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THE LIBERAL CRITIQUES OF DEMOCRACY FROM TOCQUEVILLE TO HERMANN-HOPPE

Abstract

In my article I would like to analyze a tradition created by Alexis de Tocqueville which Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn called "true liberalism." According to this political theory, "liberty" and "equality" do not complement each other but are in fact contradictions. In my lecture I would like to analyze how the words "democracy" and "liberty" were evaluated in the texts of the early liberals, how and why they began to be equated with each other. In this article, I will examine three representatives of this tradition in more detail: James Fitzjames Stephen, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, and Hans-Hermann Hoppe.

In the modern age – argue the liberal critiques of democracy – the lack of freedom is manifested evidently. Liberty was first eradicated by royal absolutisms and then by successive democratic revolutions. As a result, the vacuum created was replaced by the modern state with Weberian "bureaucratic authority." Modern state bureaucracy overwhelmed all sorts of public bodies, ordinances, provinces and other liberties for the sake of the abstract concept of "liberty." On the one hand, this was done in the name of equality proclaimed on the basis of parliamentary popular sovereignty, and on the other hand it was a product of totalitarianism. of the result these processes in the modern world – while liberty is constant ly being eulogized and has been raised to the rank of an official ideology – there is actually less freedom than in any previous era.

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The word "democracy", first appeared in ancient Greek political thought, in the city-state of Athens, as a term denoting the *polis* form of government, during the period of classical antiquity.[1] Democracy is one of the most widespread forms of state in the world of today, and the term itself has become a quasi-equivalent of "good governance" and "political freedom." Since the period of the Enlightenment, democracy has been associated with the "rule of the people," the free selection and election of the state's government. At the present time, what seems reasonable, good, or desirable in the world of politics almost automatically tends to be regarded as some sort of democracy: the idea of democracy is clearly in a privileged position. As one of the handbooks of political philosophy, the *Encyclopedia of Political Philosophy* – without any reflection on the original *meaning* of the word –puts it: "[D]emocracy can be understood as a division of power, a restriction of power, and the rule of law" (Millner et al. 1987, 466). The transition from a monarchic to a democratic age, throughout the literature, from high school or even in university textbooks to educational and scholarly articles, is portrayed as a "natural" and benevolent transition from the era of political oppression to the age of freedom, in close connection with a faith in "human progress" – a term also inherited from the period of Enlightenment. The doctrine of popular sovereignty is apparently connected with the notion of the "autonomous man", who freely shapes his own destiny and who does not depend on another sovereignty, be it human or divine.

Despite the frequency of usage of the term, democracy is a rather difficult concept to grasp. As a British American conservative, T. S. Eliot (1939) has already pointed out, "When a term has become so universally sanctified as 'democracy' now is, I begin to wonder whether it means anything, in meaning too many things" (14-15), because democracy is so much embedded in different conceptual frameworks that its actual meaning is often hollowed out.

1) The word comes from *demos*, "common people" and *kratos*, "strength."

Democracy has been subjected to serious critiques throughout history. Apart from Athens and its allies, other Greek states generally did not speak of themselves as democracies, and the Romans of the republican era referred to their own state as a *Res Publica,* carefully distinguishing it from democracy. In classical political thinking, the term democracy was mostly a derogatory term, nearly the equivalent of "mob rule" (*ochlocracy*). This comparison was also emphasized by Plato and Aristotle, – two of the foremost and most prominent philosophers of Greek antiquity – in line with their ill-fated experiences with the politics of the Athenian democracy. According to Plato, democracy is first of all the domination of desires, while Aristotle sees democracy as one of the decadent forms of the state, which represents the rule of the poor over the rich, and differs greatly from the ideal form of state, the *Politeia*. When asked whether "democracy is the least bad political system" the majority of ancient, medieval and early modern political thinkers would have clearly answered in the negative. Like Plato, some openly rejected it, or were sceptical of it, like Hume and Kant, while others such as Tocqueville warned of the dangers of democracy, even though they thought of its coming as inevitable. Further political philosophers who critiqued democracy include Montesquieu, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, James Harrington, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, and conservative authors as T. S. Eliot, Carl Schmitt, Oswald Spengler and Nicolás Gómez Dávila.

In this article, I would like to discuss a critical reception and evaluation of democracy which can be made from a liberal rather than a conservative point of view. This may not seem to be a self-evident standpoint, because democracy today is closely associated with liberalism.

