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LIBERTARIANISM, MONARCHISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF THEIR (IN)COMPATIBILITY

A b s t r a c t

In this paper, I explain why Hans-Hermann Hoppe's advocacy of monarchy poses some theoretical and practical challenges to libertarianism. By definition, libertarianism (anarcho-capitalism) opposes the existence of the state as such. However, Hoppe presents conditional support for this type of regime, especially in comparison to democracy. This view seems surprising not only when compared to the core assumptions of libertarianism, but also to the ideological tradition from which this political philosophy originated. In this paper, I would like to consider the possible aporias arising from the attempt to reconcile monarchy with anarcho-capitalist political philosophy and try to show the proper meaning of libertarian monarchy. In the article, I also explain the connection between support for the monarchy and the problem of political strategy, i.e. the way in which libertarian philosophy presupposes the achievement of its demands. In this perspective, monarchy turns out to be merely an element of Hoppe's postulated delegitimisation strategy.

K e y w o r d s: libertarianism, monarchism, state, monarchy, Hans-Hermann Hoppe.

INTRODUCTION

Libertarianism[1] and monarchism seem to be contradictory ideas. As we know, anarcho-capitalist libertarianism rejects the institution of the state as 'an inherently illegitimate institution of organized

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[1] For the sake of clarity and coherence in the following sections of the article, unless otherwise indicated, the term 'libertarianism' will refer only to its most consistent and radical form, namely anarcho-capitalism.

aggression'.[2] Therefore, for libertarians (anarcho-capitalists), whether the state is a democracy or a monarchy seems to be secondary as long as a state exists at all. Libertarianism thus advocates the abolition of the state as an institution responsible for continuous and fundamentally immoral violations of private property and, by implication, individual liberties. However, in the political philosophy of one of the leading libertarians, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, we find a distinctive and, in fact, positive stance towards monarchy. Among libertarian thinkers, Hoppe is the theorist who has clearly, though conditionally, expressed his support for monarchy. This position is peculiar in that neither Hoppe's mentor, Murray Rothbard, nor other contemporary influential libertarian philosophers have ever identified themselves as supporters of monarchy. Furthermore, Ludwig von Mises, who was an important thinker for both the Austrian school of economics and libertarian political philosophy, declared his support for democracy, which contradicts the theory developed by Hoppe.[3]

The problem of the compatibility or incompatibility of monarchism with libertarianism is rarely addressed in the literature and is largely disregarded in works on general libertarian doctrine.[4] Furthermore, previous critical studies on the subject predominantly come from an insider perspective within libertarianism.[5] In this article, my focus

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[2] Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), p. 187.

[3] Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism. An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 72–76; idem, *Liberalism in the Classical Tradition* (Auburn, AL: Mises Institute, 2018), pp. 39–42. Cf. Dawid Megger, 'Krytyczna analiza obrony demokracji w filozofii społecznej Ludwiga von Misesa', *Pro Fide Rege et Lege* 80: 2, 2018, pp. 73–82.

[4] Jan Narveson, *The Libertarian Idea* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001); Jason Brennan, *Libertarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); David Boaz, *The Libertarian Mind: A Manifesto for Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015); Magdalena Modrzejewska, *Libertariańskie koncepcje jednostki i państwa we współczesnej amerykańskiej myśli politycznej* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010); Dorota Sepczyńska, *Libertarianizm. Mało znane dzieje pojęcia zakończone próbą definicji* (Olsztyn: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie, 2013); Dariusz Juruś, *W poszukiwaniu podstaw libertarianizmu. W perspektywie Rothbardowskiej koncepcji własności* (Cracow: Księgarnia Akademicka: 2012); Jacek Bartyzel, *W gąszczu liberalizmów. Próba periodyzacji i klasyfikacji* (Lublin: Fundacja Servire Veritati, 2012). Cf. the recent work by Matt Zwolinski and John Tomasi, in which they characterise Hoppe's thought as a 'peculiar strand of contemporary libertarianism' which 'argues that monarchy would be a superior form of government'. They link Hoppe's position on monarchy to the contemporary American alt-right movement. Matt Zwolinski and John Tomasi, *The Individualists: Radicals, Reactionaries, and the Struggle for the Soul of Libertarianism* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2023), p. 335.

[5] Jacek Sierpiński, 'A Critique of Hans-Hermann Hoppe's Thesis on Lesser Harmfulness of Monarchy than Democracy', *Res Publica. Revista de Historia de las Ideas Políticas* 19: 2, 2016, pp. 521–59, https://doi.org/10.5209/RPUB.53878; Norbert Slenzok,

is on exploring the aforementioned problem through the lens of libertarianism as a political ideology. In this regard, gaining a deeper understanding of the rationales behind Hoppe's endorsement of monarchy can contribute to advancing our knowledge of libertarian thought. It is important to note that this actual or perceived incompatibility between libertarian orthodoxy and Hoppe's proposition requires reflection from the perspective of libertarian political philosophy as well.

The problem of libertarian monarchy raises a number of questions. After all, how can the idea of an anarcho-capitalist order, i.e. an order based on a system of private property, a seemingly apolitical system *par excellence*, be reconciled with the existence of a monarchy, which is a political system? Does the moral conditional approval of monarchy imply a conditional endorsement of the state? If so, how would this understanding of anarcho-capitalism differ from minarchism, which advocates for a minimal state? Furthermore, it raises questions about the author's intentions in promoting such views. Could there be a conscious inconsistency at play? Is support for anarcho-capitalism a strategic position, while support for monarchy a tactical one? Alternatively, is libertarian monarchism merely an exoteric form of political philosophy, serving as a myth or element of propaganda without being taken seriously by the philosopher himself?[6]

The aim of this article is to examine and analyse the concept of monarchy within the anarcho-capitalist libertarianism, focusing on the perspective of a prominent libertarian figure such as Hans-Hermann Hoppe.[7] Hoppe's stance on monarchy distinguishes him from other libertarians, making his viewpoint a subject of particular interest. In this article, I argue that his position on monarchy is based on two assumptions that are not derived from the political philosophy of

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'Hansa-Hermanna Hoppego libertariańska rehabilitacja monarchii. Analiza metodologiczna', *Societas et Ius* 5, 2016, pp. 111–32.

