

NEW OCCIDENT

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, & CULTURE

A NOTE ON NEW OCCIDENT

An editorial statement introducing *New Occident* as a quarterly aimed at long-form argument and cultural criticism, written largely by students and alumni of elite universities. It outlines the magazine's organizing commitments and its intended audience and editorial posture.

WHO RULES?

A Schmittian treatment of sovereignty as decision in the exception, set against especially Kelsenian norm-based legal theory, contending that neutral legality cannot be self-grounding because it presupposes a prior authority capable of sustaining the normal conditions under which rules can function.

AGAINST MASS MAN

Essay arguing that modern rhetoric of freedom often yields lived unfreedom, and that both market absolutism and collectivist planning share an anthropology that reduces persons to economic units, gesturing toward a common-good national political economy rooted on something else entirely.

ALSO INSIDE

Note from the Editor-in-Chief on N° One · Toward an Apollonian Order · The Rise & Fall of the Rexist Party · The Æsthetics of Command · Excerpt from *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, The Racial Basis of European History* by Madison Grant

N° I

WINTER MMXXVI

A NOTE ON NEW OCCIDENT

New Occident is dedicated to the cultivation and presentation of right-wing political theory, philosophy, theology, and commentary by students, faculty, and alumni of leading Western institutions. *New Occident* is a publication of New Occident, LLC. The views expressed in its essays are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of New Occident, LLC or the *New Occident* Editorial Board. The Editorial Board edits for clarity and style; authors retain sole responsibility for their arguments and for the accuracy of any factual claims.

To subscribe to *New Occident*, visit, <https://www.newoccident.org/subscribe>.

To submit a letter to the editor, email the editor-in-chief at editor@newoccident.com.

To submit an essay for consideration, email the editor-in-chief at editor@newoccident.com. Essays ought not exceed 4,000 words.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A NOTE ON NEW OCCIDENT.....	I
NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ON N° ONE.....	6
WHO RULES?.....	10
AGAINST MASS MAN.....	18
TOWARD AN APOLLONIAN ORDER.....	28
THE RISE & FALL OF THE REXIST PARTY.....	36
THE ÆSTHETICS OF COMMAND.....	43
RACE AND DEMOCRACY.....	51

A NOTE ON *NEW OCCIDENT*

In this inaugural issue of *New Occident*, we begin from the premise that modern political speech finds impolite: regimes do not meet their citizens first in arguments, platforms, or statutes. They meet them in what surrounds them, presses upon them, and trains them before they ever learn to name what is happening. The built world is an instructor that never sleeps. It teaches by repetition and by scale. It instructs by what it honors with endurance and what it treats as temporary, by what it permits to stand upright in form and what it allows to slump into the merely functional.

That claim, once granted, has consequences that cannot be contained inside architecture alone. If a people is formed, then politics is never a purely juridical enterprise. It is a contest over the grammar of public life. Cities and institutions educate the soul toward reverence, measure, respect for hierarchy or toward cynicism, base appetite, and resentment. The point is not that every feature on every building necessarily preaches something profound. The point is that public form habituates the citizen to certain expectations about reality itself.

Modernity's favorite evasion is to treat these questions as matters of taste,

thereby rendering the civic realm officially innocent. When the public square is declared value-neutral, the citizen is left to discover, after the fact and at great cost, that neutrality is not a description of political life but a strategy within it. The built world does not become neutral because a bureaucracy calls it infrastructure. It becomes a teacher without a curriculum, which means it teaches by accident, and accident is an education in incoherence. The citizen trained by incoherence eventually experiences coherence as an imposition.

This brings us to a second, colder thesis that runs through the issue: the liberal political vision is not a solution to political conflict but a coercion designed to hide where conflict is decided. The modern mind prefers to imagine that the state is an office, law a machine, sovereignty a signature appended to a rule, the decisive act reduced to competent administration. Yet even the most elaborate apparatus of these political procedures cannot abolish the fact that a legal order presupposes a normal situation it cannot generate by norms alone. When normality fractures, someone must decide what counts as the emergency, who may act, what must be preserved, and what guarantees can be suspended in order to preserve the whole.



Triumph of The Cross fresco (center) by Tommaso Laureti, 1585. Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace.

That is the sense in which no political order is neutral, and it is worth making the claim carefully, since it is often uttered lazily and denied just as lazily. Neutrality can exist as a local virtue, but neutrality cannot exist as the essence of a regime. A regime must decide what the rule is, what counts as a relevant difference, what ends the law serves, which threats are tolerable, which are existential, what degree of disorder will be permitted in the name of liberty, and what degree of constraint will be imposed in the name of survival. Even the decision to call them

neutral is itself a decision about what may be spoken and what must be concealed. The modern legal imagination often treats the exception as a deviation from real legality. The argument pressed here is harsher. The exception clarifies the meaning of the normal precisely because the normal rests upon prior acts of consolidation and continuing acts of preservation. This is not an invitation to permanent emergency. It is a refusal to pretend that legitimacy is produced by procedure alone, since procedure cannot

conjure the world in which its own predicates make sense.

Once that veil is lifted, the question of formation returns with a vengeance. If politics cannot be reduced to paperwork, then the citizen cannot be reduced to a consumer of rights, and the nation cannot be reduced to an economy in motion. The issue therefore insists on measures of public health that resist abstraction: whether marriage can be pursued without despair, whether children can be welcomed without panic, whether ownership is sufficiently widespread to keep citizens upright rather than dependent, and whether work confers dignity rather than humiliation. That set of concerns is not an aesthetic hobby. It is the skeleton of a political economy that remembers man's nature and therefore refuses to govern him as if he were a number. It also names, without embarrassment, the moral capacities that a serious nation expects from its people: loyalty, sacrifice, reverence, and craftsmanship.

Here the magazine's posture is unapologetically of the Right, and it is so for reasons deeper than partisan alignment. A civilization that wishes to endure must be able to speak of rank, duty, and limit without flinching, because the attempt to abolish these realities does not in fact abolish them. It merely ensures that they return in degraded and dishonest forms. The state still has hierarchy, but it simply calls it expertise. The market still has hierarchy, but it simply calls it price. Liberal culture still has dogma, but it simply calls it tolerance. A regime that will not name its principles becomes more, not less, susceptible to manipulation, since its

operative commitments must be smuggled in under moralistic euphemisms rather than argued as first principles.

It is in that spirit that we include, near the close of the issue, an excerpt from a seminal early twentieth-century writer on race and democracy. The excerpt is printed as a specimen of a certain kind of political prose and a certain kind of argument: blunt, categorical, unwilling to flatter the democratic conscience, and resolute in drawing distinctions modernity prefers to dissolve. The author insists upon separating race, language, and nationality as distinct orders of analysis, and he argues that a fixation on linguistics and custom often overstates environment at the expense of heredity. He then turns, with characteristic severity, to the political effects of universal suffrage, contending that democratic administration tends toward the elevation of the average rather than the selection of the excellent, with a consequent standardization of type and a diminution of genius.

One may reject the biological premises of that tradition. One may reject its rhetoric or its hierarchy of human nature. Yet, the excerpt remains illuminating in at least two ways that matter for our purposes. First, it forces the reader to confront what democracy denies about itself: that mass rule has an inherent gravitational pull toward leveling, that it prefers what is legible to what is great, and that it often treats excellence as an affront because excellence implies standards the majority did not authorize. Second, it models a kind of sentence-making that modern political writing has largely

forgotten: prose that states what it means, argues from definitions, and proceeds as though truth does not need to ask permission to be spoken.

This editorial posture explains the selection of topics across the issue without requiring us to point at individual pieces as discrete exhibits. The throughline is not a catalog of themes; it is a single insistence, applied across different domains, that public life is built, not merely administered. Architecture trains citizens in the visibility of order. Jurisprudence reveals the inevitability of decision when normality breaks. Political economy either fortifies the family and the local order or dissolves them into dependence and mass management. Religious and moral claims, denied at the level of official doctrine, return by bureaucratic means.

The Right's task, as we understand it, is therefore not exhausted by electoral victory, important as that may be. It is the reconstruction of formative institutions capable of producing a citizenry fit for self-government, which means a citizenry capable of discipline, capable of approbation and of distinguishing between what is noble and what is merely loud. The alternative is familiar: a people trained to crave permission, to mistake appetite for liberty, and to keep the human being small, distracted, and governable.

