middle-class rentiers living off the taxes of the decent hardworking poor" (Cooper 2017: 237). Full-price tuition financed through parental and personal debt would prevent further irresponsible outbursts.

Friedman’s fellow University of Chicago economist (and yet another future MPS president) George Stigler also believed that disorder would be quelled by establishing students more firmly as customers paying fees for services. He went further, foreshadowing the casualization of the higher education labor
force in the early twenty-first century. To break the emerging “faculty-student guild socialism,” he suggested that research be hived off to a small number of privately funded research institutes, with undergraduate institutions staffed by an itinerant professoriat forced to follow the trends of market demand without the security of tenure (Nik-Khah, forthcoming). Rather than assessing the validity of the causes of student protest, the leading neoliberal intellectuals saw disorder as, above all, requiring corrective measures, namely, the move to private education financed by private debt.

Notwithstanding the avowed individualism of much of the cultural and political foment around 1968, most neoliberal saw the student revolt as a by-product of a lingering “collectivism” in the public education sector. The remedies of the Chicago School economists were institutional fixes. A deeper sociological, and even anthropological, interpretation of the decade can be found in the work of the most influential neoliberal thinker, the founder of the MPS, F. A. Hayek. In the wake of the 1960s, Hayek (1978a) built a new theory of human development and human nature around the diagnosis of what he called “the atavism of social justice.” He perceived the socialist pursuit of equal outcomes through state intervention and redistribution as “an expression of revolt of the tribal spirit against the abstract requirements of the coherence of the Great Society” (Hayek 1976: 144). With the New Left in mind, he wrote, “What especially most of the members of the New Left do not appear to see, is that that equal treatment of all men which they also demand is possible only under a system in which individual actions are restricted merely by formal rules rather than guided by their known effects” (147). Equality before the law was the only egalitarianism he recognized. Because people differed in their capacities, an inequality of outcomes was inevitable.

Had Hayek been more attentive, he might have noted that many factions of the New Left shared his critique of scientism and technocracy and his admiration for unplanned order (Caldwell 2010: 40). Indeed, scholars have pointed out that the 1960s ethos of decentralization, autonomy, and anti-authoritarianism paved the way for later forms of labor organization, workplace management, consumption, and production dubbed “neoliberal” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Bröckling 2015; Turner 2006). Yet Hayek’s focus in the wake of 1968 was on what he believed to be the basically short-sighted redistributive impulse at the heart of the global movement, a position that he decreed from his Olympian remove to be destructive of the larger order. “Socialists have the support of inherited instincts,” he wrote, “while maintenance of the new wealth which creates the new ambitions requires an acquired discipline which the non-domesticated barbarians in our midst, who call themselves ‘alienated,’ refuse to accept” (Hayek 1978a: 67). Should the “morals of the tribal society” prevail, Hayek (1976: 147) wrote, this would mean mass death, threatening “the survival of the large numbers to which some three hundred years of a market order have enabled mankind to grow.” Status quo capitalism must be protected from radical reform efforts.

To understand the process of change over time, Hayek took a cultural turn. The mechanism he identified for the progressive discovery of new techniques and practices to expand the ambit of production and exchange
was what he called the “competitive selection of cultural institutions.” Hoping to preempt accusations of resurrected social Darwinism, he insisted that he was describing “not genetic evolution of innate qualities, but cultural evolution through learning—which indeed leads sometimes to conflicts with near-animal natural instincts” (Hayek 1978a: 67–68). Against the “non-domesticated barbarians” of 1968 with their atavistic demands for economic evenness, Hayek advocated trust in the incremental “cultural evolution” of new norms, which would lead to better outcomes for humanity as a whole even if it reproduced inequality and apparent injustice locally (Gray 1984: 31).