In general, liberalism can be characterised, according to its most prominent contemporary theorists and adherents, as a political philosophy based on the principles of liberty *and* equality. Liberalism is a system of political thought that fosters and strengthens democracy. The goal of liberalism is freedom, which can best be achieved in a democracy (with *equality*), so there is basically no conflict between freedom and equality – the two mutually reinforce each other. Gray (1995), one of the most important contemporary

theorists of liberalism, distinguishes liberalism from other political ideologies as being “individualist, egalitarian, meliorist and universalist” (12). According to Gray, individualism protects the primacy of the *individuum* over the collective will of the whole, as the egalitarian element assures the same moral value and situation for all individuals, while meliorism affirms the ability of successive generations to develop their socio-political institutions, and the universalist element affirms human non-moral unity, marginalizing local cultural differences.

In Dunn’s interpretation (1993), liberalism is “political rationalism, hostility to autocracy, cultural distaste for conservatism and for tradition in general, tolerance, and [...] individualism” (33). Perhaps the most significant theorist of liberalism in the 20th century was John Rawls, whose *A Theory of Justice* is primarily an attempt at the philosophical justification of equality. This work, which has provoked fierce controversy, admiration and criticism since its publication in 1971, has become a much-cited reference for modern liberalism.

However, a closer inspection of the ideological history of liberalism reveals that the relationship and sympathy between liberalism and democracy may not be as unambiguous as it appears at first glance.

As John Skorupsky (2003, 116-137) writes:

It is conventional to talk of the “liberal democracies” of the West. This phrase suggests an assumption – that democracy is one of liberalism’s fundamental tenets; the assumption now seems, by and large, to be taken for granted. Historically, however, liberals had grave reservations about democracy. In Europe, these reservations emerged particularly clearly soon after the French Revolution, in the form of a conflict between two ideals of the new order: that of liberals and that of a democratic, radical, or Jacobin opposition; in America, they were raised already in the Federalist papers. […] Insofar as liberals have concluded that their favored political order is threatened under democracy, they have often reached for remedies that limit it.

According to Julius Evola (1968, 253–55), a fierce critique of liberalism:

We can seek the roots of liberalism in England, and we can say that the beginnings of liberalism were feudalistic and aristocratic: we must refer to the local nobility who were proud of the privileges and freedoms from the Crown. Then, with the rise of bourgeoisie, liberalism took the Whig wing of the parliament, which faced the Conservatives, the Tories.

It can be argued – in agreement with the two above mentioned authors – that the classical liberal's notion of order and freedom does not necessarily involve an inevitable reinforcement of democracy. Classical liberals feared that democracy could become a tyranny, because it kept alive the possibility of majoritarian despotism. They had further concerns about whether high aesthetic and intellectual values can be preserved under a democracy, and many have argued that democracy will inevitably lead to a flattening and deterioration of culture.

Most classical liberals rejected the doctrine that the will of the people is the sole source of political legitimacy. In John Stuart Mill's words ("Pledges 2", in. *Collected Works*, 502. cited in Scorupsky 2003, 116-137):

We know that the will of the people, even of the numerical majority, must in the end be supreme, for as Burke says, it would be monstrous that any power should exist capable of permanently defying it: but in spite of that, the test of what is right in politics is not the will of the people, but the good of the people, and our object is, not to compel but to persuade the people to impose, for the sake of their own good, some restraints on the immediate and unlimited exercise of their own will.[2]

The "tyranny of the majority" is a well-known phrase in political philosophy, which originated from Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville was – despite his famous book on American democracy – clearly not a democrat, and yet he was a very ardent supporter of liberty. "I have a passionate love for liberty, law, and respect for rights […]I am neither of the revolutionary party nor of the conservative. [...] Liberty is my foremost passion." He wrote also, commenting on the "social state" of Americans: "[B]ut, one also finds in the human heart a depraved taste for equality, which

2) Cited by Skorupsky. ibid. p. 123.

impels the weak to want to bring the strong down to their level, and which reduces men to preferring equality in servitude to inequality in freedom" (Tocqueville 1835/2000, 52).