We publish *New Occident* because we do not accept the idea that history is a one-way emancipation from inherited form. We do not accept the idea that beauty is private and therefore politically irrelevant. We do not accept the idea that sovereignty

can be dissolved. We accept, instead, that a civilization's fate is written gradually in what it builds, what it forbids itself to admire, what it permits itself to despise, and what it quietly trains its sons and daughters to consider normal. If this inaugural issue has a governing intention, it is to restore seriousness: seriousness about man, seriousness about rule, seriousness about form, seriousness about the price of civilizational continuity.

— *The Editors*

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ON N° ONE

In this inaugural issue of *New Occident*, we begin from the premise that modern political speech finds impolite: regimes do not meet their citizens first in arguments, platforms, or statutes. They meet them in what surrounds them, presses upon them, and trains them before they ever learn to name what is happening. The built world is an instructor that never sleeps. It teaches by repetition and by scale. It instructs by what it honors with endurance and what it treats as temporary, by what it permits to stand upright in form and what it allows to slump into the merely functional.

That claim, once granted, has consequences that cannot be contained inside architecture alone. If a people is formed, then politics is never a purely juridical enterprise. It is a contest over the grammar of public life. Cities and institutions educate the soul toward reverence, measure, respect for hierarchy or toward cynicism, base appetite, and resentment. The point is not that every feature on every building necessarily preaches something profound. The point is that public form habituates the citizen to certain expectations about reality itself.

Modernity's favorite evasion is to treat these questions as matters of taste, thereby rendering the civic realm officially innocent. When the public square is declared value-neutral, the citizen is left to discover, after the fact and at great cost, that neutrality is not a description of political life but a strategy within it. The built world does not become neutral because a bureaucracy calls it infrastructure. It becomes a teacher without a curriculum, which means it teaches by accident, and accident is an education in incoherence. The citizen trained by incoherence eventually experiences coherence as an imposition.

This brings us to a second, colder thesis that runs through the issue: the liberal political vision is not a solution to political conflict but a coercion designed to hide where conflict is decided. The modern mind prefers to imagine that the state is an office, law a machine, sovereignty a signature appended to a rule, the decisive act reduced to competent administration. Yet even the most elaborate apparatus of these political

procedures cannot abolish the fact that a legal order presupposes a normal situation it

cannot generate by norms alone. When normality fractures, someone must decide what counts as the emergency, who may act, what must be preserved, and what guarantees can be suspended in order to preserve the whole.

That is the sense in which no political order is neutral, and it is worth making the claim carefully, since it is often uttered lazily and denied just as lazily. Neutrality can exist as a local virtue, but neutrality cannot exist as the essence of a regime. A regime must decide what the rule is, what counts as a relevant difference, what ends the law serves, which threats are tolerable, which are existential, what degree of disorder will be permitted in the name of liberty, and what degree of constraint will be imposed in the name of survival. Even the decision to call them neutral is itself a decision about what may be spoken and what must be concealed.

The modern legal imagination often treats the exception as a deviation from real legality. The argument pressed here is harsher. The exception clarifies the meaning of the normal precisely because the normal rests upon prior acts of consolidation and continuing acts of preservation. This is not an invitation to permanent emergency. It is a refusal to pretend that legitimacy is produced by procedure alone, since procedure cannot conjure the world in which its own predicates make sense.

Once that veil is lifted, the question of formation returns with a vengeance. If politics cannot be reduced to paperwork, then the citizen cannot be reduced to a consumer of rights, and the nation cannot be reduced to

an economy in motion. The issue therefore insists on measures of public health that resist abstraction: whether marriage can be pursued without despair, whether children can be welcomed without panic, whether ownership is sufficiently widespread to keep citizens upright rather than dependent, and whether work confers dignity rather than humiliation. That set of concerns is not an aesthetic hobby. It is the skeleton of a political economy that remembers man's nature and therefore refuses to govern him as if he were a number. It also names, without embarrassment, the moral capacities that a serious nation expects from its people: loyalty, sacrifice, reverence, and craftsmanship.

Here the magazine's posture is unapologetically of the Right, and it is so for reasons deeper than partisan alignment. A civilization that wishes to endure must be able to speak of rank, duty, and limit without flinching, because the attempt to abolish these realities does not in fact abolish them. It merely ensures that they return in degraded and dishonest forms. The state still has hierarchy, but it simply calls it expertise. The market still has hierarchy, but it simply calls it price. Liberal culture still has dogma, but it simply calls it tolerance. A regime that will not name its principles becomes more, not less, susceptible to manipulation, since its operative commitments must be smuggled in under moralistic euphemisms rather than argued as first principles.

It is in that spirit that we include, near the close of the issue, an excerpt from a seminal early twentieth-century writer on race and democracy. The excerpt is printed as

requiring us to point at individual pieces as discrete exhibits. The throughline is not a catalog of themes; it is a single insistence, applied across different domains, that public life is built, not merely administered. Architecture trains citizens in the visibility of order. Jurisprudence reveals the inevitability of decision when normality breaks. Political economy either fortifies the family and the local order or dissolves them into dependence and mass management. Religious and moral claims, denied at the level of official doctrine, return by bureaucratic means.

The Right's task, as we understand it, is therefore not exhausted by electoral victory, important as that may be. It is the reconstruction of formative institutions capable of producing a citizenry fit for self-government, which means a citizenry capable of discipline, capable of approbation and of distinguishing between what is noble and what is merely loud. The alternative is familiar: a people trained to crave permission, to mistake appetite for liberty, and to keep the human being small, distracted, and governable.

We publish *New Occident* because we do not accept the idea that history is a one-way emancipation from inherited form. We do not accept the idea that beauty is private and therefore politically irrelevant. We do not accept the idea that sovereignty can be dissolved. We accept, instead, that a civilization's fate is written gradually in what it builds, what it forbids itself to admire, what it permits itself to despise, and what it

quietly trains its sons and daughters to consider normal. If this inaugural issue has a governing intention, it is to restore seriousness: seriousness about man, seriousness about rule, seriousness about form, seriousness about the price of civilizational continuity.

— *Editor-in-Chief*

WHO RULES?

SCHMITT ON THE FICTION OF NEUTRAL LAW

The modern liberal mind has a curious superstition: that politics can be made safe by being made procedural. It dreams of a world in which conflict is dissolved into competence, in which the state becomes an office, law becomes a machine, and sovereignty becomes—at most—a well-behaved signature at the bottom of a rule. In this dream, power no longer decides; it merely “applies.” Authority no longer commands; it merely “administers.” And the great question—*who rules?*—is converted into a smaller and supposedly more civilized one: *which norm governs?*

Carl Schmitt’s political theology is written as a profanation of that dream. It does not deny norms; it denies their sufficiency. It does not scoff at legality; it scoffs at the pretense that legality is self-grounding. It insists that behind the bright façade of neutral rules stands a darker, older thing: decision. And decision, Schmitt argues, reveals itself most clearly not in the calm of ordinary life but in the storm.

Schmitt’s opening provocation remains indecent because it is too simple to

be politely argued away: “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.”¹

The sentence is just as diagnostic as it is definitional. It claims that sovereignty is not exhausted by everyday administration; it becomes visible precisely where administration breaks. Liberalism prefers to speak of sovereignty as a set of competences and procedures, a jurisdictional outline. Schmitt speaks of it as a *capacity to decide* when the outline burns.

One central contention to develop: modern normativism—classically expressed in Kelsen’s “pure theory”—is not the escape from political theology but one of its most subtle permutations. Liberal legality, far from abolishing the “miracle,” merely hides it;² it builds a liturgy of rules in order to conceal the priesthood of decision. When the exception arrives (and it always arrives), the mask slips, and what is revealed is not the reign of neutral law, but the return of a sovereign power that liberal theory had trained itself not to name.

¹ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 5

² *Ibid.* p. 36

The Exception as Revelation

Schmitt's claim about the exception is often misunderstood as a lawyer's fascination with emergencies. It is larger than that, and more philosophical. The exception exposes what the rule presupposes but cannot produce. A norm can tell you what to do under conditions it can already describe, but it cannot guarantee that those conditions obtain. Law requires a "normal situation" in which legal predicates make sense, institutions function, and commands can be executed. But the establishment and preservation of such normality is not itself a matter of mere norm-application.

Here is the fundamental scandal for any legalism that wants to be metaphysically complete: a legal order cannot *generate* the factual normality it presumes. It can regulate but it cannot conjure the world in which its regulation is meaningful. When that world shakes—civil disorder, existential threat, revolutionary rupture—the legal order does not calmly apply itself. Someone must decide what counts as the emergency, who may act, which guarantees remain operative, and what sacrifices will be demanded.