**Rothbard’s Failed Entryism in the 1960s**

In contrast to Hayek and the Chicago School neoliberals, a very different approach to the 1960s was taken by Murray Rothbard and his affiliated faction of anarcho-capitalists. Born in New York City in 1926, Rothbard was an early member of the neoliberal movement, invited to join the MPS by Hayek himself in 1958 after attending the New York University (NYU) seminars of Hayek’s mentor, Ludwig von Mises, through the 1950s and working with Leonard Read’s Foundation for Economic Education (Raimondo 2000). Though a generation older than the ‘68ers, Rothbard sympathized with the antistate sentiments of campus rebels. He shared their opposition to the Vietnam War, described conscription as “draft slavery,” and publicly endorsed Malcolm X’s calls for separatism against what he saw as the redistributive reformism of Martin Luther King Jr. (Rothbard 2016). While most neoliberals criticized the student movement from afar, Rothbard attempted a form of entryism, actively seeking to spin off mobilized students from both the New Left and conservative factions toward libertarianism. In 1965, he started a journal called *Left and Right* with Leonard Liggio, future MPS president and director of the Institute for Humane Studies, in an effort to reconcile the two factions opposing the Vietnam War (Doherty 2007: 337). By 1968, he was collaborating with the Maoist Progressive Labor Party to advocate a libertarian platform for the Peace and Freedom Party (Raimondo 2000: 170–72).

The late 1960s were a heady time for libertarians as an anarchist subculture flourished and young “radicals for capitalism” reveled in provoking the socialist sensibilities of the New Left and the religious traditionalism of the Right (Doherty 2007: 339–87). Rothbard’s own efforts at a tactical alliance with the New Left did not survive the decade. In 1970, he declared the New Left dead (Raimondo 2000: 218). He accused the New Left of failing to transcend its belief in the benevolent state. The sharpest point of his critique was aimed, like Hayek’s, at what he saw as the “primitivism” of the leftist counterculture. In 1971, he condemned the “passivity of the New Left, its wish to live simply and in ‘harmony’ with ‘the earth’ and the alleged rhythms of nature. . . . It is a conscious rejection of civilization and differentiated men on behalf of the primitive, the ignorant, the herd-like ‘tribe’” (Rothbard 2000c: 264). He drafted his mentor Mises for his argument, quoting him from 1922 that “primitive man lacks all individuality in our sense. Two South Sea Islanders resemble each other far more closely than two twentieth-century Londoners” (266; Mises 1951). Rothbard believed that the egalitarianism of the 1960s New Left was both “anthuman” and “evil.”

While Hayek turned to culture in response to 1968, Rothbard dismissed the category as an alibi used by the Left to
occlude more essential forms of difference. He turned instead to biology, citing the future coauthor of *The Bell Curve*, Harvard psychologist Richard J. Herrnstein, on “the genetic basis for inequality of intelligence” (Rothbard 2000b: 16). “Biology,” Rothbard (2000b: 16) wrote in 1972, “stands like a rock in the face of egalitarian fantasies.” He described “the egalitarian revolt against biological reality” as “only a subset of a deeper revolt: against the ontological structure of reality itself, against the ‘very organization of nature’; against the universe as such” (17). He called for a countermovement—a revolt against human equality—to reground social order and obstruct “the call of ‘equality’ [which] is a siren song that can only mean the destruction of all that we cherish as being human” (Rothbard 2000c: 277). Anchoring his response to the egalitarianism of the 1960s to a renewed belief in the scientific basis of human difference would eventually lead Rothbard to allies on the Far Right.

**The Cultural Austrians**

In their idiosyncratic reading of 1968, Hayek and Rothbard both saw the New Left’s demands for substantive equality as lapses into an earlier primitive human state. While both narratives were highly racialized, Hayek eschewed biological categories of race and primarily genetic understandings of human nature even as Rothbard deferred to the putative facts of hard science. The domain on which the opposition played out after the 1960s was the revived field of Austrian economics in the United States. Although the first generation of the Austrian School, including Carl Menger (1849–1921) and Eugen Böhm-Bawerk (1851–1914) worked out of Vienna, the 1970s “revival” of the school in the United States was led by Rothbard and British émigré Israel Kirzner (1930–). By the 1980s, the Austrians had set up institutional bases at NYU and, most importantly, at George Mason University (GMU), where generous ongoing funding from Charles Koch helped sustain the Center for the Study of Market Processes (renamed the Mercatus Center in 1999) (Mayer 2016; Teles 2008).