[6]   Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952); Ralph Lerner, *Playing the Fool. Subversive Laughter in Troubled Times* (Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[7]   Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *Democracy: The God that Failed. The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001); idem, *The Economics and Ethics of Private Property Studies in Political Economy and Philosophy*, 2nd edn (Auburn, AL: Mises Institute, 2006); idem, *A Short History of Man. Progress and Decline. An Austro-Libertarian Reconstruction* (Auburn, AL: Mises Institute, 2015); idem, *A Theory of Socialism and Capitalism*, 2nd edn (Auburn, AL: Mises Institute, 2016); idem, *Getting Libertarianism Right* (Auburn, AL: Mises Institute, 2018); idem, *The Great Fiction. Property, Economy, Society, and the Politics of Decline*, 2nd exp. edn (Auburn, AL: Mises Institute, 2021).

libertarianism itself: historical revisionism and time preference theory. It is these assumptions that underlie his critical attitude towards democracy, his nostalgic sentiment towards the era of monarchy, and his argument that monarchy, historically and universally, is superior to democracy. This argument is rooted in a revisionist interpretation of history and an *a priori* social theory.

In his theory of monarchy, Hoppe confronts the challenge of reconciling unorthodox libertarian assertions with the fundamental principles of libertarianism. As I argue in this article, the solution that he offers is inherently incoherent. This incoherence manifests itself not only at the methodological level, as has previously been recognised in literature, but also within the programmatic or doctrinal framework. In this article, my focus goes beyond the theoretical accuracy of Hoppe's statements, to their practical coherence in relation to planned political action. I believe Hoppe's ideas should be evaluated from the perspective of their planned political strategy. While libertarianism has not shied away from formulating instructions to address the question of 'what to do', it has not yet established a unified and coherent vision of a political strategy. This inconsistency is obvious in Hoppe's position on monarchy. It is unquestionable that for anarcho-capitalists, implementing a private--property order should be a strategic objective. However, whether the tactical pursuit of monarchy at the expense of democracy is a viable approach remains a topic of debate.

In this paper, I also explore the relationship between support for monarchy and political strategy, i.e. the way in which libertarian philosophy implies the achievement of its political goals. From this perspective, monarchy seems to be merely an element of Hoppe's delegitimisation strategy of democracy. In this article, I would like to consider the possible aporias resulting from the attempt to reconcile monarchy with an anarcho-capitalist political philosophy and to clarify the true sense of the idea of a libertarian monarchy.

LIBERTARIANISM AND MONARCHISM.
AN OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM

Monarchism can be understood—according to Jacek Bartyzel——both as an idea, a view, a subjective feeling of love and reverence for a crowned ruler or dynasty, and as a set of theories and doctrines

that praise monarchy.[8] Monarchism can also be understood more generally as 'a belief in the necessity or desirability of monarchy'.[9] Thus, monarchism presupposes the existence of a ruler and also of a political authority or state, even if it is of a very limited nature.[10]

In contrast, libertarianism in the anarcho-capitalist version is a doctrine or political philosophy that strongly rejects the state and advocates for a social order based on private property in its place.[11] For libertarians, the existence of the state constitutes a gross violation of liberty and private property, specifically the property rights over the bodies and belongings of its citizens. The libertarian position is based on two fundamental principles, the non-aggression principle and the self-ownership principle.[12] Both principles are ultimately intended to create an ethical-legal system that follows from *a priori* claims about the property of the moral subject. In libertarian political philosophy, it is assumed that these principles are indisputable and that claims contrary to them risk falling into a 'performative contradiction'.[13] Thus, one cannot rationally argue that people do not, for example, have a right to their own bodies, because by arguing in this way one is exercising one's exclusive property in the organ of speech and the body in general. For libertarians, then, the state is essentially an aggressor, a 'criminal', permanently and immanently violating both principles. The very existence of the state is based on its failure to respect the rights of individuals. Reconciling libertarianism with the presence of the state seems impossible. Such a view, which considers

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[8]   Jacek Bartyzel, 'Monarchizm', in idem, Bogdan Szlachta and Adam Wielomski, eds, *Encyklopedia Polityczna*, vol. 1: *Myśl polityczna: Główne pojęcia, doktryny i formy ustroju* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2007), p. 238.

[9]   Iain McLean, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 326.

[10]   Against such a definition of monarchy, the objection could be raised that, prior to the formation of the modern state, hereditary monarchies were pre-state monarchies in which rulers were no different from other private owners. The Hoppean defence of monarchy would then apply only to pre-state monarchies, and only later, state-identical monarchies would be the subject of libertarian criticism. Hoppe, however, makes no such clear distinction. His support for monarchy, based on historical revisionism and time preference theory, does not presuppose such a distinction. It seems that, for Hoppe, any hereditary monarchy would be preferable to democracy.

[11]   Cf. Paweł Nowakowski, 'Anarchokapitalizm – ideologia polityczna, doktryna polityczno-prawna czy nurt filozoficzno-polityczny?', *Societas et Ius* 5, 2016, pp. 31–46, https://doi.org/10.12775/SEI.2016.003.