Schmitt's point is not that exceptions are frequent. His point is that they are *constitutive*. The polity may spend most of its days in the realm of the ordinary, but the ordinary depends upon an original, continuing act of political consolidation. Every stable legal order rests on earlier victories—over rivals, over factions, over the dissolution of authority. And the capacity to

reassert unity in moments of crisis is not an accidental ornament.

A pictorial anecdote may perhaps be more illuminating than just an argument. Take the image of a cathedral, a monumental structure that dominates the skyline. Liberal legality is the equivalent of the cathedral's architects denying that it has foundations. They will offer you a tour of its arches and windows, its refined proportionality, its carefully distributed load. But ask them what holds it up, and they point—absurdly—back to the arches. Schmitt insists you look down. He insists you see the buried stone, the older violence of establishment, the prior act that made the structure possible.

And because this insistence is intolerable to the liberal conscience, liberalism offers a counter-move: it treats the exception as a pathology, a deviation from "real" legality, something that should be minimized, proceduralized, domesticated. But Schmitt's whole method reverses the perspective. It is precisely the abnormal case that clarifies the meaning of the normal. We do not truly know what law *is* until we see what law does when it cannot do what it claims to do.

Kelsen's Purity and the Phantom of Self-Grounding Norms

Hans Kelsen's project—at least as Schmitt reads it—is the most ambitious attempt to evacuate decision from the concept of law. Kelsen wants a "pure theory": a theory of law *as law*, cleansed of metaphysics, politics, sociology, theology, and

morality. The juridical order becomes a hierarchy of norms, each deriving validity from a higher norm, culminating in the famous presupposition: the basic norm.

Schmitt's objection is not that the picture is elegant. It is that the picture is incomplete precisely at the point where completeness matters. In the editorial introduction to *Political Theology*, Schmitt is summarized as targeting Kelsen's view of the state as a "system of ascriptions" in which a "last basic norm" anchors the structure.³

One immediately sees why this is attractive to liberal modernity. A basic norm is a substitute for a sovereign person; validity replaces authority, and the state becomes an impersonal order rather than a decisive agent. But Schmitt's argument is that this does not abolish sovereignty. Rather, it displaces it.

What is a "basic norm," after all, except a demand for obedience that cannot be derived from the legal order without circularity? Kelsen must *presuppose* it because it cannot be proven within the system whose validity it grounds. Thus, "purity" becomes a kind of metaphysical hygiene that, in fact, leaves one metaphysical object in place: the ungrounded presupposition that the system ought to be treated as valid.

Schmitt's deeper criticism is that Kelsen's norm-hierarchy cannot account for the moments when the system confronts what it cannot legally articulate. A norm can be applied only within an already secured political unity. But who secures it? Who decides what counts as the legal order when rival claimants contend? Who determines that

³ Ibid. p.xliii

this constitution is the constitution when revolution, occupation, or civil fracture occurs? The basic norm is silent. It is the ghostly neutrality of a system that wants to be sovereign without confessing sovereignty.

Schmitt's own emphasis, by contrast, is relentlessly personalistic. The reality of legal life depends, ultimately, on *who* decides. The text presses this not as a mere sociological observation but as a formal insight into jurisprudence: "What matters for the reality of legal life is who decides."⁴ That line is dynamite under normativism. It does not mean that substantive correctness is irrelevant; it means that substantive correctness cannot replace competence, authority, and decision. A system of norms can offer rules, but it cannot compel someone to treat them as binding unless a political power exists that can, in the decisive case, secure the conditions of their bindingness.

Political Theology as the Anatomy of Modern Concepts

Schmitt's most famous claim is often quoted as a slogan but perilously ignored as a method. Yet it is central to his entire enterprise: modern state concepts, he argues, bear the imprint of theological structures. The reason is twofold: historical translation (concepts migrate from theology into political theory) and systematic analogy (the conceptual architecture remains similar even after the sacred vocabulary is discarded).

Schmitt states this thesis with the bluntness of someone who knows he is about

⁴ Ibid. p.34



The Coronation of Napoleon by Jacques-Louis David, 1807.
Louvre Museum, Paris.

to offend a whole century: “All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts...”

Note the phrase quoted in part: “secularized theological concepts.” If Schmitt is right, then liberalism is not a neutral alternative to theological politics; it is theology’s masked continuation. Liberalism did not kill the sacred or abolish metaphysical structure; it rearranged it, replacing an explicit God and His miracles, providence, and sacraments with an implicit Lawgiver, imbued emergency powers, hellbent on progress, but limited by procedure.

Schmitt sharpens the analogy further by insisting that “the exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology.” The Enlightenment banishes miracles, and the constitutional state, in its rationalist self-understanding, wants to banish exceptions. It wants a closed system governed by regularity, predictability, and immanent law. But Schmitt’s point is that neither nature nor politics truly tolerates this dream. Nature may be conceived as lawful, but theology insists on God’s freedom to intervene. Liberal jurisprudence may be conceived as a closed order of norms, but political reality insists on the power to

intervene when the order cannot preserve itself.

And here Schmitt makes a move that should interest any reader whose intellectual sympathies lean toward similar clarity: he explicitly identifies the Catholic philosophers of the counterrevolution as offering the richest political application of these analogies—naming Bonald, de Maistre, and Donoso Cortés as exemplars.⁵

The modern liberal might dismiss this as reactionary romance. But Schmitt's claim is the opposite: these thinkers are not merely playing with symbols; they are perceiving the structure that liberalism is trained to deny. The liberal speaks of neutral institutions and impersonal legality because he cannot bear the theological implications of politics. The counterrevolutionary speaks of authority, providence, and decision because he sees that the state cannot survive on procedure alone.

The Medieval Template: Kantorowicz and the Transference of Sacred Forms

Schmitt's method invites a historical deepening: if modern political concepts are secularized theological concepts, then the medieval period, where theology and political order were explicitly intertwined, should provide a laboratory for seeing these forms in their original intensity.

Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* supplies precisely such a laboratory. His analysis traces how ecclesial notions of mystical unity and transcendence migrate into political forms. He shows, for example,

⁵ Ibid. p.37

how the concept of the Church as a *corpus mysticum* is “transferred...from the theological sphere to that of the state the head of which is the king.”⁶

The medieval king is not merely a man. He is also an office, a continuity, a corporate head. The doctrine of the “two bodies”—the king's natural body and the political body—reveals the political need for continuity beyond mortality. A polity cannot allow the death of the ruler to become the death of order. The king must be, in Kantorowicz's striking summary from the legal tradition, a “Name of Continuance,” such that “the King never dies.”⁷

Kantorowicz also notes the process by which the “lofty idea” of the *corpus mysticum* becomes politicized and secularized, then “fell prey” to the conceptual world of jurists and statesmen constructing new ideologies for territorial states.⁸ The key term here is not merely “secularized” but the reality it names: *transference*. The political order borrows sacred vocabulary because it needs the metaphysical weight the sacred once supplied.

Schmitt's insistence that modern sovereignty is structurally analogous to theological omnipotence becomes less shocking when one sees how earlier political orders openly clothed themselves in sacred concepts to stabilize authority.

The Concept of the Political: Friend and Enemy, Unity and Decision

⁶ Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, p16

⁷ Ibid. p.23

⁸ Ibid. p.207

Schmitt's political theology is inseparable from his concept of the political. The exception is not merely a juridical curiosity; it is the point at which political unity confronts its existential boundary. In *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt presses the question liberal pluralism wants to evade: who decides in the extreme case? The text asks which entity determines the "decisive friend-and-enemy grouping."

This is the heart of Schmitt's provocation: the political is not reducible to moral debate, economic bargaining, or aesthetic preference. It concerns the possibility of collective existence and the willingness to defend it. Liberalism, especially in its more sentimental forms, wants to treat the state as a neutral umpire among interest groups. Schmitt replies that an umpire presupposes a game, and a game presupposes boundaries, and boundaries presuppose an authority.

Here one must be careful. To state Schmitt's analysis is not to applaud every political passion, still less to glamorize conflict. It is to notice that politics, unlike the liberal fantasy, does not disappear when we refuse to speak its name. The refusal merely produces self-deception. The liberal continues to make enemy distinctions—he simply moralizes them, disguises them, and then congratulates himself on his neutrality.

Schmitt's insistence is that the political entity, if it exists, is in the decisive case, the authoritative entity. This is sovereignty again, but now seen through the lens of political unity rather than legal competence. The sovereign is the guardian of

norms, yes, but he is also the guardian of the conditions in which a common life can continue.