Austrians differentiate themselves from mainstream neoclassical economics, including the Chicago School, by their emphasis on subjective value and limited knowledge, and their emphasis on verbal rather than mathematical arguments. As Don Lavoie (1994: 551), the founder of the GMU center put it, the Austrian “view of human action does not reduce it to maximizing.” In the 1980s, many of the Austrian economists around GMU began to take what they later called the hermeneutic or “interpretive turn” (Lachmann 1990: 140). An early proponent was Richard Ebeling, who set out, in his own words, to exorcise “the ghost of ‘economic man’” by emphasizing processes of “inculturation” by which we “come to share a common social world,” citing Mises’s seminar participant from Vienna, Alfred Schütz, along with the Austrian-born Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann on the “social construction of reality” (Ebeling 1986: 47–48; Berger and Luckmann 1967).

As with their contemporaries on the Marxist Left promoting the new field of cultural studies, this group—which could be called the cultural Austrians—often defined themselves against what they called the “economism” of their opponents. When 1970s post-Marxist, feminist, and cultural studies scholars derided economism, this meant bringing the state, race, gender, and everyday life into the frame of analysis to compensate for what they saw as an overemphasis on materialistic determinism in traditional Marxist analysis.
(Brenner and Ramas 1984: 34; Hall 1980: 23). Cultural Austrians sometimes used similar language drawn from sociology. Ludwig Lachmann (1990: 133) described the need to reintroduce the “‘life-world’ in which all our empirical knowledge of social matters is embedded” to the “desiccated formalism” of textbook neoclassical economics. In this case, the post-Marxist Left and the Austrian Right agreed that if value was subjective, then it should be sought not only in monetized transactions but also in all aspects of human action.

Cultural Austrians took the insight from Hayek that not only the market but all social institutions had a “communicative function” (Boettke 1990: 62). Lavoie argued that Hayek had identified a “knowledge problem” that only private property and free exchange could solve. The problem was not to access and organize all known information about prices—which computers could theoretically accomplish—but to access the “inarticulate,” tacit, or unknown knowledge that local actors held—and computers could never know (Lavoie 1986: 5). The emphasis on the situatedness of the economic actor led cultural Austrians to borrow language from phenomenology and philosophy, including frequent references to Hans-Georg Gadamer.

Hayek’s definition of culture offered the most important point of orientation for the cultural Austrians—and the chief route to move beyond methodological individualism and begin to understand collectives and institutions. Neither culture nor evolution was a central category in neoliberal thought until the 1970s. While some Austrians have noted the similarity between Hayek’s (1978b: 293) ideas and those of contemporary sociobiology, his intervention, while acknowledging the existence of genetic heredity, was to constantly downplay nature in favor of nurture and against an overemphasis on biology and genetic transmission. For Hayek, a culture was not a population bounded by race or heredity but one with fluid boundaries where adaptation occurs at the margins, often through interaction with (and imitation of) other cultures, and it gradually becomes generalized through a process of the survival of successful traits (Beck 2011).

Existing critiques of neoliberalism ill equip us to make sense of the cultural Austrians. Neoliberals are frequently charged with the fault of economism, meaning variously a fixation on material explanations for all social change, a disciplinary claim about the superiority of economics, or, most often, a desire to distill the messy complexity of human life down to the elegance of formal models (Kwak 2017: 38). Yet, for Hayek and the cultural Austrians, it is complexity that is the central intellectual concern, not mathematical proofs (Vaughn 1994). Thick description, ethnography, culture, and complexity have been incorporated into important streams of neoliberal thought for decades (Lavoie and Chamlee-Wright 2000). Rather than resisting the cultural turn that emerged from the 1960s, an important faction of the neoliberal movement absorbed it.

**Hoppe and the Racialist Austrians**

The schism that produced the libertarian strain of the Alt Right manifested first as a violent opposition from within the Austrian camp to the cultural turn taken by their fellow Austrians. The institutional base for the critique was the Ludwig von Mises Institute at Auburn University in Alabama, which was established in 1982 by former Ron Paul staffer Llewellyn Rockwell Jr., with Rothbard as its vice president of academic affairs. The founding of the institute followed a dispute over tactics between Rothbard and his former collaborators at
the Cato Institute, which he had cofounded (originally named the Charles Koch Foundation) with Charles Koch and Ed Crane in 1974. While Crane and Koch sought direct policy influence—signaled by the institute’s relocation from San Francisco to Washington, DC, in 1981—Rothbard favored an appeal to the libertarian sympathies of the American grassroots through what he labeled “right-wing populism” (Bessner 2014; Ganz 2017; Rothbard 2000d). The attack on the cultural Austrians formed part of Rothbard’s (2000a) broader attack on the left-libertarians or “big government libertarians,” as he called them, who he felt were acquiescing to the egalitarian demands of the 1960s in civil rights for racial and sexual minorities and the expansion of supranational institutions.