[12]   Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*; Hoppe, *Democracy*. Cf. Łukasz Dominiak, 'Problem aksjomatyczności zasady autowłasności w filozofii politycznej libertarianizmu', *Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne* 49, 2016, pp. 42–64.

[13]   Hoppe, *Democracy*. Cf. Norbert Slenzok, 'Od transcendentalnej pragmatyki języka do libertariańskiej etyki argumentacyjnej', *Eryda* 3: 1, 2016, pp. 59–82, https://doi.org/10.12775/DP.2018.006.

the state's existence to be minimally necessary, is adopted by another variant of libertarian political philosophy, namely minarchism. As already noted, the moral and legal order advocated by libertarians (anarcho-capitalists) is a complete negation of the state order, for it is supposed to be a social order based exclusively on private property. This means that any state, even a limited one, cannot exist under such conditions. Anarcho-capitalists differ on this fundamental point from the minarchists, proponents of the minimal state, whose most famous representative was Robert Nozick.[14]

Libertarianism, following Rothbard, rejects two alternative (to private) solutions to the problem of self-ownership. One is slavery, which presupposes the existence of a class that owns a subordinate class. The other is communism, or universal mutual ownership of all people. Rothbard rejects both solutions as incompatible with natural law, unjust as well as inefficient and anti-civilisational.[15] The existence of the state does not by definition necessarily imply slavery or communism, but the constant violation of private property is a denial and violation of the idea of private property. The state claims rights to something to which it has no moral right. Anarcho--capitalist libertarianism is uncompromising on this point and this is particularly evident in the polemics its proponents have with minarchist arguments.

Anarcho-capitalism rejects the minarchists' claim that the state can arise and exist without violating natural rights.[16] Nozick's claims were disputed by Rothbard, leaving no hope of reconciling the two positions. He believed that Nozick's philosophy of the state would have to be verified by the introduction of an anarchic system, but even then the minarchist assumptions would not prove correct.[17] Rothbard strongly rejected the minarchist idea of the 'immaculate conception' of the state through the influence of the 'invisible hand'.

As we can see, libertarianism makes a clear distinction between its vision of a desirable social order and possible alternatives. Since libertarians reject alternative forms of social order and do not accept even limited forms of violations of private property by the state, the

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[14] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Basic Books, 1974).

[15] Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*, pp. 45–46.

[16] Łukasz Dominiak and Igor Wysocki, 'The Anarcho-Capitalist Case Against the State as a Challenge to the Minarchist Libertarians', *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 70: 2, 2022, pp. 53–69, https://doi.org/10.18290/rf2202.4.

[17] Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*, pp. 231–53.

question must be asked whether and why it is possible to support monarchy in libertarian political philosophy.

Hoppe supports monarchy, but does not declare himself a monarchist. In a key passage of his most important work he states:

> Despite the comparatively favorable portrait presented of monarchy, I am not a monarchist and the following [*Democracy: The God that Failed*—Ł.Ś.] is not a defense of monarchy. Instead, the position taken toward monarchy is this: *If* [ed. Hoppe] one must have a state, defined as an agency that exercises a compulsory territorial monopoly of ultimate decisionmaking (jurisdiction) and of taxation, then it is economically and ethically advantageous to choose monarchy over democracy.[18]

An endorsement of the monarchy is therefore conditional and a kind of 'lesser evil' compared to an endorsement of democracy.

The opposition between monarchy and democracy is a distinctive feature of Hoppe's political thought. As a proponent of anarcho--capitalism, Hoppe is not a monarchist in the traditional sense. He advocates monarchy primarily because of all the disadvantages of democracy. For him, monarchy is nothing more than a rule of a single person based on private property. The obvious association of this view with patrimonial monarchy does not seem to exhaust all the possibilities that the libertarian concept actually envisages. For, in a sense, it can be said that monarchy is not only royal rule (where we have a ruler and his subjects), but any 'rule' of a private owner who exercises his 'sovereignty'. Let us add that in Hoppe's conception, such ideas as the divine right of kings or the principles of succession to the throne, which are so important to conservatives, are of no relevance at all. Such ideas are here secularised and reduced to the question of property.[19] Before going further into Hoppe's analysis of the conditional endorsement of monarchy, it is necessary to analyse two assumptions that do not come from the political philosophy of libertarianism itself—historical revisionism and time preference theory. For it is on these, and not on the non-aggression principle and the principle of self-ownership, that Hoppe's positive attitude towards the monarchy is based.

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[18] Hoppe, *Democracy*, p. xx.
[19] Carl Schmitt, *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984); idem, *Politische Theologie. Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009).

HISTORICAL REVISIONISM:
DEMOCRATISATION AS A PROCESS OF DECLINE

In today's Western world, democracy, particularly liberal democracy, is widely regarded as the standard political system. It is acknowledged that power stems from the people and is exercised on their behalf by those who govern. Democracy is regarded as a non-alternative regime,[20] not only because of its advantages but also despite its evident disadvantages (W. Churchill). Authoritarian regimes or countries with democratic deficits are condemned both by the international community and internally face the challenge of maintaining government legitimacy. In short, societies have a democratic political consciousness, regardless of the variations in understanding and interpretation of the term among different societies, influenced by historical or cultural factors. Democracy is a crucial part of the ideological identity of the West and is instrumental in defining the group of countries that identify themselves as Western. Democracy is currently and historically associated with positive values, with the 20th century being portrayed as a period of conflict between democracy and non-democratic systems, with the former ultimately emerging victorious. Hoppe challenges the prevailing view and, like a political heretic, rejects the positive connotations associated with democracy. He not only revises contemporary perspectives on democracy but also reassesses recent history. In his words:

> From the vantage point of elementary economic theory and in light of historical evidence, then, a revisionist view of modern history results. The Whig theory of history, according to which mankind marches continually forward toward ever higher levels of progress, is incorrect.[21]

Hoppe assumes the role of a historical revisionist, aiming to portray the history of the 20th century not as a period of development and civilisational progress, but as one of regression and decline. According to his viewpoint, the First World War marks the beginning of a 'process of decivilization' which brings 'the transformation of the entire Western world from monarchical rule and sovereign kings to democratic-republican rule and sovereign people'.[22]

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[20] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
[21] Hoppe, *Democracy*, p. 69.
[22] Ibid., p. ix.