If Schmitt is right, liberalism should eventually be forced into an admission: in the extreme case, the rule of law cannot fully rule. Modern liberal jurisprudence has indeed produced a vocabulary for this admission, though it often presents it as an unfortunate anomaly rather than a constitutive truth.

David Dyzenhaus describes the phenomenon of "legal black holes"—zones created by law in which officials act unconstrained by ordinary legality⁹. The phrase is vivid because it captures the metaphysical embarrassment: a "black hole" is not merely an exception; it is a region where the normal laws of the system no longer apply. Liberal legality, in creating such zones, demonstrates that it is willing—under pressure—to suspend the very principles it celebrates as fundamental.

Dyzenhaus also cites Dicey's scandalous phrase for the legislative sanitizing of executive violations: an indemnity that "legalises illegality."¹⁰ The formula is almost Schmittian in spite of itself. It acknowledges that legality can be manufactured after the fact, that law can be used to baptize what was lawless, and that the system's self-image as a continuous reign of legality is—at best—aspirational.

Dyzenhaus seeks, of course, to resist Schmitt's conclusion. He wants to keep faith

⁹Dyzenhaus, *The Constitution of Law: Legality in a Time of Emergency*, p. 77

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 201, quoting Dicey, *Law of the Constitution*, pp. 412–13.

with a rule of law, to demand that judges and constitutional culture push back against statutory or executive attempts to create these holes. That is honorable, perhaps as a normative project. But it concedes Schmitt's descriptive premise that the extreme case presses law to the point where law either breaks or must be supplemented by political decision.

In another passage, Dyzenhaus observes that when liberal legality fails, its failure reveals a legislative "decision to govern arbitrarily rather than through the rule of law."¹¹ The word "decision" is, well, decisive. Liberalism cannot avoid it; it can only relocate it. It dreams of a world governed by norms, but it wakes—again and again—to the reality that someone must decide whether norms govern at all.

Schmitt's suspicion is that liberalism's greatest danger is not hypocrisy in the moral sense, but self-blindness in the political sense. The liberal imagines that the exception is an aberration, and thus fails to build a responsible theory of who should decide and under what conditions. The result is not the abolition of the exception, but its return in a more irresponsible form, now concealed, improvised, and justified after the fact in the language of administrative necessity.

The Counterrevolutionary Lesson: Authority, Not Neutrality

Schmitt's sympathy for counterrevolutionary Catholic thinkers should not be treated as mere biographical

¹¹ Ibid.

flavor. It discloses the kind of clarity Schmitt believes modernity has lost. The counterrevolutionary writers Schmitt names do not fear the theological structure of politics. They fear its denial. They understand that every political order rests on judgments about ultimate things like human nature, authority, sin, conflict, the necessity of coercion, and the limits of rational consensus.

To speak like de Maistre is to refuse the liberal euphemisms. It is to say: the state is a real power because the world is real, and men are not angels, and communities do not maintain themselves by procedure alone.

This is why Schmitt's seemingly technical thesis about the exception becomes, in his hands, a philosophical weapon. It unmasks the liberal fantasy that law can replace politics. Law can channel politics, but it cannot abolish it. Law can adorn power but not eliminate the need for power. And when liberalism forgets this, it becomes more fragile—and fragility, in politics, is an invitation to emergency.

Modernity wanted a closed system of norms, a stable geometry of rights, a neutral state that does not decide but merely administers. Schmitt's political theology replies that such a state is either impossible or dishonest. The exception arrives, the decision must be made, and the sovereign reveals himself.

Schmitt's definition of sovereignty forces political theory to stop pretending that the decisive act is not decisive. It forces jurisprudence to acknowledge that validity is never merely logical but always politically sustained. And it forces liberalism to admit

that its supposed neutrality is built on unspoken decisions about the friend and the enemy, about the normal and the abnormal, about what must be preserved when preservation becomes most costly.

One may reject Schmitt's conclusions, preferring instead the moral comforts of liberal constitutionalism, but one cannot do so without confronting the structure he exposes. Modern legality is a secular liturgy built around a hidden priesthood of decision. The exception is its miracle. The sovereign is its god—not because he is divine, but because the system cannot finally explain itself without him. Politics, like theology, ultimately concerns ultimacy: the boundaries of order, the meaning of authority, and the final decision when words run out. That is why political theology will not die.

AGAINST MASS MAN

The modern world speaks incessantly of “freedom,” yet produces men and women who feel increasingly unfree: economically insecure, culturally disoriented, atomized in their neighborhoods, exhausted by the churn of novelty, and resentful of the political theater around them. In this climate, two rival solutions dominate the imagination: on one side, a capitalism that asks us to trust the impersonal logic of markets even when markets corrode the very social bonds that make human life worth living; on the other, a communism, or broader collectivism, that promises justice by concentrating power, dissolving intermediary institutions, and subordinating the person to the plan.

Both, in different ways, share the same mistake. They begin from an impoverished anthropology. They imagine the human being primarily as an economic unit—producer, consumer, beneficiary, statistic—rather than as a moral and spiritual creature whose flourishing depends on duties, loyalties, inherited forms, and a culture capable of shaping virtue. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, describing the hollowing-out he perceived in affluent modern societies, put his finger on the deeper hunger: “After the suffering of decades of violence and oppression, the human soul longs for things higher, warmer,

and purer than those offered by today’s mass living habits, introduced as by a calling card by the revolting invasion of commercial advertising, by TV stupor, and by intolerable music.”¹²

The point is not to romanticize poverty or repression. It is to recognize that *bread alone is not enough* and that a political economy that forgets the soul will eventually degrade even the material order it boasts of securing. Wilhelm Röpke, a major critic of both collectivism and a merely technical “economism,” warns precisely against the conceit that markets exhaust society: “the sphere of the market... neither exhausts nor determines society as a whole. The market is only one section of society... possible only because it is part of a larger whole which concerns not economics but philosophy, history, and theology.”¹³

There is a third way—not a mushy “centrism,” but a principled alternative: a common-good political economy rooted in the nation understood as a moral community, with the family as its first cell; a renewed commitment to property widely held and work dignified; a reassuring of local and religious institutions; and a cultural program

¹² Solzhenitsyn, *A World Split Apart*

¹³ Röpke, *A Humane Economy*, p.91-2

aimed at recovering beauty, discipline, and the conditions of virtue.

This vision rejects the modern cult of the State that absorbs everything, and it rejects any “nation” defined as an idea or economic zone. A society cannot be built from individuals floating in space, and it cannot be governed as if human beings were interchangeable units. The most perceptive critics of modernity repeatedly return to the same insight: political health requires *intermediate* forms—family, parish, guild, neighborhood, local associations—that stand between the solitary person and the centralized state.

Edmund Burke gives the classic statement. Against leftist revolutionary schemes that dissolve inherited attachments in the name of abstract “rights,” he insists that our loves and loyalties are first learned in the near and particular: “To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections.”¹⁴ The nation is not a replacement for those loyalties. Rather, it is their extension and guardian.

Burke deepens the point by describing society as a partnership across time, not a contract among the presently living alone: it is “a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.”¹⁵ A nation worthy of love is, therefore, not simply a market territory or an administrative zone. It is a moral inheritance, from its law and language, right down to its

worship, manners, architecture, memory, and shared sense of the admirable.

Joseph de Maistre mocks the liberal revolutionary habit of drafting constitutions for an imaginary and universal “Man” that is detached from real peoples: “The Constitution of 1795, like its predecessors, was made for man. But there is no such thing as man in the world.” He continues, “I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, etc... But as for man, I declare that I have never in my life met him; if he exists, he is unknown to me.”¹⁶ This is paradigmatic of the anti-utopian insistence that politics must address human beings as they actually live: in families, nations, and traditions.

A similar observation appears—interestingly—from a scholarly foreword on early conservative thought: the post-revolutionary “reawakening... of an appreciation of these intermediate ties among human beings, with the family and church leading the way.”¹⁷ The “pulverizing legislation” of revolutionary modernity attacked “patriarchal family, local community, guild, monastery, and other groups and associations intermediate to man and state.”¹⁸ If this is true politically, it is even more true economically. A nationalist political economy is not primarily a slogan about borders or flags; it is a program for rebuilding the institutions and habits that make national solidarity possible, principally stable family life, dignified work, distributed property, and

¹⁴ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p.39-40

¹⁵ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p.80

¹⁶ de Maistre, *Considerations on France*, p. 97

¹⁷ Nisbet foreword on Bonald, *On Divorce*, p.ix

¹⁸ Ibid.

a moral culture capable of restraining appetites rather than monetizing them.