At a talk at Jagiellonian University in Krakow in 1987, Rothbard condemned what he called the “hermeneutical invasion of philosophy and economics.” Sarcastically borrowing a term from the French New Left, he singled out the attempt of the “groupuscule” of “renegade Austrians” around Lavoie to found a “Society for Interpretive Economics” at GMU as an attempt to sully the school of Mises and Hayek with the theories of Michel Foucault, Paul Ricœur, and Jacques Derrida (Rothbard 1989). Rothbard saw the hermeneutic turn taken by the cultural Austrians as bringing them into the orbit of the nihilistic Left. He included the “deconstructionists” in his camp of villains (Rothbard 2000a: 110).

In the same journal issue in which Rothbard’s article appeared, Hans-Hermann Hoppe (1989: 179) also brought out the knives against the cultural Austrians, claiming that “Lachmann and the George Mason University hermeneuticians” are singing “the ancient tune of skepticism and nihilism, of epistemological and ethical relativism.” This was one of the first appearances on the English-language publication scene for Hoppe, who had taken a position in 1986 as Rothbard’s colleague at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, School of Business while in his mid-thirties after coming to the United States as a fellow of the Center for Libertarian Studies the year before. Hoppe was an apostate, having been educated at the heart of the hermeneutic turn. Studying in Frankfurt as a self-described “left-winger” in the early 1970s, his dissertation adviser was Jürgen Habermas, and he also worked with Karl-Otto Apel, a philosopher and specialist in the work of Martin Heidegger, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Charles Sanders Peirce (Hoppe 2014).

As symbolized by their affiliation with the Mises Institute, Rothbard and Hoppe took Hayek’s mentor as their lodestar rather than Hayek himself. The choice was significant. While the thinkers are usually distinguished by their relative commitment to laissez-faire, we find a more meaningful difference for our purposes in their respective treatment of culture and race. Race theory has an ambiguous place in Mises’s work. Like Hayek, he took the diversity of human capacity as a starting point or a given. Unlike Hayek, however, he explicitly associated certain traits with racial groups, writing that “it may be assumed that races do differ in intelligence and will power, and that, this being so, they are very unequal in their ability to form society” (Mises [1936] 1981: 255). He left the door open for a scientific study of race for new understandings of the human condition and for explaining “the flowering and decline of civilizations.”

Mises repeatedly expressed cautious optimism for a potential science of race even as he condemned the race theory that existed. In his earliest work, Mises (1922: 313) laughed off the
nineteenth-century anthroposophical theories of Arthur de Gobineau that linked cranial size to intelligence. He also begins his magnum opus, Human Action, with a condemnation of what he called the "racial polylogism" of the Nazis, or the belief that different races follow different rationalities. Against this, Mises ([1949] 1998: 134)—whose Jewish background can be noted here—argued that all humans are governed by the same rationality, the same motivations, and the same drive to purposive action. And yet, in his 1944 work, Mises conceded the difficulties of racial integration, writing in a phrase, often cited by latter-day Mises Institute Austrians, about immigration barriers that "there are few white men who would not shudder at the picture of many millions of black or yellow people living in their own countries (1944: 107; Slobodian 2019).

In the original German-language version of the book that would later become Human Action, written during his time at the Graduate Institute for International Studies in Geneva, Mises (1940: 157) granted even more ground to race science, writing that "we may take as given that the racial element plays a role among the factors that form the personality and, with it, our values and understanding." What he objected to was not the possible truth content of race theory but its misuse. "In the doctrine of National Socialism and its derivative teachings in Italian fascism," he wrote, "there is an unbridgeable gap between the statements of the founders of racial biology and their application to propaganda and use for practical policies." Yet the fascist politicization of race theory should not discredit it permanently. "Because the keywords of race theory are used to justify measures with which it has nothing to do," he wrote, "does not free scientific thought from the responsibility to think through to the end the problem of human races (Menschenrassen) in its praxeological significance" (158).