The situation brought about by the end of the First World War is described by Hoppe as follows:

> Hence, the defeated Romanovs, Hohenzollerns, and Habsburgs had to abdicate or resign, and Russia, Germany, and Austria became democratic republics with universal—male and female—suffrage and parliamentary governments. Likewise, all of the newly created successor states—Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia adopted democratic-republican constitutions, with Yugoslavia as the only exception. In Turkey and Greece, the monarchies were overthrown. And even where monarchies remained in existence, as in Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries, monarchs no longer exercised any governmental power. Everywhere, universal adult suffrage was introduced, and all government power was invested in parliaments and 'public' officials. A new era—the democratic-republican age under the aegis of a dominating U.S. Government—had begun.[23]

At first glance, Hoppe's account of events may not seem controversial. However, Hoppe is critical of the triumph of democracy, which he sees as synonymous with the decline of European monarchies. Where monarchy remains, it no longer resembles the historical concept of monarchy. Indeed, power no longer rests with a particular dynasty, but with elected parliamentarians and civil servants. According to Hoppe, a constitutional monarchy cannot be considered a true monarchy since the real locus of power lies within parliament or government. Austria occupies a central position in this libertarian thinker's reflections. It is noteworthy that, as he points out, the title of his most important book could easily be *An Austrian Perspective on the American Age*.[24] He thus refers to the Austrian school of economics but also to the intellectual and cultural heritage of the country in which that school was born.

Hoppe characterises the process of political transformation triggered by the aftermath of the First World War as a shift from the 'Austrian system' to the 'American system'. In his view, Austria and America represent distinct systemic solutions, with Austria being a monarchy and America a democracy. From this perspective, the First World War was not merely a conventional conflict but, in Hoppe's words, an 'ideological war' in which 'Austria and America respectively were (and were perceived as such by the contending parties) the two countries that most clearly embodied the ideas in conflict with each other'.[25]

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[23] Ibid., pp. 41–42.
[24] Ibid., p. xxii.
[25] Ibid., p. x.

Hoppe presents a revised or even revisionist perspective on history, with a particular focus on the process of centralisation of political power, which he views negatively. He argues that the current dominance of democratic governments, positioning themselves as the sole political model, is the outcome of an ideology that sees democracy as a moral imperative. According to Hoppe, the influence of this ideology began with the First World War, which was essentially an ideological conflict between the USA and Europe (specifically Austria--Hungary) representing different ideas. This war, coupled with the ideologised notion of democracy, initiated 'the transformation of the entire Western world from monarchical rule and sovereign kings to democratic-republican rule and sovereign people'.[26] Hoppe sees this shift from monarchy to democracy as a civilisational decline.

TIME PREFERENCE THEORY

In his analysis of monarchy, Hoppe uses the theory of time preference.[27] While this theory is not normative in its character, serving merely as a description of certain rules that govern the economic behaviour of individuals, the resulting implications are normative. Time preference refers to an individual's tendency to prioritise present goods over future goods, a consequence of the limited nature of time as a resource. Under natural circumstances, individuals choose to consume goods in the present rather than in the future. For instance, they prefer to eat a meal now rather than in a few or several hours, thus delaying consumption in time. Of course, individuals show different degrees of time preference. Some, such as children, are unable to delay consumption. Conversely, adults or people on a diet will only consume a meal at a time of their choosing. Hoppe associates low time preference with a focus on capital accumulation, investment and the growth of both the individual and civilisation as a whole. High time preference, on the other hand, favours immediate consumption, thereby preventing both individual and societal progress. Hoppe argues that high time preference is characteristic not only of children but also of undisciplined adults, immature individuals and criminals.[28]

In a monarchy and in a democracy, the rulers of the two systems behave very differently due to their time preference. In a democracy,

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[26] Ibid., p. ix.
[27] Cf. ibid., ch. 1 & 2.
[28] Ibid., p. 1–43.

those in power are subject to the logic of general elections. They are aware that the exercise of power is temporary and that its extension through subsequent elections is not certain. The acquisition and maintenance of power is based on a specific electoral logic in which redistribution is a key element.[29] Redistribution, in turn, leads to an increase in time preferences and thus to 'a self-accelerating process of decivilization'.[30]

In a monarchy, on the other hand, there is no tendency to continually increase public expenditure and, consequently, taxes. This is because the ruler is not subject to the logic of universal suffrage. His power derives from the principle of heredity, which is at odds with democracy. Therefore, he is not obligated to respond to his electorate and, consequently, to increase public spending in order to gain or maintain his legitimacy in the exercise of power. The ruler does not stimulate a high time preference among his subjects. The structural conditions of monarchy also incline the ruler to exhibit low time preference. For Hoppe, a monarch's power is a 'private government' and the 'head of state' is simply a private owner like any other.[31] In this sense, his behaviour is characterised by a focus on the future. He is concerned not only with preserving his power but also with maintaining and consolidating the line of succession, leaving a favourable image of the monarchy (so that his successors are not in a worse position than he was) and securing the wealth that his descendants will possess. The ruler knows (or should know) that his power must be somewhat limited—especially compared to the scope of power held by elected rulers in a democracy—because crossing an invisible threshold can lead to his downfall and the collapse of the dynasty.[32]

As we can see, the theory of time preference has implications for both the rulers themselves and their subjects. In the case of monarchy, subjects under a constrained state (such as a private government like monarchy) will not be structurally subjected to an influence that would lead to an increase in their time preference. It can therefore be assumed that, in the absence of this state influence, the rate of time preference will naturally evolve undistorted and will generally be low,

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[29] Ibid., p. 29.