A humane political economy requires a serious account of law and moral purpose. Here St. Thomas Aquinas remains indispensable precisely because he refuses to reduce politics to power, economics, or sentiment. For Aquinas, law is not sheer command; it is rational order oriented to a shared end: “Law is nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated.”¹⁹

Notice the structure. Law presupposes (1) reason, (2) a common good, (3) legitimate authority, and (4) public intelligibility. When any of these are severed, law degenerates into mere technique or coercion. A society that legislates as if it were regulating machines will eventually receive machine-like citizens, citizens that are passive, resentful, and manipulable.

A people can be materially entertained and still become politically impotent. A people can be legally free and still lack the real independence that comes from property, family stability, and functional community.

Aquinas is equally direct about the aim of legislation: “the intention of the lawgiver is fixed on the true good, which is the common good.”²⁰ A nationalist politics, then, cannot treat the economy as a neutral arena of preference satisfaction. The economy

¹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, Q.90, Art.4

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I–II, Q.92, Art.1

must be judged by whether it supports the common good—whether it enables families to form, children to be educated, neighborhoods to cohere, and citizens to practice the virtues that freedom requires.

This also clarifies why both market absolutism and collectivist planning are ultimately inadequate. The market absolutist says that if exchanges are voluntary, the outcome is legitimate. The collectivist says that if the plan is rational, the outcome is legitimate. Aquinas replies that legitimacy must be measured by the *true good* of the community and by a law that forms, not merely permits.

In *De Regno*, Aquinas defines political rule by its end: “the idea of king implies that he be one man who is chief and that he be a shepherd, seeking the common good of the multitude and not his own.”²¹ Conversely, then, a tyrant is one who rules over a people for his own good rather than the good of the people. This provides a clean diagnostic for modern systems. An economy becomes tyrannical not only when a dictator appears, but when impersonal structures rule for *private good* i.e. when labor is treated as disposable, when communities are dismantled for profit, when the family wage becomes impossible, when culture becomes a delivery system for appetite. Tyranny can just as easily be bureaucratic or financial as it can political.

A nationalist political economy begins, therefore, with a demand: *structures must serve the common good*. That demand includes duties. A healthy national community is not a playground of isolated

²¹ Aquinas, *De Regno*, II. 13.

rights-claims. It is a field of reciprocal obligation in which strong institutions cultivate strong persons.

It is tempting, then, to say that capitalism and communism are opposite poles. In practice, they often function as rival mechanisms for the same outcome: depersonalization.

Röpke describes “mass society” as a condition in which the person loses “features, soul, intrinsic worth, and personality because and in so far as he is immersed in the ‘mass.’”²² This happens not only in centralized political regimes but also in societies where commercial and technological forces dissolve local life into an undifferentiated consumer-culture.

He continues with a description that should unsettle both the technocratic planner and the complacent market celebrant: “men are uprooted and taken out of the close-woven social texture in which they were secure... true communities are broken up in favor of more universal but impersonal collectivities in which the individual is no longer a person in his own right.”²³

This is the crucial point: a society can be “free” in the narrow legal sense while still producing the social reality of mass man—deracinated, lonely, and easy to govern. And once that condition becomes widespread, citizens begin to crave security over freedom, and the door opens to servility.

Here, Hilaire Belloc’s warning in *The Servile State* reads like a prophecy. He defines the core danger as a society divided into

owners and non-owners and stabilized by state-backed arrangements that guarantee subsistence in exchange for the loss of independence. In *The Servile State*, he warns essentially that either the institution of property must be restored, or slavery will return.

Belloc’s argument is not that every welfare measure is evil. It is that when property becomes radically concentrated, the “solution” offered will increasingly be a trade: security for freedom—status for contract. He poses a chillingly realistic question: if offered a life-contract guaranteeing wages at the price of freedom, “how many would refuse?” and answers, “Very few would refuse it.”²⁴

This is why a nationalist political economy cannot be satisfied with GDP or consumer choice. A people can be materially entertained and still become politically impotent. A people can be legally free and still lack the real independence that comes from property, family stability, and functional community.

Against both market idolaters and state idolaters, the tradition insists on the person—and on the moral ecology that makes persons possible.

The heart of an alternative political economy is not envy of the rich, or romanticization of the poor, or the contra of either of those. It is the conviction that independence requires a material basis, and that human dignity is injured when most people are locked permanently into wage dependence without any realistic path to ownership.

²² Röpke, *A Humane Economy*, p.53

²³ Ibid. p.55

²⁴ Belloc, *The Servile State*, p.140-1

Belloc is precise about what capitalism means in this sense. It is not merely trade or enterprise; it is a structure in which “the ownership and therefore the control of the means of production, is confined to some number of free citizens not large enough to determine the social mass of the State, while the rest have not such property and are therefore proletarian.”²⁵

This structural definition matters because it clarifies why the meritocracy myth often fails. If the basic condition of the majority is non-ownership, then politics becomes a contest over wages and transfers rather than a project of restoring independence. Indeed, Belloc observes that workers increasingly cease to view ownership as attainable; “they think of themselves as wage-earners.”²⁶

Chesterton supplies the positive counterpoint. He insists that property is not merely an economic quantity but a civic and spiritual reality: “Property is merely the art of the democracy. It means that every man should have something that he can shape in his own image, as he is shaped in the image of heaven.”²⁷ A society of owners is a society with citizens capable of standing upright, capable of saying “no,” capable of sustaining local institutions, capable of exercising responsibility rather than merely demanding rights.

This is why the family and the household are not private lifestyle choices but the first school of political economy.

²⁵ Ibid. p.15

²⁶ Ibid. p.138

²⁷ Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World*, I.VI.

Xenophon, long before modern ideology, treats household management, or *oikonomia*, as a discipline of stewardship and formation. In a striking passage, he notes the social expectation that women be educated chiefly so that “she might see as little, hear as little, and ask as few questions as possible,” while the husband was expected to look after his work.²⁸

We need not import every ancient social assumption wholesale to learn from the underlying point: a household is a real economic unit with real duties, and a healthy society requires that households have the stability and resources to carry those duties. Modern economies often speak as if the household were merely a consumption node, but the Western tradition speaks of it as stewardship, continuity, and responsibility.

Economic renewal without cultural renewal is futile. If the citizen is shaped by pornography, nihilistic entertainment, and appetite, no policy will save him; he will demand to be entertained, anesthetized, and managed. He will be the cattle they already think him to be.

A distributive political economy follows from this. Its goal is not to abolish markets but to discipline markets toward the common good by widening ownership, restraining predatory concentrations, and ensuring that the dignity of work is not

²⁸ Xenophon, *Economicus*, p.97. Concerning the way in which the Athenian girls passed their time before marriage, see Becker's *Charicles*, vol. ii. p. 422, 475. Breitenbach, *Also Xen. Rep. Lac. c. 1, sect. 3.*

sacrificed to profit or administrative convenience.

A nationalist political economy begins where Burke begins: with the “little platoon.” It proceeds through Aquinas, for whom law is an “ordinance of reason for the common good.” It receives its economic urgency from Belloc, who insists that the alternatives resolve into a stark choice: restore property or accept servility. It gains cultural clarity from Röpke, who reminds us that markets are a “section,” not the whole, and that mass society, precisely because it is mass, can grind the person down into a unit rather than a soul. And it hears, in Solzhenitsyn’s severe voice, the warning that comfort without spiritual depth produces weakness: a civilization can be amply supplied and yet inwardly unarmed.

From these premises, what follows is not a fantasy of instant transformation, but an ordering of loves and a hierarchy of tasks. The household must be rebuilt, not as a lifestyle option, but as the irreducible cell of national continuity, through policies that make family formation eminently materially possible and through a culture that honors duty over appetite. Ownership must be distributed, because the citizen must be secure enough in property to be free in fact, not merely free on paper. The intermediaries of society must be strengthened so that the person is not left naked before Leviathan and so that public life regains texture, loyalty, and moral instruction. Politics itself must recover its proper grammar: authority understood as stewardship rather than extraction, and rule judged by whether it seeks the people’s good

rather than private advantage. And beauty must be made public again: architecture, art, education, liturgy, and manners restored to their rightful place as instruments of national form, not dismissed as private taste or optional luxury.