The followers of Mises took his rather parenthetical opening to the possibility of race theory and drove the proverbial truck through it. In their appeal to racial science, they found a genetic basis for unequal capacity and unequal achievement and, in Hoppe’s work, an explanation for the supposedly natural aversion of races to cohabitation. Having cited Herrnstein already in 1971, Rothbard (1994a) raved about The Bell Curve for breaching the topic of race theory, writing that "until literally mid-October 1994, it was shameful and taboo for anyone to talk publicly or write about, home truths which everyone, and I mean everyone, knew in their hearts and in private: that is, almost self-evident truths about race, intelligence, and heritability."

Faced with the neoliberal problem of how to explain unequal capacity in a universal marketplace, Rothbard and Hoppe diverged from Hayekian arguments about social learning and cultural imitation in favor of the putative objectivity of racial science—a move that itself would fall clearly afoul of Hayek’s (2010) charge of "scientism." As they embraced racial science, they also opened up to the new collaborations, which would ultimately coalesce as the Alt Right. In the late 1980s, Rothbard led the so-called paleo alliance between paleo libertarians like himself, and the paleo conservatives organized around the Rockford Institute of Rockford, Illinois, founded in 1976 (Gottfried 1993: 147). The outcome was the John Randolph Club, named after early nineteenth-century plantation owner and advocate of African colonization, founded in 1989. The chief organ of publication for the paleo position was the monthly...
Rothbard-Rockwell Report (later Triple R), which began publication in April 1990.

From the beginning, the Rothbard-Rockwell Report displayed an openness to “racialist” arguments, sharing contributors with the American Renaissance (1990) newsletter, a “journal of race, immigration, and the decline of civility” that began publication the same year to protest the ongoing “dispossession” of whites by nonwhites. Michael Levin was a contributing editor at Triple R in the late 1990s at the same time he was contributing articles to American Renaissance. A preview of his book Why Race Matters was published by the Mises Institute in 1996 (Levin 1996). In a telling development, Rothbard’s support for black separatism in the 1960s transformed into support for neoconfederate white nationalist separatism by the 1990s (Raimondo 2000: 166).

The early 1990s saw a flourishing of publications devoted to racial science and the supposed dangers facing the white race (Kohn 1995). The Rockford Institute’s magazine, Chronicles, began to focus heavily on questions of immigration and race in the 1990s with covers featuring, for example, the Statue of Liberty stormed by slant-eyed devils and the title “Bosnia, USA” in 1993, and a glowing article about “secessions” in 1991. Hoppe published excerpts from what would become his best-known book, Democracy: The God That Failed (2001), in Chronicles (Hoppe 1993, 1995). He displayed the heritage of 1968’s enemies when he used the language of the opponents of the Civil Rights movement to condemn the “forced integration” that resulted from immigration and the shared use of state-owned and operated roads and schools (Jackson 2005). He proposed instead the splintering of polities into competing entities. “Secessionism,” he wrote, “and the growth of separatist and regionalist movements in Eastern and Western Europe represent not an anachronism but potentially the most progressive historical forces” (Hoppe 1993: 25).

Rothbard, Hoppe, and other right-wing libertarians frequently cited the work of Richard Lynn (1930–) and J. Philippe Rushton (1943–2012), who published their studies linking cranial (and penis) size, race, climate, and intelligence at the fringes and often beyond the fringes of their own professions (Tucker 2002). Rothbard used the work of such “racialists” along with the example of Yugoslavia to support his position, published the same year as The Bell Curve, that “beyond a small quantity, national heterogeneity simply does not work, the ‘nation’ disintegrates into more than one nation, and the need for separation becomes acute.” He argued that the solution for South Africa was not in less apartheid but more—a “Grand Apartheid . . . not just cantonization, but separate sovereign nations in the territory of the exiting Union of South Africa” (Rothbard 1994b: 7).