[30] Ibid., p. 30.

[31] Cf. Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr., 'A Life of Ideas', in Jörg Guido Hülsmann and Sthephan Kinsella, eds, *Property, Freedom, Society. Essays in Honor of Hans-Hermann Hoppe* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2009), p. 5.

[32] Cf. Hoppe, *Democracy*, ch. 2.

disregarding individual factors. In a democracy, however, the situation is different. The expansion of the democratic state means that people are put in a position where they have to choose between producing or benefiting from the fruits of others' labour, and they tend to lean towards the latter. Productivity falls, people become less self-reliant, and less future-oriented. Redistribution therefore does not solve social problems (as is often claimed), but rather exacerbates them.

The longstanding maintenance and stimulation of high time preference in democracy has led to various consequences. As Hoppe notes:

> [...] as regards civil society, the institutions of marriage and family have been increasingly weakened, the number of children has declined, and the rates of divorce, illegitimacy, single parenthood, singledom, and abortion have increased [...] In comparison to the nineteenth century, the cognitive prowess of the political and intellectual elites and the quality of public education have declined. And the rates of crime, structural unemployment, welfare dependency, parasitism, negligence, recklessness, incivility, psychopathy, and hedonism have increased.[33]

Hoppe does not hold back in his criticism of democracy, which undoubtedly puts him in line with conservative and right-wing critics of this system.[34] His condemnation of democracy implies that monarchy, as a superior system to democracy, would avoid such negative social phenomena. This is the unspoken argument in favour of monarchy. Consequently, the application of the concept of time preference leads to two remarkable results. First, it provides a fascinating analysis of the behaviour of individuals, including the monarch and his subjects, as well as the rulers and the ruled in a democracy. Secondly, it strongly supports the negative assessment of democracy by associating it with pathological behaviour and, from a broader perspective, with the decivilisation process described by Hoppe. In this view, monarchy appears to be largely free of the critical objections raised by the theory of time preference in relation to democracy. Moreover, monarchy emerges as a system of political moderation. Hoppe argues that the monarch's low time preference has several positive consequences for state policy.

The issue of Hoppe's justification of monarchy based on the concept of time preference has been criticised in the literature. Jacek Sierpiński has devoted a separate study to examining this problem,

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[33] Ibid., pp. 42–43.
[34] Cf. Zwolinski and Tomasi, *The Individualists*, p. 335.

focusing on historical arguments. Sierpiński aims to evaluate Hoppe's theory of monarchy by examining actual cases from the past. This type of criticism may seem unjustified given Hoppe's apriorism in social theory. However, it is worth acknowledging the arguments that question the validity of the claim that monarchs have a lower time preference than politicians in a democracy. Sierpiński argues that this assumption alone is not sufficient to conclude that monarchy violates property rights to a lesser extent than democracy and contributes to the process of decivilisation.[35]

HOPPE'S CONDITIONAL MONARCHISM

Both critical revisionist historiography and time preference theory lead Hoppe to conclude that monarchy is a superior system to democracy. In the previous discussion we examined the arguments Hoppe uses to support his thesis. Our focus should now shift to understanding the nature and extent of Hoppe's support for monarchy, in particular the conditions under which he supports it. Hoppe's approval for monarchy seems to stem primarily from his belief that democracy is a significantly inferior system.[36] Given the choice between monarchy and democracy, and given the unlikelihood of an anarcho-capitalist order being achieved in the near future, Hoppe leans towards the former. But can this kind of argument be considered valid? Would we treat with the same seriousness a liberal who argued for the superiority of authoritarianism over totalitarianism solely on the basis of the absence of a democratic--liberal system? How would we view an anarchist who supports the idea of a minimal state simply because the chances of achieving the desired vision are slim? Similarly, what would we judge a Marxist who opts for a parliamentary route to social change?

For a historian of political thought, it is worth noting that a positive assessment of the monarchy does not appear in Hoppe's earlier works. It is only in his most famous book that he presents a critique of democracy and a defence of monarchy as a superior system in the light of libertarian principles[37]. This fact alone suggests that monarchy plays a relatively minor role in Hoppe's developed political philosophy.

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[35] Sierpiński, 'A Critique of Hans-Hermann Hoppe's Thesis', p. 559.
[36] Hoppe, *Democracy*, p. xx.
[37] Ibid. Cf. idem, *A Short History of Man*.

It is safe to assume that Hoppe is not ideologically aligned with monarchism. On the basis of his writings, it is clear that monarchism had no significance for him prior to the publication of *Democracy: The God That Failed*. Hoppe distances himself from monarchism, presumably to avoid being associated with the traditional notion of monarchism.

Hoppe's endorsement of monarchy is conditional. Libertarians should recognise that both monarchy and democracy are state regimes that inherently involve institutionalised violations of property rights. These regimes involve a political authority (government) that has a territorial monopoly on violating property rights. According to Hoppe, every government seeks to expand its power and income, and thus poses a threat to the process of civilisation. This includes monarchies. However, Hoppe recognises that different regimes contribute to the process of decivilisation to different degrees.