The modern West oscillates between cynicism and frenzy: either nothing matters, or everything is an emergency. The tradition offers a steadier path, rooted in the permanent things, honest about human nature, and confident that renewal is possible because human beings are capable of virtue, indeed made for it. If “the intention of the lawgiver is fixed on the true good, which is the common good,” then the ultimate test of any political economy is not cleverness but fruit: does it make it easier for ordinary people to live truthfully, to form families, to worship, to work with dignity, and to hand down a stable inheritance to those “who are to be born”? That is the nationalist standard—not an ideology of resentment, nor of domination, nor of abstraction, but the patient work of rebuilding a moral community, first in the home, then in the neighborhood, then in the nation, until the nation again deserves to be called a common good.

From this follows a distributive political economy: not a scheme to abolish markets, but a resolve to place markets back under judgment, disciplining them toward the common good by widening ownership, restraining predatory concentrations, and refusing to let the dignity of work be treated as expendable whenever profit or administrative convenience demands a



The Gleaners by Jean-François Millet, 1857. Musée d'Orsay, Paris

sacrifice. In practice, such a program takes form through a public regime that breaks the spell of bigness—an anti-monopoly seriousness that prevents ownership and cultural power from congealing in a few commercial, financial, or technological hands—while reestablishing labor and wage norms ordered not merely to “productivity,” but to the actual conditions of household formation and the raising of children. It seeks broad-based capital as a necessary part of the

architecture: cooperative ownership where fitting, employee ownership where possible, small business formation as a national priority, and local credit institutions that invest in places rather than merely bleeding them dry. And it gives a real preference to the local, shaping procurement, zoning, and tax policy so that community-scale enterprise can survive and flourish instead of being crowded out by a system that rewards pure utilitarian scale and calls the resulting massacre “efficiency.” A common-good political

economy requires competent authority, but it also requires limits. The modern error is to see only two options: a centralized state that “solves” everything, or a procedural liberalism that refuses to name the good and therefore cannot defend the social preconditions of its own freedom.

The classical tradition offers a more realistic account. Polybius, analyzing regime forms, notes that:

“There are six kinds of constitution—the three commonly recognized ones I have just mentioned, and three more which are congenital with them: tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlocracy or mob-rule. In the natural, spontaneous course of events, the first system to arise is monarchy, and this is followed by kingship, but it takes the deliberate correction of the defects of monarchy for it to develop into kingship. Kingship changes into its congenital vice—that is, into tyranny—and then it is the turn of aristocracy, after the dissolution of tyranny. Aristocracy necessarily degenerates into oligarchy, and when the general populace get impassioned enough to seek redress for the crimes committed by their leaders, democracy is born.”²⁹

The point is not to memorize typologies; it is to recognize that every regime form carries characteristic temptations, and therefore stable politics often requires a mixed constitution—a balance of elements that

prevents any one principle from devouring the rest.

Burke’s lament about the collapse of moral and æsthetic restraint belongs here too. A society that sneers at honor, piety, and tradition soon discovers that it cannot govern by calculation alone: “The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.” This is not just romantic grief. It is a warning: when a civilization reduces human motives to interest, it will eventually be ruled by whoever manipulates interest most effectively, whether the bureaucrat, the financier, or the propagandist. A nationalist political economy must therefore recover not only institutional competence but moral formation—citizens who can be governed without being bribed or hypnotized.

Economic renewal without cultural renewal is futile. If the citizen is shaped by pornography, nihilistic entertainment, and appetite, no policy will save him; he will demand to be entertained, anesthetized, and managed. He will be the cattle they already think him to be.

Röpke describes the intellectual and moral dimension of mass society with unsparing clarity:

“thought is becoming shallow, uniform, derivative, herdlike, and tritely mediocre; the growing predominance of the semi-educated; the destruction of the necessary intellectual hierarchy of achievement and function; the crumbling away of the edifice of civilization; and the

²⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, VI. IV.

presumption with which this *homo insipiens gregarius* sets himself up as the norm and chokes everything that is finer or deeper.”³⁰

If politics is downstream from culture, then a nationalist project must include cultural disciplines: education that trains taste and judgment, public architecture that embodies national beauty, and a civic life that honors worship, sacrifice, and the inheritance of the dead.

The globalist, commercial culture does not merely sell products; it sells a posture toward reality. It is a culture designed to keep citizens in a permanent state of appetite and distraction, because appetite is governable and distraction is profitable.

A nationalist cultural program is not a call for puritanical grayness. It is a call for natural beauty—for homes and streets that invite reverence rather than assault attention; for art that ennobles rather than degrades; for moral standards that free desire by disciplining it. Solzhenitsyn’s critique of “commercial advertising” and “TV stupor” is, ultimately, a plea for human elevation. The globalist, commercial culture does not merely sell products; it sells a posture toward reality. It is a culture designed to keep citizens in a permanent state of appetite and distraction, because appetite is governable and distraction is profitable. When a people is trained to crave stimulation and despise discipline, it becomes easy to rule: not by persuasion, but

by sedatives, incentives, and fear of exclusion. Beauty, in this context, is not decoration. It is resistance. The point can be stated simply: if the human person is made for higher things, then a world order that trains him to live for lower things will eventually produce despair—and despair is politically explosive.

A nationalist political economy does not require hatred of other nations. On the contrary, it presupposes that real peace is easier among peoples who are internally healthy, secure in their identity, capable of self-government, and not compelled to export their disorder abroad.

De Maistre’s mockery of “Man” is relevant again because the most aggressive imperial projects now arrive wearing humanitarian masks. The universal abstractions of our age—“the international community,” “global norms,” “the rules-based order”—are not descriptions; they are claims to authority. They function as a solvent poured on particular loyalties, loyalties to religion, to nation, to locality, to inherited obligations. Under this Hebraic pressure, a people is instructed to treat itself as provisional, negotiable, and morally suspect, while the managers of the system present their own power. The result is a politics in which sovereignty becomes a sin, borders become a scandal, tradition becomes repressive, and any attempt to defend the integrity of a national community is denounced as extremism, precisely because a self-governing people is the one thing a borderless managerial class cannot easily tolerate.

³⁰ Röpke, *A Humane Economy*, p. 54

This is also a warning against the modern habit of laundering ambition through moral vocabulary. This world Jewry speaks with a pretense of humanity while practicing the politics of control: it declares itself neutral, rational, benevolent, and rules-based, even as it concentrates decision-making in institutions no citizen can meaningfully reach—boards, courts, agencies, transnational consortia, and the soft-power priesthood of experts. It flatters the public with slogans about openness and progress while quietly converting communities into administrable populations and citizens into compliant stakeholders who will never see a dime. If one wants a definition of contemporary domination, it is not jackboots; it is *this*, a regime of incentives and penalties, of reputational policing and regulatory strangulation, designed to make resistance too costly and loyalty too quaint to sustain.

A nationalist political economy, then, is best understood not as a mood or a slogan, but as a discipline of order: the deliberate subordination of wealth, technique, and appetite to the ends that justify a common life in the first place. It insists that the nation is not a warehouse of interchangeable labor, nor a bazaar of detached consumers, nor a spreadsheet managed by distant experts, but a communion of persons bound by obligation—an inheritance carried, cultivated, and handed on. It therefore measures success by realities that resist abstraction: whether marriage is attainable without despair, whether children are welcomed without financial panic, whether work grants dignity rather than humiliation, whether ownership is

sufficiently widespread that citizens can stand upright, and whether the places people inhabit train reverence rather than cynicism. Such a project cannot be achieved by a single law or election; it is a long campaign of reconstruction that begins with first principles and ends in institutions, habits, and a culture capable of moral self-government.

If there is a practical confidence at the heart of this vision, it is the confidence that the political and economic order is not fated. Structures can be changed; incentives can be reformed; power can be redirected; and a people can recover the capacity for seriousness. A nation that chooses to prefer families over usurious financial abstraction, productive ownership over servile dependence, local vitality over centralized extraction, and public beauty over private degradation is not retreating into the past; it is reclaiming the preconditions of liberty. The modern world's deepest lie is that nothing higher can be asked of man than comfort and choice. The nationalist alternative answers with a higher realism: that man is capable of loyalty, sacrifice, reverence, and craftsmanship, and that when these are expected again, a people becomes harder to purchase, harder to deceive, and harder to rule from afar. That is not merely an economic program. It is a moral recovery, and it is the only foundation on which a stable, peaceful, and genuinely humane public life can be rebuilt.

TOWARD AN APOLLONIAN ORDER

Modernity congratulates itself on having ostensibly moved beyond the old polarities. It speaks in the tranquil idiom of process, wellness, inclusion, evidence-based policy, and, perhaps above all, choice. But behind this polite pharmacology of words, the same older architecture of the soul persists, indifferent to straplines, and more implacable than any theory that denies it. The human race, in the aggregate, is not a smooth continuum of rational individuals. It is a field of types—recurring dispositions with recurring needs—whose tensions generate culture and whose mismanagement generates ruin.