In *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville argued that what the revolution did not overthrow but "refine" is an activity he called "soft despotism" or "tutelage by the government", while it seemed to him more and more doubtful whether democracy would lead to greater freedom or would lead humanity to a more real existence. Tocqueville conjectured that in the absence of an aristocracy the virtuous citizenship diminishes, and society will be in danger of becoming too rationalistic and pragmatic, losing its soul and becoming materialistic and insect-like. As he wrote:

It will always be a subject of regret that the French nobility was destroyed and uprooted instead of being subjected to the control of the laws. The error deprived the nation of a portion of its substance, and dealt liberty a wound that will never heal. The nobility had been the first class in the kingdom, and had enjoyed undisputed greatness for so many centuries, that it had acquired a high-mindedness, a self-reliance, a sense of responsibility, which rendered it the most solid portion of the social frame. Virile itself, it imparted virility to the other classes of society. Its extirpation weakened its very assailants. It can never be wholly restored—can never revive of itself; it may regain the titles and estates of its ancestors, but their spirit, never (Tocqueville 1856, 64).

Tocqueville was not the only classical liberal who openly criticized democracy. There was a type of liberalism in the 19th century which can be called "elitist liberalism." This form of liberalism emerged in the second half of the 19th century, responding mainly to the disturbing tendencies of the political revolutions of the so-called "liberal" (and increasingly socialist) revolutions of the 1830s, and 1840s. The group of such liberals in England, who are now mostly forgotten to the wider public, included figures such as W. H. Lecky, who regarded democracy with noble simplicity as "legalized robbery", James Fitzjames Stephen, who attacked the social liberalism of John Stuart Mill, or Henry Maine, who talked about the pitfalls of "people's government" and the manipulation of the masses. These authors, some of them active politicians, were already in the 19th century suspicious of the increasing intervention

of the state into private life, as with Disraeli's efforts to establish "Tory democracy" in the United Kingdom. Undoubtedly, this kind of liberalism did not enjoy enormous popularity on the parliamentary benches or in the election-booklets, but several of them figured among the major theoretical works collected in *The predominant ideas of the 19th century* ("A 19. század uralkodó eszméi") by Baron Joseph Eötvös, a Hungarian statesman and writer, which earned the praise of such prominent political thinkers as Lord Acton, and which was, according to the *The Cambridge Modern History*, "the most important work on political philosophy in Hungarian literature" (Yolland, 1909, 421-431).

One of the most important of these figures was Fitzjames Stephen. His most well-known and influential work was *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873), an elaboration of Fitzjames Stephen's own political philosophy, which can be seen as a riposte to John Stuart *Mill's On Liberty* (1859). According to Stephen, the democratic creed of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," is the most important political-ideological tenet of modern times, a legacy of the rationalist and anti-religious philosophy of the French Enlightenment and revolution, which is replacing the transcendence-oriented values of the Christian European civilization with simple, mundane and high-sounding promises, directed at the uneducated masses. According to Stephen, neither the masses nor the ideologues who promoted these ideas can be said to have scrutinized too deeply exactly what kind of freedom they are talking about, or with whom they would enjoy equality and fraternity. The creed becomes a dangerous and demagogic political slogan, by which the demolition of virtually all things old and traditional can be justified, regardless of how much they harmonise with human nature. Every hierarchy and every established social relationship that has been operating for centuries can be destroyed, the power of every state can be weakened and, last but not least, every religion can be undermined. (According to Stephen, religion is the foundation of any orderly society.) John Stuart Mill, who is, in Stephen's eyes, the most eloquent contemporary representative of this popular creed, believed that there is no longer any need for coercion in the world of politics because it fits into an earlier state of society in which the "right of the stronger" was decisive, but with historical progress and man's evident socio-intellectual evolution, it will now be possible to

gradually get rid of all discriminatory and hierarchical situations (Stephen 1873/1993, 70-81).

According to Stephen, Mill's anthropology is superficial and overly optimistic, and there is no basis for drawing far-reaching conclusions from what he calls "progress." Moreover, the basic premise of Mill's later works is in stark contrast to any theological system that expresses systematic morality. The naively optimistic notion that humans will be wiser, morally superior, or more intelligent through spontaneous evolution is a mere illusion, as the events of the present do not justify such optimism, and historical experience does not suggest that the state and society can be sustained without coercion (Stephen 1873/1993, 20-21).

If people want to live in organized societies where there is any possibility of "reasonable freedom", they need some kind of compulsion – which in Stephen's interpretation should not merely be physical compulsion but a more subtle one – for example, the moral compulsion of the public could be prevention of possible crime as well as religion – specifically the fear of damnation – which is, according to Stephen, – the best antidote to committing a crime.

