

Reply to Hollick

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Serious philosophical argument often makes use of devices like listing the propositions of the opponent's case, discussing what would happen in an imaginary, artificially restricted world, or far-fetched analogies meticulously followed through. Hollick has read some of this stuff and now that he has decided to advance an argument in writing, feels the necessity to display those devices. But he doesn't know how to use them. They are just for show.

Hollick's "components", pretentiously listed as 1, 2 and 3, are padding. We know that free market anarchists *prefer* and *advocate* free market anarchy. All that Hollick should be doing is giving a brief descriptive definition of free market anarchy, singling out the aspect of it that he considers unworkable, and stating his reasons why. But this is beyond his powers.

The discussion of a "stateless, populated island" is completely unhelpful, and serves only to confuse the issue because Hollick generously assumes that the island's people are all anarchists. This is beside the point, but it may plant in the mind of the drowsy reader the notion that it is necessary to have everyone converted to anarchism before anarchy can operate. There is no more reason to suppose this than to suppose that present-day society requires everyone to be statist, or for that matter, Butskellite welfare-statist.

Why must "our island be populated only by those anarcho-capitalists who accede to a single theory of acquisition of real estate and jurisdiction thereon"? This is asserted. No argument is supplied. There is no such unanimous "agreement" now, nor would there be in Hollick's liberal state. If any other social order can get by without unanimous agreement on a single property theory, why is it justified to single out anarchism for this qualification? Why must anarchy pass a test that every other society fails?

True, there has to be "agreement" to the extent that people do not engage in endless

feuding, but this may be because some of them, though disagreeing with the prevailing property law, perceive that they would be seen as aggressors if they attempted to go against it, and would be beaten in a fight. Or it may be that many people have a hard-boiled apathy towards abstract legal and property theories, and simply want to know what the law is so that they can conduct their affairs accordingly.

Hollick's "we are back to square one" is somewhat enigmatic. It is hardly a triumph of argumentation to introduce a lot of irrelevant drivel, and then announce that it takes us "back to square one", as though this was the fault of the opponent. (1) Individuals in anarchy would be analogous to nation-states. (2) So instead of discussing how individuals interact we discuss how "micro-states" interact. (3) But discussing how micro-states interact is just as difficult as discussing how individuals interact, and takes us no further. (4) Consequently, this analogy with nation-states which I introduced has been a waste of time. (5) The fact that I can waste time like this proves that your view is wrong. Brilliant!

If "present states are viewed as land-holding companies..." If scorpions are viewed as kittens, it's hard to see why Hollick shouldn't want them scampering around his house. Libertarians do not view states as land-holding companies. For one thing, a land-holding company has no right to refuse to let individuals on its land leave. But if states were land-holding companies, this would merely mean that we were opposed to certain kinds of land-holding companies and proposed to dismantle them. The fact that free market anarchists agree with socialists in wanting to alter the property system is quite immaterial. Libertarians agree with socialists in opposing apartheid, monarchy, militarism and baby-battering, and in favouring peace, love, the law of conservation of momentum and the commutative law for addition. Hollick too agrees with socialists in wanting property titles changed. In the realm of ideas, there is no guilt by association.

Hollick misstates the issue. He ought to know that free market anarchists do propose

"a single arbitrary system of lawmaking and enforcement which asserts jurisdiction over non-consenting parties' (emphasis added). All stateless societies possess such a system. It is difficult to conceive of a society operating at all without such a system. But it is not difficult to conceive, nor to find in the anthropological literature, societies which lack a single supreme organisation or agency with a recognized right to the last word in law making and enforcement.

A "system" may allow for divergent practices side by side. Abortion may be permitted in town A and forbidden in town B. As long as citizens of B do not invade A with tanks to enforce B-type laws, and as long as citizens of A accept that when in B they must not commit abortions, we are justified in regarding A and B as parts of a single system. It would be possible to speculate at length about Hollick's phrase 'finally arbitrary', but this would probably be pointless, as Hollick, having stated his definition of free market anarchy, immediately forgets it. He does seem to accept throughout the rest of his piece that a single organisation, not a single system of law, is the hallmark of statism.

Hollick's argument against free market anarchism leads to the return of the state, "shorn of its democratic aspect", apparently a horrible prospect for Hollick. It is reasonable to conclude that Hollick's state *will* be democratic. It is therefore odd that Hollick condemns free market anarchy because it will have, he contends, quasi-democratic features.

Free market anarchy is describable. It has been described at length. It is not describable in specific detail (except by way of illustration of what *might* occur) but in this it is no different to any other proposed social order - including Hollick's democratic liberalism. It is again most peculiar that Hollick the democrat should attack anarchy because it is *almost* like (his) democracy in being able to produce 'any social system at all.'

I don't know of any free market anarchists who think anarchy would be "majoritarian", except in the truistic sense that any legal system must obtain at least the passive

acquiescence of, not just a majority, but of about 98 per cent of the population, if it is to continue.

Hollick scarcely tries to *argue* at all. He just makes assertions. Merely making assertions can be very useful. But to take one side of an already hotly-debated issue, and make the same old assertions, with no evidence in support, not even a re-statement of already disputed evidence let alone new evidence, is hardly very helpful. When even these assertions are few, and dotted about amid a slew of vague innuendos, vacuous rhetorical flourishes and half-baked misconceptions, there is little to go on.

Hollick's "own conclusion is that probably, after a protracted civil war, a dominant protection agency (or coalition of agencies) would emerge". The conclusion, as well as the terminology, is taken from Chapter Two of Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1974). Hollick does not vouchsafe to us anything of the form or outline of the idle reveries which led him to his "own conclusion". He only reveals the conclusion. How much simpler life would be for the rest of us if we could make out a case for a debatable proposition simply by revealing what our conclusion was! Neither does Hollick summarize Nozick's arguments for this "conclusion", and this is understandable, for Nozick presents no arguments either. Indeed, Nozick does not actually reach the conclusion. He states three alternatives (p. 16), one of which is not a dominant protective agency or anything like it, but just a functioning system of free market anarchy. He then goes off, as is his wont, on some peripheral issues (pp. 18-22), and when he returns (pp. 22-25) we learn to our surprise that Nozick assumes the inevitability of the dominant protective association. Apparently there are two possibilities. (a) When he came to write pp. 22-25, Nozick forgot what he had said on pp. 15-17, which quite manifestly does not make even a gesture towards demonstrating the emergence of a dominant agency. (b) Nozick has re-defined "protection association" so that if two or more associations negotiate, arbitrate, or somehow get along without continuous pitched battles, they are to be *defined* as *one* association. It therefore follows that if we are to avoid continuous

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pitched battles, there can be but one association. Some tautologies are illuminating, but this seems to be one of the uninteresting ones.

Hollick knows full well that Nozick has been read by most libertarian activists, that there has been tremendous disappointment at the flimsiness of Nozick's "arguments" against anarchy, and that numerous detailed criticisms of them have been presented by free market anarchists (several in *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*, Winter 1977)

If Hollick knew a way to make something out of the ruin of Nozick's case against anarchy, Hollick ought to have thrown out a few hints.

Free Life