According to Hoppe, the monarchical system is considered the closest to the natural social order due to historical factors. He points out that the origins of political life lie not in democracy but in a form of personal power, namely monarchy. Hoppe argues that in every society there are individuals whose talents set them apart from the rest and who form an elite. They are valued for their wealth, wisdom, or bravery, and their opinions and judgments carry weight. Ordinary people naturally turn to the elite to resolve disputes, looking to the distinguished members of the nobility as judges and arbiters. These individuals offer their services out of a sense of morality and a need for justice, rather than economic or political motives. With such authority, the elite may seek to establish a monopoly on violence in a given territory by monopolising judicial services and law enforcement.[38] However, the risk of monopolisation is more closely associated with monarchy. Hoppe does not indicate whether the spontaneous order he describes could have halted its development at the stage of an aristocratic form of government.

Monarchy arises from the natural development of the elite. But this is not the only way in which monarchy arises, as Hoppe sees it. Monarchy can also arise from conquest, which Hoppe recognises but does not explore in his apologia for monarchy. For this kind of monarchy would be based on violence and therefore fundamentally immoral. By contrast, the natural and spontaneous development of

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[38] Cf. idem, *Democracy*, p. 72.

personal power seems, in Hoppe's view, 'immaculately conceived' until the king begins to usurp the right to settle disputes, which the German thinker sees as the source of the degeneration of this type of regime.

In his analytical reflections on the foundations of monarchy, Hoppe speculates philosophically without basing his theory on solid historical ground, as his critics have already noted.[39] The monarchy he considers is more like a model or an ideal type in the Weberian sense.[40] But is it merely a system to be used as a point of reference for criticising actual systems (above all democracy), or is it also part of a political programme?

For Hoppe, monarchy is certainly not an ideal system, as anarcho-capitalism represents that ideal. In what I consider to be a key passage in his reflections, the German thinker admits: 'monarchies, whatever their relative merits, do exploit and do contribute to present-orientedness as well'.[41] Monarchy is not a hybrid system combining features of an anarcho-capitalist order and a state order. If, according to Hoppe, the state is a monopoly of coercion and final decision, and monopoly means that entry into the market is prevented for any competitors, then monarchy—and we are talking about hereditary monarchy—is a state system that meets this definition.

Hoppe's critique of the state also applies to the monarchy. After all, the monarch has a monopoly of final decisions, and this means that he 'does not just produce less and lower-quality justice, but also generates more and more "bads", i.e., injustice and aggression'.[42] In a key passage, Hoppe makes it clear that 'the choice between monarchy and democracy concerns a choice between two defective social orders'.[43] Therefore, in answer to the above question, it must be stated that for Hoppe monarchy is a state system and therefore incompatible with the basic principles of the anarcho-capitalist order, just as democracy is. It can undoubtedly serve as a point of reference for the critique of existing regimes, especially democracy. But can it be an element of a political strategy?

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[39] Sierpiński, 'A Critique of Hans-Hermann Hoppe's Thesis'.
[40] Slenzok, 'Hansa-Hermanna Hoppego libertariańska rehabilitacja monarchii'.
[41] Hoppe, *Democracy*, p. 71.
[42] Ibid., p. xx.
[43] Ibid.

MONARCHY AND THE PROBLEM OF LIBERTARIAN POLITICAL STRATEGY

Libertarianism is often criticised for being a utopian philosophy that lacks practical elements, with the implementation of its principles appearing too abstract. As Przemysław Hankus writes, libertarianism is sometimes portrayed as 'an idea that sounds very good and is essentially correct in theory, but is impossible to put into practice'.[44] This gives the impression of a doctrine or political philosophy divorced from reality. In reality, however, libertarians are not indifferent to practical matters, including the fundamental question of 'what to do?'.[45]

As a doctrine, libertarianism does not offer a coherent, unified vision of a strategy for political action. Instead, the core libertarian principles provide a framework that sets limits on what can be done, rather than providing positive postulates. One such limitation is the non-aggression principle, which precludes the use of violence to achieve even legitimate goals, such as the realisation of the libertarian order.[46]

There is no doubt that the fundamental political goal for libertarians should be the establishment of an order based on private property (anarcho-capitalism). The way to embody this vision is through the delegitimisation of the state and secessionism, as mentioned in the previous section of this article. The question of monarchy in the context of libertarian political strategy needs to be considered in relation to both the delegitimisation strategy and the secessionist strategy. While in the case of the former it is clear that monarchy serves Hoppe's purpose of criticising the prevailing democracy and centralised state, in the case of the latter it is not explicitly presented by him as a transitional stage to anarcho-capitalism. This raises questions about the consistency of Hoppe's position on monarchy. It is debatable what role monarchy plays in libertarian strategy: it is clear that it cannot be a strategic goal, but can it be considered a tactical goal? This dilemma can be presented in the form of the following alternative:

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[44] Przemysław Hankus, 'Libertarianizm nie jest utopizmem. Dlaczego twierdzenia o utopijności libertarianizmu są fałszywe?', *Dialogi Polityczne/Political Dialogues. Journal of Political Theory* 22, 2017, p. 14, https://doi.org/10.12775/DP.2017.001.

[45] Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*; Hoppe, *Democracy*; Jakub Wozinski, 'O prymacie secesji względem reform liberalnych', *Societas et Ius* 5, 2016, pp. 99–110, https://doi.org/10.12775/SEI.2016.006.

[46] However, libertarianism should not be seen as a pacifist doctrine. The use of violence is justified in situations of self-defence. Cf. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*, pp. 71–72.

(1) Support for monarchy is unrelated to political strategy (secessionism). The political entities resulting from secession can have different political regimes. The crucial aspect is the political fragmentation itself. Monarchy serves primarily as a tool to delegitimise the democratic state, rather than as an end in itself.

(2) Support for monarchy is connected with political strategy (secessionism). While the primary focus is on breaking down the state into smaller units, it is preferable if secession leads to small monarchies rather than democracies. This is because monarchies are considered to be closer to the desired anarcho-capitalist order. In this way, the resulting monarchies would function as transitional regimes on the path to the optimal solution.