The well-arranged condition of the modern states does not stem from the fact that force is no longer employed or that the "right of the stronger" has been abandoned, (as Mill assumes), but on the contrary: the state has now become such an irresistible apparatus, that any effective resistance to it would be impossible for individuals:

A criminal may overpower an isolated policeman just as a pigmy might with his whole weight hold down the last joint of the little finger of a giant's left hand, if the hand were in a suitable position; but deliberate individual resistance to the law of the land for mere private advantage is in these days an impossibility which no one ever thinks of attempting. Force not only reigns, but in most matters it reigns without dispute, but it does not follow that it has ceased to exist (Stephen 1873/1993, 113).

According to Stephen, the power-relations between people have not changed in the way Mill hoped for. The form of dependence has indeed changed: status-based hierarchy has been replaced

by the practice of treaties, but the contracting parties are not and cannot be equals. While the feudal conditions afforded the weak and the poor a degree of protection, the modern dependence renders the weaker party almost completely vulnerable.

> I doubt much whether the power of particular persons over their neighbours has ever in any age of the world been so well defined and so easily and safely exerted as it is at present. If in old times a slave was inattentive, his master might no doubt have him maimed or put to death or flogged; but he had to consider that in doing so he was damaging his own property, that when the slave had been flogged he would still continue to be his slave; and that the flogging might make him mischievous or revengeful, and so forth. If a modern servant misconducts himself, he can be turned out of the house on the spot, and another can be hired as easily as you would call a cab (Stephen 1873/1993, 116).

Although Stephen was a critic of the French Revolution and was not explicitly sympathetic to the optimistic views of his era regarding “historical progress”, he himself was not a conservative but a defender of the older tradition of English liberalism. He stood for election in 1873 not for the Conservative, but for the Liberal Party. (Stephen 1873/1993, 13). As he wrote:

> I do not object to the practice of modern Liberals. Under great difficulties they have contrived to bring about highly creditable results, but their theories have presented those defects which are inseparable from the theories of a weak and unpopular party making its way towards power (Stephen 1873/1993, 60).

Stephen greatly appreciated “well-arranged freedom” and was a staunch believer in parliamentarianism, but he was explicitly averse to democracy and frightened by its seemingly unstoppable expansion. He feared, – not without justification – that if the right to vote were gradually and continuously extended,[3] the process would increasingly lead to proletarianization and the spread of socialist ideas. He feared that the parliamentary rule of the educated elites, rooted in the ancient soil of England, would be lost forever in favour of the political cunning of petty demagogues

3) The two English Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867, were followed by and the third, Representation of the People Act in 1884 which also gave voting rights to „proletarians.”

who constantly refer to "the people." Thus, Stephen also formulates the classic Tocquevillian dilemma of "liberty or equality." Regarding the freedom as a value, he emphasized that freedom or liberty cannot mean the same in all ages, under all circumstances and for all people, and cannot exist in the absence of order, which requires a strong government, governing on the basis of sound moral principles.

Stephen argued that even if universal suffrage came to be realised, the criterion of political equality, advanced by its activists, would not be achieved. Political power always changes its form, but not its nature.

The result of cutting it up into little bits is simply that the man who can sweep the greatest number of them into one heap will govern the rest. The strongest man in some form or other will always rule (Stephen 1873/1993, 118).

According to Stephen, in the modern form of democracy, the real rulers are the "wire pullers" and their circle who are as equal to the voters as the ministers and generals of the monarchy are equal to the subjects of a king. Thus, in his view, in the democratic system, only the principle of legitimacy changes, but this change does not result essentially in anything new, or specifically in better governance. What was particularly troubling to Stephen concerns democracy or political equality, accompanied by a reference to freedom. In his view the separation of powers and freedom are two completely different things. With the introduction of democracy, all that the "manipulators" have to do is to move the ignorant masses according to primitive desires – as we have seen, Stephen does not believe at all in the progressive "enlightenment" of mankind and the improvement of human nature through modern education – and thus democracy and "democratic faith" could lead to cultural decline, materialism and vulgarity (Stephen 1873/1993, 118).

