

Mises: An Annotated Bibliography: A Comprehensive Listing of Books and Articles by and About Ludwig von Mises

Compiled by Bettina Bien Greaves and Robert W. McGee
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Reviewed by Israel M. Kirzner

This is, quite simply, an extraordinary work. The reference, in its title, to an "annotated bibliography," is grossly, al-

most laughably, inadequate as a description of it. Even its subtitle fails to convey its phenomenal and fascinating scope. This book not only provides a "comprehensive listing" of relevant material; it provides in most cases, excerpts from, or succinct characterizations of, the material referred to. This has resulted in an encyclopedic treasurehouse of materials and information regarding Mises, his works, and the reactions of hundreds upon hundreds of reviewers and authors to his ideas and his writings. Dozens of future doctoral dissertations could be planned based on the wealth of information and bibliographical citations included here, covering sources spanning some 80 years and translated from many languages. As a bibliographical compilation this is utterly unique. Its compilers richly deserve doctorates of their own for the scholarship and indefatigable research which this work so obviously reflects.

Some of the material included here (for example, the full translations of a number of the reviews—including one by Knut Wicksell—of Mises' 1912 first German edition of *The Theory of Money and Credit*) will be extremely valuable for the historian of economic thought. Many of the excerpted reviews of the early editions of Mises' *Socialism* provide fascinating insights into the interwar mentality on the topic. It is certainly not surprising to read that as ardent a socialist as Harold Laski described Mises' book as an "extravagant and often ignorant diatribe" (p. 162). It is an eye-opener to read that as eminent an economist as Frank Knight dismissed the entire debate concerning economic calculation as "largely sound and fury," declaring that "Socialism is a political problem . . . and economic theory has relatively little to say about it" (p. 162). Some of the material provides arresting (often wry) commentary on personal aspects of Mises and his relations with other scholars. For example, one reads (on p. 253) with a certain fascination, University of Vienna Professor Hans Mayer's tribute to Mises on his 70th birthday, bearing in mind Mises' own description of Mayer as having preoccupied himself, during Mises' years at

the University of Vienna "with mischievous intrigues against me (*Notes and Recollections*, p. 94)." Among so many thousands of pieces of information—the index contains more than 2,500 entries—certain parallels and contrasts pop out, adding to the interest of the volume. (As an example: A passage cited [on p. 322] from a German-language 1974 book by Engel-Janosi concerning Mises' openness in his famed *Privatseminar*, to the articulation of opposing views, seems to be a *verbatim* parallel to a 1973 German-language newspaper article by M. Steffy Browne, cited on p. 311.)

If the bibliography of Mises' own works is spectacularly exhaustive (going far beyond that outstandingly valuable earlier bibliography compiled by Bettina Bien Greaves and published by The Foundation for Economic Education in 1970), it is the "listing" of books and articles about Mises (going only up to 1982—while the book reviews include items from later years) which is most extraordinary. Certainly no economist has ever before been accorded this kind of attention. Listed are not only books and articles about Mises, but books and articles in which the *slightest* reference to Mises is made. One can only marvel at the detective work that must have gone into the tracking down of such references in unpublished doctoral dissertations (as on pp. 325, 332, 349, 355, 371), in the autobiography of a priest (p. 347), in a letter to *Business Week* (p. 324), or in a 1981 Spanish-language Buenos Aires article arguing that Mises' views do not contradict those of Aquinas (p. 381).

I would be less than candid if I did not register my fear that the inclusion of many references (for example those to somewhat repetitious laudatory assessments of Mises at special commemorative occasions, or those to rather trivial comments, or those which appeared in obscure, ephemeral publications) may lead the critical outside reader to dismiss the entire volume as a pious exercise in hagiography. This would be most unfortunate and quite unfair. Although the inspiring and utterly splendid loyalty of Bettina Bien Greaves to Ludwig

von Mises shines through this work, she and Professor McGee have bent over backwards to include the negative (often outrageous!) comments of the critics of Mises, as well as the praise of Mises' admirers. Certainly this work valuably records the reactions of hundreds of writers to the work of Mises, the champion of liberty. But its lasting scholarly value lies in its being an important, objective, and remarkably researched source concerning Mises, the eminent economic theorist.

I confidently expect that many of us will be consulting this wonderful volume again and again. Bettina Bien Greaves, Robert McGee, and The Foundation for Economic Education are to be warmly congratulated on this valuable contribution to the growing Mises literature. As the value of Mises' own contributions to economic understanding will come to be more and more widely recognized in the years to come, the significance of the patient and dedicated research which culminated in this work will be sure to increase correspondingly—and to be correspondingly appreciated. □

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