Hoppe seems sceptical about the possibility of a revival of monarchy and its actual realisation as a political form. He acknowledges that in the eyes of most people today, monarchy seems abstract and even ridiculous, out of touch with their consciousness and political imagination. The system has lost its potential for legitimacy, so a return to monarchy would not be seen as 'a genuine solution'.[47] Hoppe's perspective seems to start from similar premises to Carl Schmitt's reflections on different ages dominated by different imaginaries that shape people's consciousness about fundamental aspects of human existence. As Schmitt argued, the central framework through which all political concepts must be understood has been permanently transformed by the process of secularisation. As a result, democracy has become the universally accepted political ideal, with any alternatives being labelled as dictatorships and inherently evil regimes.[48] But while the German conservative thinker is pessimistic about the possibility of reversing this process, Hoppe expresses a liberal optimism. As he writes:

> And just as monarchy was once accepted as legitimate but is today considered to be an unthinkable solution to the current social crisis, it is not inconceivable that the idea of democratic rule might someday be regarded

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[47]   Hoppe, *Democracy*, p. 71. In his essay on the relationship between Hoppe with the political right, Paul Gottfried (himself a non-libertarian) writes as follows: 'But because of the present impossibility of junking this parasitic institution [the state—Ł.Ś.], Hans suggests (perhaps not entirely tongue-incheek) a return to an already tried political alternative, namely, monarchy'. Paul Gottfried, 'Hans-Hermann Hoppe and the Libertarian Right', in Hülsmann and Kinsella, eds, *Property, Freedom, Society*, p. 33.

[48]   Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen. Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002), pp. 79–95; idem, *Diktatur. Von den Anfängen des modernen Souveranitätsgedankens bis zum proletarischen Klassenkampf* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006), p. XVI.

as morally illegitimate and politically unthinkable. Such a delegitimation is a necessary precondition to avoiding ultimate social catastrophe.[49]

Therefore, the recognition of a particular regime is not determined by the laws of history alone; people's consciousness can be changed, even if it is not an easy task.

This optimism is, of course, cautious and conditional. Hoppe bases his argument on the idea that delegitimising democracy is the most relevant and practical plan of action at the moment. He draws inspiration from the philosophy of Étienne de la Boétie (1530–63), the author of the *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (published posthumously in 1577).[50] De la Boétie's philosophy emphasises that power ultimately rests on the consent of its subjects. This consent is essentially tacit, based on established ideas. Consequently, consent can be withdrawn by changing such beliefs. Since libertarians reject the initiation of violence, supporting a revolution or *coup d'état* is not an option. If the state cannot be overthrown, then it must be delegitimised. This can be achieved by moral, aesthetic, political, economic, and religious means, by severing the deep emotional ties that bind citizens to the institution of the state. As Hoppe writes:

> Ultimately, the course of human history is determined by ideas, whether they are true or false. Just as kings could not exercise their rule unless public opinion accepted their rule as legitimate, so democratic rulers are equally dependent on public opinion to sustain their political power. It is public opinion, therefore, that must change if we are to prevent the process of decivilization from running its full course.[51]

The delegitimisation strategy is one of the two political strategies advocated by libertarians, the other being secessionism. These two strategies are interrelated and to some extent interdependent. In Hoppe's view, secessionism represents a form of decentralisation that stands in opposition to the process of centralisation that has concentrated power in a democratic state. In this context, secession is understood as 'a shifting of control over the nationalized wealth from a larger, central government to a smaller, regional one'.[52] These entities can take the form of regions, cantons, cities or even smaller

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[49] Hoppe, *Democracy*, p. 43.
[50] Étienne de la Boétie, *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* (Auburn, AL: The Mises Institute, 2015).
[51] Hoppe, *Democracy*, p. 43.
[52] Ibid., p. 113.

units such as neighbourhoods, settlements or individual households. To understand the intended political effect that Hoppe has in mind, one can refer to the history of the European Middle Ages, when

> [...] from about the twelfth until well into the seventeenth century (with the emergence of the modern central state), Europe was characterised by the existence of hundreds of free and independent cities, interspersed into a predominantly feudal social structure.[53]

In Hoppe's perspective, the process of secession aims to promote the gradual formation of smaller communities, starting with existing ones, and progressing from small states and regions to cities, neighbourhoods, villages, and even down to households and businesses. This secessionist approach is seen as a political strategy aimed at reducing the economic and political influence of large states, ultimately paving the way for the establishment of a fully privatised order. Hoppe elaborates on this concept by stating that

> the smaller the territorial units, the more likely it will be that a few individuals [...] will rise to the rank of natural, voluntarily acknowledged elites and lend legitimacy to the idea of a natural order of competing (non-monopolistic) and freely (voluntarily) financed peacekeepers, judges, and overlapping jurisdictions.[54]

Hoppe's aim is to reverse the process of centralisation and steer the course of history back to its origins by restoring the basic institutions that underpinned the economic and civilisational progress of Western societies. In this context, the restoration of monarchy is seen as a means of organising small societies, in which elites traditionally held political power.[55] Hoppe argues that monarchy can only arise under natural conditions. It is worth noting, however, that Hoppe sees monarchy primarily as an element of the proposed delegitimisation strategy. He does not see its implementation as highly likely, nor does he consider the practicalities of its realisation. Monarchy is not explicitly discussed in the context of secessionism. Support for monarchy from a libertarian perspective, particularly in Hoppe's case,

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[53] Ibid., p. 291.
[54] Ibid., p. 106.
[55] '[A]ll governments must begin territorially small. Nor is it likely, even for as small a population as that of a clan, a tribe, a village, or a town, that a government will initially be democratic, for who would not rather trust a specific known individual-especially in as sensitive a matter as that of a territorial monopoly of expropriation-than an anonymous, democratically elected person? Having to begin small, the original form of government is typically that of personal rule: of private ownership of the governmental apparatus of compulsion (monarchy)'. Ibid., p. 16.

can be seen as rather peculiar. Other political doctrines or philosophies do not typically include the notion of choosing the 'lesser evil' in their rhetoric. Therefore, it can be seen as peculiar, if not absurd, for a libertarian to support monarchy as it is for an anarchist to support a minimal state or for a Marxist to support parliamentarism. Given the apparent incompatibility between libertarianism and monarchism, let us explore the possibility of libertarian support for monarchy from the standpoint of political practice.