The problem of the "Tyranny of majority" is also one of the main ideas of one of the 20th century's "classical or right liberal" catholic political theorists, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, who was also an ideological adherent of Tocqueville. He dealt with this problem extensively and in great detail in his works such as *Leftism*, *Liberty or Equality*, or *The Menace of the Herd.*

Kuehnelt-Leddihn's main preoccupation, throughout his life, was the radical critique of the idea of equality and, in a narrower sense, the criticism of liberal democracy and "totalitarian democracy."[4] In this vein, he never considered himself a conservative, but spoke of himself explicitly as a liberal. He emphasized that his liberalism is "right-wing liberalism," and that such liberalism is also the definition of "true liberalism." He believed that, originally, liberalism was the heir to the aristocratic ideal of freedom and the Christian philosophy of history, which emphasize the reality of the Person. According to him, liberalism was originally associated with the aristocratic spirit of freedom and generosity. (Latin: *liberalitas*) The heyday of this original form of liberalism was the 19th century. By the second half of the 20th century, Kuehnelt-Leddihn, liberalism had become perverted, and modern, "left-wing liberalism" is largely a counterfeit of the original idea, fallaciously claiming the "liberal" notion for itself . The reason for the change, which began as early as John Stuart Mill, is first and foremost the penetration of idea of equality into liberalism, which is, according to Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the greatest and most insidious threat to freedom.

Kuehnelt-Leddihn prefers to describe his own political-ideological position as "right-wing liberal" or even "arch-liberal of the extreme right", elsewhere: "catholic, extreme-right liberal" (*katholischen rechtsradikalen*) (Oblinger 2009, 39). Although the terms "liberal" and "democratic" are nowadays closely associated with each other and regarded as almost inseparable, in his view, the roots of liberalism (like the roots of the parliamentary system) are not democratic but aristocratic, because freedom and independence, the most important values of liberalism, are not democratic but undeniably aristocratic virtues. Kuehnelt-Leddihn was keen to point out that "true liberalism" embodies all that a true conservative should also be enthusiastic about. He spoke of a liberalism that is Catholic and monarchical, and which rejects materialism and hedonism. He insisted that what his liberalism represents is opposed to the general representation of liberalism in the world, which he said was often mistaken, distorted and simplistic.

In the contemporary world, Kuehnelt-Leddihn argues, the lack of freedom is manifestly evident. The earlier hierarchies were

4) An original phrase of Jacob Talmon.

eradicated by the royal absolutisms and then by successive democratic revolutions. As a result, the emerging vacuum was replaced not by liberty but by "bureaucratic authority" in the Weberian sense. The bureaucracy of modern states overwhelmed all public bodies, ordinances, provinces, and other liberties. On the one hand, this was done in the name of equality, proclaimed on the basis of popular parliamentary sovereignty, and on the other hand, by anti-hierarchic, levelling totalitarianism, although these two tendencies are by no means independent of each other. As a fruit of these processes in the modern world, while eulogizing freedom and raising it to the rank of the official ideology, there is actually less freedom than in any previous era.

As Kuehnelt-Leddihn claims:

In the last 200 years the exploitation of envy, its mobilization among the masses, coupled with the denigration of individuals, but more frequently of classes, races, nations or religious communities has been the very key to political success. The history of the Western World since the end of the eighteenth century cannot be written without this fact constantly in mind (Kuehnelt-Leddihn 1974, 18).

He suggests that two tendencies are present in human nature, which can also be seen in political theory: one is the desire of merging with others (*identitarianism*) and the other is the opposite desire "to be different" (*diversitarianism*). These are basic elements and tendencies of human existence, both necessary for life. According to his theory, in the course of modern history, the tendency towards *identitarianism* is becoming increasingly marked, while the tendency of *diversitarianism* is fading, a trend which can be observed in many fields.

According to Kuehnelt-Leddihn, this tendency is deeply rooted in a *misinterpretation* of a Christian tenet: the "equality of all souls before God" – because if everyone was equal before God *literally*, it would not make sense to talk about the creation of individual souls. "Ultimate equality" is a spiritual possibility that can be achieved through a *conscious effort*, and hence is not an actual reality. Kuehnelt-Leddihn claims that this misinterpretation was also made by various heretical groups of medieval times, such as in the Reformation, which "secularized the cloister" and made

"monasticism obligatory" by abolishing it. By this, he is suggesting that the strict rules of the Catholic cloister were transfigured into the "asceticism" of protestant discipline and work ethics. The "hard-working man" became the ideal, and this also invoked the notion of "unnecessary classes" such as the clergy because they did not accumulate material wealth, which was increasingly seen by the Protestants as God's reward. What they forgot, however, was that the discipline and the uniformity of the cloister were prescribed for a conscious effort that was purely spiritual in nature, and was independent of politics, and that, above all else, entering the cloister was voluntary.