The primary polarity is still the one the Greeks knew: Apollo and Dionysus, two durable orientations of the organism and its imagination. Apollo is form and limit, clarity and selection, the impulse toward structure that does not apologize for structure. Dionysus is dissolution and fusion, appetite and intoxication, the impulse toward the loss of boundaries that does not ask permission of reason. These are not *ideas* floating over human life; they are *drives* that recruit ideas as

their instruments. When a civilization is healthy, the drives contend and transact, each granting the other a bounded place. When a civilization becomes decadent, as it has, it ceases to govern the transaction and instead weaponizes one drive against the other, often by flattering the more pliable one for the purposes of rule.

Three essential claims can help diagnose such decadence.

Firstly, that Apollo and Dionysus describe real, stable dispositions in persons—not perfectly clean categories, but persistent clusters. The metaphor is anchored in biology and in the deep grammar of sex-difference. The quarrel is real because the organism is real.

Secondly, that modern institutions, especially the twin engines of finance and media, have converged upon an operating strategy: pacify the Dionysian by giving it endless, low-cost simulacra of liberation; subjugate the Apollonian by dissolving the norms and disciplines on which it depends, while still extracting its productivity.

Thirdly, that the present social crisis is not an accidental polarization that better civics lessons will heal. It is the predictable result of a regime that has inverted the hierarchy of drives: rewarding dissolution while taxing form; subsidizing appetite while penalizing restraint; praising transgression while suspecting distinction.

The reigning anthropological superstition is the one that insists there is the human being, singular—an abstract unit whose preferences are infinitely malleable and whose identity is a matter of self-declaration. This is convenient for bureaucracies, which require interchangeable parts, and for markets, which require endlessly reprogrammable consumers. But it is false. Human life is not primarily a debate between propositions; it is a contest between temperaments. Culture is not merely expressed by people; it is made possible by certain kinds of people and made unstable by others when their energies are ungoverned.

Apollo is the temperament of distance. It is the capacity to stand apart from impulse long enough to shape it. It can be ascetic without being puritanical; it can be aristocratic without being merely snobbish; it can be disciplined without being timid. Its first instinct is not to *feel more* but to *form more*. It values hierarchy in the literal sense and suspects the sentimental lie that “all feelings are equally valid,” because it knows feelings are cheap and form is costly. It senses, often wordlessly, that civilization is an unnatural achievement purchased by restraint.

Dionysus is an altogether different temperament. It longs for the loss of separations: between self and group, appetite and legitimacy, desire and right. It experiences boundaries as injury. It is drawn to collective emotion, sexual permissiveness, ecstatic politics, the dream of universal belonging. It can be generous, even lovable. It can also be cruel—not by calculation but by contagion. It does not primarily seek power; it seeks release. It therefore becomes the ideal raw material for any power that can manufacture a sense of release on demand.

Both can be dangerous when absolutized. A purely Apollonian order hardens into sterility, pride, and inhumanity. A purely Dionysian culture liquefies into noise, panic, and predation. The question is never which drive should exist; it is which drive should rule, and by what means the other is granted a place without being allowed to devour the whole.

Nietzsche’s own formulation in the tragic context matters here: the greatness of Greek tragedy lay not in moral preaching but in the woven tension of these two artistic drives, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, each transfiguring the other without eliminating it. The modern habit, by contrast, is to moralize and psychologize what is actually an aesthetic and civilizational question, thereby reducing tragedy, culture, and ultimately the human being to therapeutic categories. Nietzsche mocks precisely this moralistic reduction. The critic displaces the aesthetic listener, and the art dies not of age but of internal betrayal.

That betrayal, in late modern terms, is this: we pretend we are beyond types, and then we build institutions that secretly cater to one type while starving the other.

To say biology is to invite two opposing simplifications. One side hears it and imagines crude fatalism, as if the soul were nothing but glands. The other hears it and imagines an immoral excuse, as if nature were a permission slip for anything one wishes to do. Both misunderstand the point. Biology, rightly understood, is neither a deterministic cage nor a libertine alibi. It is the substrate that any durable culture must reckon with. Institutions exist not because humans are infinitely plastic, but because they are not.

Sex-difference is the most obvious locus of this substrate, and it is also the most lied about, precisely because it is the most politically inconvenient fact. The male organism, across mammalian patterns, tends toward risk, competition, and status-striving, while the female organism tends toward selectivity, security-seeking, and relational attunement. Darwin's account of sexual selection emphasizes both male-male competition and female choice, and the way these pressures shape not only bodies but behaviors and preferences over time.

From this angle, the Apollonian impulse—distance, restraint, hierarchy, the sublimation of aggression into form—maps naturally onto the male burden: to earn status, to build, to protect, to delay gratification for a public end. The Dionysian impulse—fusion, sexuality, collective emotion, the primacy of the body's rhythms—maps

naturally onto the female burden: to select, to bind, to preserve life, to navigate the deep social ecology of belonging. Yet the mapping is not one-to-one. There are Dionysian men and Apollonian women. Indeed, some of the most formidable Apollonian forces in cultural history have been women whose temperament aligned with distance and discipline rather than dissolution and sentimentalism. Think, for instance, of the many famous lesbians in industries typically dominated by men. The point is not to imprison individuals in stereotypes. Rather, it is to note that the polarity has biological plausibility, and therefore a civilizational seriousness.

The most naive modern claim is that institutions can simply declare a new anthropology into existence. But institutions that deny sex-difference and deny typology do not abolish the drives. They only abolish the cultural channels through which drives were civilized. Aggression does not disappear because a school board issues a values statement; it migrates. Lorenz, writing as an ethologist, makes precisely this kind of point in his account of aggression's place in human behavior: eliminate it in principle and you risk eliminating the impetus behind ranking, ambition, task-tackling, and even the higher sublimations of art and science. The modern habit is to treat aggression as a moral defect rather than an energy that must be governed and directed. The result is not peace. The result is damming and misdirection, causing in turn resentful politics, sadistic entertainment, bureaucratic cruelty, and social-media mobbing.



Apollo and Dionysus by Leonid Ilyukhin

This is where the Apollonian and Dionysian typology becomes political. Civilization is, in large part, the art of sublimation: of taking energies that would otherwise be destructive and giving them form. If you dissolve the forms, you do not liberate the energies. You unchain them.

What, then, governs the late-modern soul? Not priests, not kings, nor legislators. The ruling force is the apparatus that controls attention and appetite: finance, media, et cetera, in concert. Finance, banking, and markets control the tempo of life through debt, usury, wages, precarity, and consumption. The media controls the imaginative horizon through image, narrative, and manufactured consensus.

The genius of this system is not that it compels by brute force. It compels by offering pleasures—or rather, by offering what Debord

calls the spectacle: a social relation mediated by images, in which representation and consumption replace presence and participation in society. The spectacle both distracts and reorganizes desire. It teaches the Dionysian person that liberation is an experience you buy and a mood you display, not a reality you build. It teaches the Apollonian person that discipline is acceptable only as productivity, not as sovereignty. The one is fed endless “freedom” in the form of permitted transgression while the other is permitted discipline only insofar as it serves the machine.

This is why the system’s moral rhetoric is so often liberationist while its lived effect is so often conformist. The Dionysian drive is not set free; it is *placated*. It receives permitted festivals, weekends, screens, pornography, intoxications, rage-cycles, and

identity performances while the deeper Dionysian longing for actual communion, actual rootedness, is quietly starved. The Apollonian drive is not honored. It is recruited as labor and management, as credentialism, while its deeper longing for hierarchy, meaning, and form is denounced as oppressive or pathological.

Pieper's critique of the work-world belongs here as an indispensable lens. A civilization that loses leisure loses the conditions under which higher culture is possible. There is no time for contemplation, festival, non-instrumental attention, the kind of *unproductive* time in which form is born. Late modernity, by contrast, grants leisure as compensation and entertainment, not as the ground of culture. It does not want striving citizens; it wants workers and consumers with managed appetites.

And here we reach the contemptible elegance of the regime: organized capital extracts labor and manages dependence, while the media supplies the narcotic that dulls the senses and placates the mind. One tightens the economic leash and the other loosens the psychic leash so that the leashed animal *feels* free while remaining tethered. This is not a conspiracy. It is what happens when a civilization enters its late phase and gives up on greatness.