The tone of the racialist Austrians betrayed a giddy sense of possibility opened up by the end of the Cold War. Watching the dissolution of the Soviet Union and later Yugoslavia was an exhilarating sight for them. As Rothbard (2000e: 8) wrote at the time, “it was a particularly wonderful thing to see unfolding before our very eyes, the death of a state.” It proved simultaneously that polities were impermanent and that cultural homogeneity was the only viable principle for social organization. The goal, as Rothbard put it, was to “repeal the twentieth century” (20). When Hoppe (1993: 23) pointed out that in the year 1000 “Europe consisted of thousands of independent territorial units,” the goal became even more radical: to repeal the millennium.
After Rothbard’s death in 1995, the alliance between right-libertarianism and the self-described “race realists” was carried by the Mises Institute and, since 2006, by Hoppe’s Property and Freedom Society (PFS). Hoppe (2010) established the PFS as the “international spearhead” of an “anti-statist counterculture” in the hope of displacing the MPS. He sought to claim the legacy of the Austrian neoliberals, citing Mises in the mission statement and, at the society’s inaugural meeting, repeating Hayek’s often-quoted words: “We must make the building of a free society once more an intellectual adventure, a deed of courage. What we lack is a liberal Utopia” (Kinsella 2009). Since 2006, the PFS has hosted key figures in the Alt Right and so-called academic racist movement, including Jared Taylor, “human biodiversity” theorist and journalist Steve Sailer, VDARE publisher and anti-immigration extremist Peter Brimelow, and racialist psychologist Richard Lynn. Richard Spencer himself gave the lead-off speech at the 2010 meeting on the topic of the movement whose name he helped coin two years earlier: “the alternative Right in America.” Hoppe constitutes what one scholar calls “the most important bridge between libertarianism and the Alt-Right” (Hawley 2017).

Hoppe’s heterodox strain of neoliberal thought combines race theory with a program of voluntary political secession, unconditional free trade, and privatization of all built and natural resources in a so-called private law society. Democracy is not to be constrained, as in the model of James M. Buchanan, Hayek, or Friedman, but eliminated altogether (Biebricher 2019; Slobodian 2018b). A meme from online message boards gives shape to the political imaginary of the PFS. It shows Rothbard, Hoppe, and Mises in the style of the Alt Right icon Pepe the Frog in front of the gold and black anarcho-capitalist flag (fig. 1). Hoppe carries a machine gun in reference to the implication of violence in a much-reproduced statement in one of his texts that “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” (Hoppe 2001: 218). The assault rifle, a symbol of armed resistance associated since the 1960s with anticolonial liberation movements and Ultra Left armed resistance, is repurposed as a symbol of right-wing libertarian intolerance.

**Conclusion**

To right-wing libertarians, the most harmful legacy of 1968 is the principle of human equality. Speaking at the PFS in 2017, Hoppe said that libertarians must “recognize from the outset, as the Alt Right does, the inequality not just of individuals but also of different cultures as an ineradicable datum of the human existence.” He condemned “the destruction of all natural . . . social bonds or institutions such as families, communities, ethnic groups and genealogically related nations, so as to create an increasingly atomized populace whose only shared characteristic is its
common existential dependency on the state.” Hoppe saw the primary beneficiaries of the system as “women, and in particular single mothers, blacks, browns, Latinos, homosexuals, lesbians, bi and transsexuals . . . awarded victim status and accorded legal privileges through non-discriminatory or affirmative action decrees.” To unwind their putative privilege, he calls for the end to affirmative action and the shuttering of all “university departments for black, Latino, women, gender and queer studies.” Echoing his mentor Rothbard’s (2000d: 41) proposal from 1992 to “get rid of the bums” and “unleash the cops,” Hoppe (2017) said that the “anti-fascist mob” must be “beaten into submission.”

Hoppe’s variety of violently exclusionary libertarianism is extreme. Yet even more moderate forms of cultural Austrian ideology have found a place on the right in opposition to the legacy of 1968. In Austria itself, the head of the Hayek Institute, Barbara Kolm, is an expert for the Freedom Party, whose interior minister has called for a “countermovement” to 1968 (Sprenger 2018). The Hayek Society in Germany split in 2015, leaving many right-wing neoliberals with ties to the Far Right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in the organization, including the party’s parliamentary leader, Alice Weidel, a staunch opponent of Muslim immigration (Slobodian 2018a). Opposition to 1968, as one journalist observes, is what holds the AfD together (J. C. 2017). Understanding the turn of many neoliberals to both culture and race in the wake of 1968 is necessary to avoid simplistic oppositions of populism and globalism and caricatures of neoliberals as one-dimensional market fundamentalists.

The lesson of 1968 for neoliberals was that if the Left would speak the language of equality, they would rediscover the language of difference.

Note
1. Full rosters of all conferences are available on their website (www.propertyandfreedom.org).

References


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