This process clearly exhibits a tendency towards "equalization" – if everyone is doing fundamentally "the same" there will be earthly happiness, while secular satisfaction is the sign of the Grace of God. Protestantism was followed by Deism and the increasingly secular world-view of the era of the French Enlightenment. It is to this period that we can trace back the origins of the modern democracies. For Kuehnelt-Leddihn the French Revolution was itself an attempt to create a democratic utopia based on the design of total equality – and the results can clearly be seen in the dictatorship of Robespierre, who wanted to demolish steeples because they towered above the other buildings (Kuehnelt-Leddihn 1974, 15-21). The subsequent centuries saw various forms of utopian egalitarianism, with two main tendencies – the "totalitarian" and the "democratic" form – although in fact all democracy is inherently totalitarian, and all totalitarianism is democratic by nature.

Kuehnelt-Leddihn takes democracy in its "literal" meaning: this means the *kratos* (power) of the *demos*, which means primarily that the origin of power is from the people and the people can govern themselves through this power. This concept assumes that all the actors of the political community are equal, and that there are no qualitative differences between them, consequently the decision of the majority is the sole criterion for political decision-making. The problem with that mechanism is the same as with modern political ideologies in general: this method is blind to the *real* qualitative differences in the world and the differences between people, such as intelligence, discretion, knowledge, and competence, and because of this blindness, it sacrifices quality on the altar of quantity. This

mechanism is, to Kuehnelt-Leddihn, inherently totalitarian, and hostile to liberty because in a "full" democracy, there is no limitation on the *in abstracto* power of the majority. The majority is the absolute theoretical sovereign, and it can do everything because it is the source of all law. Democracy is a utopia, as it is based on the assumption that the majority is wise. Nevertheless, Kuehnelt-Leddihn stresses, experience shows that the majority is not wise but can be easily manipulated. This could be seen, for example, in the case of National Socialism, which is, in Kuehnelt-Leddihn's view, clearly a populistic, plebeian ideology with democratic roots. He maintains that Hitler was an "*Archdemocrat*" who used the popularity and the power of the popular will to take power, and who was neither "aristocratic" nor "antidemocratic." According to his *Leftism*, in the seemingly opposing currents of modern political movements, we can only see various *versions* of democratic utopianism, so there is no *essential* difference between the ultimate goal of any of these political currents. All sought to *homogenize* society and all strove to create a *uniform*, monotonous world of "ants", in which there are no more individuals, just screws in the socio-political mechanism.

The modern city – writes Kuehnelt-Leddihn in *The Menace of the Herd* – has an overcomplicated structure of technology, requiring an infinite number of laws, regulations, restrictions and controls, which often deeply intervene in the private sphere of the individual (Kuehnelt-Leddihn 1943, 81).

In Kuehnelt-Leddihn's view, these are necessary constraints that must be endured for the illusion of progress: virtually everything has to be registered, licensed and so on, so the price of liberation by technological advancement has to be paid by restrictions in other spheres of life. The more technical devices a modern employee possesses, the more dependent he is, as he becomes subservient to these means (Kuehnelt-Leddihn 1943, 80-85).

According to Kuehnelt-Leddihn, in the highly technicised modern world, there is a variety of types of tyranny and slavery: the "tyranny of the clock" over everybody, slavery to material prestige and the tyranny of "successful competition" over the bourgeoisie, wage-slavery over the worker, and school-slavery over the children (Kuehnelt-Leddhin 1943, 137). All this transforms the modern

metropolis into an "inhuman bee-hive" that is totally subordinate to the constraints of industrialised labour and its cruel and soulless mechanism. For example, for a modern employee (whether he be a "white-collar" intellectual or a physical worker) it is simply impossible to arrange his own time scheme in the way that a worker in pre-technical era could. He lives in fear of redundancy and the constant threat of unemployment and "the lack of independence is almost on his face" (Kuehnelt-Leddihn 1943, 85).

A classical liberal-based critique of democracy can be also found in what is known as "Right-libertarian" political thought. Right-libertarianism is characterized by the strict priority given to liberty, with the need to maximize the realm of individual freedom and minimize the scope of public authority. Unlike Kuehnelt-Leddihn, however, Right-Libertarians, are proponents of "pure capitalism", as they also underline that total equality is impossible and not even desirable. In their view, in a free market, some will do better than others, some will have more, others less, and as a result of competition, a natural elite will emerge. They also emphasize that most democratic governments have an elite but typically deny it or try to interpret it as being only temporary. Libertarians accept that some will succeed, some will do better and so there will always be inequality in any free society.