In Hoppe's view, a monarchy represents a privately-owned government, in which the ruler is future-oriented, values capital goods and adheres to the principles of economic calculation.[56] While Hoppe recognises that monarchy operates on the basis of private property, he regards the king as an owner like any other, but claims that he has a special status compared to other owners. This recognition of a special status seems incompatible with the principles of anarcho--capitalist libertarianism, as it could be seen as an inclination towards minarchist political philosophy. Another fundamental issue regarding libertarian support for monarchy revolves around the concept of just property rights. Hoppe discusses the monarch as a private owner at length, but does not connect his arguments with the notion of legitimate acquisition of property, which is of considerable importance within libertarianism. Instead, Hoppe focuses primarily on the degeneration of existing monarchies rather than addressing the issue of just acquisition of property. The secessionist strategy does not address the issue of justly acquired property for those who choose to secede. By ignoring the significance of the manner in which the monarch acquires property, Hoppe's lack of explicit support for a monarchy built on the ruins of democracy may seem odd. Leaders of local territorial units who assert themselves as monarchs would not only achieve a more effective separation from the centralised state, but also, as 'monarchs', outperform democratic leaders in various respects. The democratic regimes that would emerge from such fragmentation would inevitably repeat the mistakes of their larger democratic predecessors. If monarchy is generally regarded as a superior system to democracy, it would be logical to assign it a special role within the political strategy of libertarianism. The monarchy could then serve as a transitional regime on the way to anarcho-capitalism. The monarchy resulting from secession would

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[56] Ibid., p. xix.

have a formally libertarian character (based on private property), but its substance would no longer align with libertarian principles (due to the unjust origin and title of property right).

This inconsistency in Hoppe's view requires a redefinition of the concept of monarchy. To reconcile libertarian political philosophy with support for monarchy, a broadened definition of monarchy must be recognised. This expanded definition would characterise monarchy as a system rooted in power derived from private property, where the monarch, like any other rightful owner, exercises authority over his property. This redefined monarchy would not resemble any historical arrangement, as Hoppe acknowledges, where monarchies have been characterised by monopolistic decision-making and exploitation of subjects, regardless of scale. A libertarian monarchy must adhere strictly and uncompromisingly to basic libertarian principles. Thus, Hoppe's concept of a 'thousand Liechtensteins' should be reconsidered as a vision of 'million monarchies' in which each individual acts as a monarch over his own property and his natural subjects, such as children, dependents and voluntary subjects.

CONCLUSIONS

Hoppe juxtaposes monarchy and democracy within his political philosophy. As an anarcho-capitalist, he does not consider monarchy to be the optimal system, but rather views it as a preferable alternative to democracy due to its perceived drawbacks. His interpretation of monarchy strives to align with libertarianism, thus positing that monarchy should be founded on private property. Consequently, monarchy is not simply any form of royal government, but one where a private owner exercises sovereign rule. In Hoppe's framework, conservative notions such as the divine right of kings or principles of hereditary succession are secularised and reduced to matters of property. This suggests the possibility of a broad interpretation of monarchy in which political power is essentially the authority exercised by private owners over themselves and their property. Hoppe contends that the king is no different from any other private owner, but attributes to him a special social position. A consistent libertarian anarcho-capitalist would therefore conceive of an order rooted in private property as consisting of numerous territorial units, each potentially headed by private owners referred to as 'monarchs'. Supporting monarchy would require redefining monarchy itself to

make it fully compatible with the envisaged anarcho-capitalist order. Monarchy would then be understood as the non-coercive authority of a private owner over a specific territory, confined solely to the private sphere (immediate family). It is conceivable, however, that voluntary agreements within this sphere could lead to political dependencies, where individuals voluntarily choose to reside on the sovereign's territory and provide certain services (*protego ergo obligo*).

The relationship between advocating for monarchy and promoting an anarcho-capitalist order may seem puzzling. On the one hand, it is possible that Hoppe recognises the importance of steering people away from democracy towards monarchy as a substantial political achievement. After all, democracy represents the furthest departure from anarcho-capitalism, while monarchy is closer to its principles. The path to the desired order would therefore involve gradual stages and require a long process of political and consciousness transformation. On the other hand, by acknowledging the abstract nature of implementing anarcho-capitalism (which Hoppe does not conceal) while affirming monarchy, there is a danger of abandoning the vision of the ultimate order in favour of what is politically feasible. This risks distorting or diluting libertarian thought. Regardless of the perspective adopted, a secessionist strategy would serve as the means to the end. However, Hoppe's lack of clarity regarding the preferred type of secessionist regime and the support they should receive from libertarians is less than ideal in terms of maintaining coherence within anarcho-capitalist political philosophy. Anarcho--capitalist libertarianism seems to face three possible options: 1) an indifferent attitude towards secessionist regimes; 2) support for any form of monarchy; 3) support for a legitimate monarchy. The unresolved nature of this question among libertarians themselves underscores the fact that political strategy is probably the weakest aspect of anarcho-capitalist political philosophy.

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