A prominent contemporary libertarian, who has consistently espoused these ideas is the economist Hans-Hermann Hoppe. In his book *Democracy: The God that Failed*, (Hoppe, 2007) Hoppe examines modern democracy's failures which include, in Hoppe's view, rising unemployment rates, expanding public debt, and insolvent social security systems.

Hoppe deals with the era of transition from monarchy to democracy (between the French Revolution and the end of World War I), and compares it to the failure and fall of "eastern soviet-style" socialism, with the search for an ideal social and political system, the "natural order", which could be an alternative. He categorizes democracy as "publicly-owned government", and compares it with monarchy, a "privately owned government", concluding that the latter is more advantageous, although he identifies deficiencies in both monarchy and democracy. His preferred structure of civilization is "the natural order" (some kind of *natural aristocracy*)

–a system devoid of both taxation and coercive monopoly (Hoppe 2007, 45-77).

This means that while in a monarchy, the monarch has a monopoly on expropriation, he only makes limited use of it, because he has to be forward-looking, which hinders the exercise of this right. If monarchs were unbridled in exploiting their subjects, they would have no way of encouraging them to produce, for they would think that their efforts to produce were in vain if they were deprived of the fruits of their labour. If, on the other hand, this monopoly is exercised within reasonable limits, production, as it is recycled by its subjects, will increase the king's ownership of an ever-expanding economy. As he writes:

[I]t is in his interest to draw – parasitically – on a growing, increasingly productive and prosperous nongovernment economy, as this would – always and without any effort on his part – also increase his own wealth and prosperity (Hoppe 2007, 19).

Hoppe adds historical evidence to support his views, investigating the traditional monarchies of the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, the "government" was small, taxes were intermittent to non-existent, spending was low, war debt was about the only kind of debt there was and even wars themselves were fought in a limited fashion by monarchs who had specific objectives and who did not wish to waste their armies, which were expensive to train, equip and maintain. As he writes, on the "progress" from monarchy to democracy:

In contrast to the internal and external moderation of a monarchy, a democratic (publicly owned) government implies increased excess, and the transition from a world of kings to one of democratically-elected presidents must be expected to lead to a systematic increase in the intensity and extension of government power and a significantly strengthened tendency toward decivilization (Hoppe 2007, 261).

The short-term interests of the elected leaders of the so-called "welfare states" of our time are to maximize their revenue. Hoppe compares taxes to crimes committed by criminals, because they violate the right to private property. The only difference, to Hoppe

is that, unlike criminals, the state has a right to theft from which we cannot protect ourselves (Hoppe 2007, 87).

This right is, of course, exercised by the (for short time) elected leaders, which is why democracy is far more exploitative than monarchy, in contrast to the widely accepted and propagated view of history. In this regard, Hoppe also rejects the notion that in history, human societies undergo an uninterrupted upward linear development, saying that democracy cannot be the end of history, and describes the decline of the monarchy and the transition to democracy as a process of "decivilisation" (Hoppe, 2007, 1-45). From his point of view, this fact is not alleviated even if we consider other aspects than just economic factors. According to Hoppe, democrats like to present themselves as humanists, but, as he points out, the bloodiest wars and the most terrible genocides have taken place after the fall of the great historical monarchies, after 1918. However, a return to the monarchy is impossible, because a monarchical power can never be accepted by the people, and thus "we cannot return to the feudal past or the time of the American Revolution" (Hoppe, 2007, 1-45).

Therefore, as an alternative to these two systems, monarchy and democracy, he proposes a social system which he calls the "natural order." This new social order would not be based on exploitation but on "private property, production and voluntary exchange" (Hoppe, 2007, 71). Just as in any other age and period, some kind of elite, a "nobility" will there be also formed, so this natural order will produce outstanding talents whose knowledge and wealth will pass from father to son. Because the common people would look up to this "nobility", they would put jurisdiction in their hands, which they would view as "privately produced public good", and as persons of natural authority, they would fulfil this role free of charge.

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As we have seen, the "liberal critiques of democracy" assailed the principle of democratic egalitarianism, from the point of the autonomy and freedom of the *individuum*. They criticised the modern world and the modern state not from an obviously conserva-

tive point of view, but – as Kuehnelt-Leddihn put it, – from the ideological standpoint of “true liberalism” or “right-liberalism.”

There is no doubt that the liberalism which the liberal critiques of democracy tried to represent is very different from the liberalism of other authors who generally call themselves liberal, not to mention the “everyday” meaning of this term. It seems that what the “liberal” critics of democracy call liberalism, especially in today’s context, is unlikely to be attractive to liberal parties or individuals.

Of course, the defenders of “left-liberalism” or “social-liberalism” could point out that the true nature of liberalism may also be the subject of contradictory opinions, just like the nature of “true democracy” or “true conservatism.” Recalling Hoppe’s view, while his preferred system is a kind of aristocracy a critic could retort that there is no guarantee that the new elite would be “liberal” and exercise power in a non-oppressive way.

Even though these theories have imperfections and deficiencies, they still represent a significant critique of the ideological “democratism” – an overrating of democracy very common today, when there is a tendency to idealize this word and the often vague concept it represents, which could easily lead to the incoherent and weak aspects of the world’s most wide-spread political regime being overlooked.

From a conservative point of view a more serious critique could be made – especially of Hoppe – that he has narrowly examined the state, solely on the basis of economic aspects, while a nuanced judgement of a form of state or a system of political arrangements cannot be made solely on its relation to private property. Without a reference to transcendence, or values outside of material interests, the system, which Hoppe has characterised as ideal, can easily sink into mere materialism. Because his approach is purely economic, the theory precludes a more elaborate theory of the state, omitting to analyse sovereignty and the state itself, as a “Platonic” idea, or even to define the state’s essence. With its lack of any metaphysics or value theory, conservatives could accuse his analysis of being simple and materialistic, which of course is unacceptable to them.

A similar critique could also be applied to Stephen and Kuehnelt-Leddihn. Contrary to Hoppe's materialist/secularist starting point, both Stephen and Kuehnelt-Leddihn approached the problem on a Christian (Protestant and Catholic) basis, although neither of them placed much emphasis on the relationship of the idea of state to transcendence. While Kuehnelt-Leddihn emphasizes in one place that the good ruler must be "*leitourgós Teoú*, God's helper" (Kuehnelt-Leddihn 1952, 169), in general they paid little real attention to clarifying those aspects of the state which were not merely negative. This is, of course, in accordance with the liberal tradition for which the state, even at best, is just a necessary evil. Although Kuehnelt-Leddihn and Stephen were, similar to Hoppe, both in favour of monarchy as opposed to democracy, they did not stress that a king, according to his original functions, and according to the pre-enlightenment theory of kingship, is also a "priestly" character, or point out the definite correlations of kingship with a supernatural order. They did not emphasize that for *non-modern* man, for pre-*Entzauberung* individuals, transcendence was a reality, and indeed more of a "reality" than earthly existence and philosophical materialism, for whom attributing ultimate existence to the principle of "matter" was nearly non-existent. The state itself was far from being seen as a purely economic and political organization. It was also a representation of an immanent manifestation of the transcendent order. This was the case for most non-modern state theories, as set out, for example, in Dante's *De Monarchia*. For Dante, the ruler does not represent society but the state. The state is embodied in the ruler, who acts as a restraining and "shaping" force that organizes the dispersing forces of society that, in the absence of an impact from above, would collide with each other. The meaning of the state (Latin: *status*) is therefore associated with "stopping": it is a force that represents a solid and unchanging axis as a symbol of God, that restrains and intervenes when necessary.

Plato asserted that the leaders of society must know the "form of the Good" which means that the philosopher-kings who appear in his State return to the "cave" — that is, to society — only in order to bring the whole of society out of the "cave's" darkness into the light. In this sense, the philosopher-king cannot be a tyrant, precisely because if the truth, which is unchanging, can be known, then the knower of that truth can only be just, so it is legitimate

to place the supreme power in his hands. As can be deduced from the teachings of the early platonic dialogues, knowing the good is the same as "becoming good." The Platonist justification of power was undoubtedly related to a strong recognition and affirmation of a principle beyond the material world, beyond the affairs of economy and society —a supernatural order. As such, the essence and justification of power can be found not in itself but in a higher sphere of reality. The Platonic "form of the Good" directly manifests a supernatural order, which is the divine law of the universe and allows no "progress" no "democracy" and no "equality" and which is hierarchical and aristocratic, and of which the physically manifested world is on the one hand a "shadow" and on the other a reflection. Thus, everything which can lead to Good, the source of existence, is in essence also good.

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