All high culture is, in a sense, transfigured cruelty—cruelty not as sadism, but as the capacity to say “no.” No to impulse, no to softness, no to the immediate. Much of what we call higher culture rests on the spiritualization and deepening of cruelty. One may dislike the term, but the phenomenon is

obvious. The craftsman is cruel to his own laziness. The athlete is cruel to his own comfort. The scholar is cruel to his own desire for easy answers. Civilization is built by those who can tolerate this pain.

Decadence begins when a culture moralizes this pain as harmful and treats any hierarchy of ends as violence. The Apollonian man, whose excellence requires this kind of self-coercion, becomes suspect. Discipline, distinction, and asceticism are reclassified as a repressive pathology. Meanwhile, the Dionysian aspects of man—always hungry, always seeking pleasure—finds itself affirmed by a thousand little permissions. Not because the regime loves it, but because it can use it.

The mechanism is simple, and for that reason it is often missed. First, the old forms are dissolved. Institutions are stripped of their norms—above all the sexual and familial disciplines that once made desire answerable to something higher—under the banners of liberation and authenticity. The Dionysian man applauds this as emancipation and the Apollonian man inherits a world suddenly without load-bearing beams.

Then form is replaced with procedure. What had been a substantive moral ecology is translated into compliance rules and administrative management. In the space created by this hollowing-out, spectacles of transgression are supplied in abundance. The population is given endless performances, carefully curated, safely contained, and reliably monetized. Dionysus is fed, but only in appearance; the regime takes the profit in reality, converting what once threatened authority into content and consumption.

At the same time, refusal is pathologized. Those who would restore hierarchy, restraint, and aristocratic distance are not answered as interlocutors; they are diagnosed. Their desire for limits is recast as resentment, trauma, insecurity, or some other therapeutic defect—anything that allows the system to dismiss them without engaging their principles.

Finally, productivity is extracted. The disciplined remnants of the Apollonian class are permitted honor only in the degraded form of metrics. They may be useful, but they must not be authoritative. The system wants Apollo's labor, not Apollo's rule—and it ensures this by granting him a wage in exchange for his silence.

The human race, in the aggregate, is not a smooth continuum of rational individuals.

At this point, even the Dionysian is betrayed. A civilization that turns Dionysus into pornography, intoxication, and online outrage has not honored Dionysus. It has taken the deepest human longing for ecstasy and converted it into cheap stimulations. The system does not unleash chaos. It *manufactures* chaos in controllable doses, because a perpetually agitated population is easier to lead.

The user of this typology must speak carefully about primitive elements. "Primitive" here means the older layers of the human animal, the parts of us that predate reflective ethics and that never disappear.

They can be civilized. They cannot be abolished.

When a culture maintains strong Apollonian forms, these elements are not denied; they are channeled. Aggression becomes sport, work, art, civic-martial virtue. Sexual energy becomes courtship, marriage, and generational continuity. Crowd emotion becomes festival, liturgy, patriotic ceremony, tragic art. Even Nietzsche's discussion of tragedy's effect, misunderstood by moralists and aestheticians, points to the way art can transmute powerful affects without reducing them.

When forms collapse, the primitive returns, now in distorted and uglier guises. Aggression reemerges as sadism and the cruelty of digital lynch-mobs. Sexuality, stripped of its binding purposes and its civilizational obligations, becomes cheaper. It reappears as commodified appetite and predatory confusion, a marketplace of bodies and identities in which desire is endlessly stimulated and increasingly unable to generate stable loyalties. And crowd emotion, no longer contained by shared ritual or elevated by public forms, becomes pure contagion—algorithmic hysteria, political possession, and that paradoxical condition of late modernity in which the masses are constantly connected yet profoundly lonely.

Notice the paradox. Modernity boasts of having tamed the beast, yet it builds an entertainment culture that constantly resurrects the beast in safe, vicarious forms. Nietzsche's diagnosis of cruelty's persistence in higher culture is therefore not an invitation to barbarism. It is an exposure of hypocrisy.

The late culture is sentimental on the surface and sadistic underneath, because it lacks the honest forms.

Why is the Apollonian now the primary target? Because the Apollonian type is the hardest to govern. Dionysus can be pacified. Apollo cannot. Apollo demands real authority, real hierarchy, real meaning. It requires standards that are not negotiated by the crowd. It prefers initiation, excellence, and distance. This makes it intolerable to a managerial regime that requires universal legibility and universal compliance.

The regime therefore performs a double maneuver.

It flatters Dionysus: “be yourself,” “express,” “transgress,” “live your truth,” “no shame,” “no judgment.” But the flattery is bound to consumer pathways and media scripts. The Dionysian is allowed every appetite except the appetite for genuine sovereignty and rooted community—because those would compete with the regime.

It humiliates Apollo: “elitist,” “repressive,” “authoritarian,” “toxic,” “reactionary.” Not because Apollo has no dangers—it does—but because Apollo is the last remaining source not centrally managed. A truly Apollonian aristocracy does not ask permission to build, or to command, or to set standards.

The result is a civilization full of precisely the condition Nietzsche describes when Socratic optimism penetrates tragedy and drives out its Dionysian basis.

If one accepts this diagnosis, the proper response is not primarily electoral. Politics matters, but politics downstream of

anthropology is theater. The deeper task is the reconstruction of Apollonian forms capable of governing Dionysian energies without denying them.

The first move toward recovery is the rebuilding of formative institutions. Education must again become an initiation into standards. The aim is not the mere transfer of information, still less the cultivation of compliant sensitivities, but the formation of persons in habits of attention and memory, reverence for excellence, a capacity for solitude, and the disciplined use of speech. If leisure is in fact the basis of culture, then education must protect the kind of leisure that yields intellect and judgment rather than the distracted consumption of entertainment.

Second, a hierarchy of ends must be restored in sexual ethics. No civilization survives the permanent liquefaction of sex into recreation, not because pleasure is evil but because an unbounded erotic order dissolves the very loyalties on which continuity depends. Sexuality either binds and generates, or it consumes and dissolves. Institutions should therefore reward binding and cease subsidizing dissolution.

Third, aggression must be channeled into noble forms. If aggression is an indispensable element of human impetus, then the choice is not aggression or no aggression, but how to sublimate it. A culture that denies male aggression does not produce gentle men. It produces either broken men or cruel men, because denied energies reappear as perversion. The proper answer is to reintroduce structured contest and honorable

discipline: martial virtues, sport, demanding craftsmanship, and forms of public service that carry risk, responsibility, and honor, thereby converting raw force into ordered strength.

Fourth, the spectacle must be resisted not by complaint but by counter-presence. It is not enough to denounce media. It must be outcompeted at its own game. That requires embodied institutions capable of sustaining real belonging. If the spectacle is a social relation mediated by images, then the counter is a social relation mediated by shared duties, shared reverence, and shared time.

Finally, aristocratic distance must be rehabilitated as a civic good. The egalitarian reflex treats distance as contempt, but distance is precisely what makes judgment possible and what enables the refusal of crowd contagion. An aristocratic ethos is not hatred of the many. It is the discipline of the few who will not be ruled by appetite, fashion, or the moods of the moment. Such distance should be taught, modeled, and admired because without it, no culture is capable of standards, and without standards, no culture is capable of greatness.

This is the only sustainable settlement. Not the extermination of Dionysus, which is impossible, but the re-enthronement of Apollo as the ordering principle. One might object: is this not simply a moral project dressed in myth? No—because the point is not primarily moral exhortation but structural anthropology. If culture is made by form, then when form collapses, culture becomes tragic, vulgar, and dysfunctional.

Aristotle's analysis of tragedy stands behind the later quarrels about catharsis that Nietzsche mocks and reinterprets. Nietzsche, for his part, insists that the tragic effect cannot be reduced to moral bookkeeping; it is a higher game. People that lose this knowledge lose the capacity for civilization. It becomes either pornographic (Dionysus without Apollo) or managerial (Apollo without Dionysus). Our decadence is a testament to our inverted competence, for we have achieved both at once: a pornographic popular culture and a managerial public culture.

The system wants Apollo's labor, not Apollo's rule—and it ensures this by granting him a wage in exchange for his silence.

So the question that remains is not whether Apollo and Dionysus exist. They do, because the human animal exists. The question is whether a civilization still remembers how to seat them in the right order. The modern system has decided for us: it flatters dissolution to keep the crowd docile, and it hires discipline to keep the machine profitable. The results are visible everywhere. A person can survive many things, but it cannot survive the permanent enthrone-ment of appetite. So either the Apollonian man returns as a living standard of form or the West will continue its late drift: the long, tragically sophisticated suicide of a civilization that forgot the dignity of limit.

THE RISE & FALL OF THE REXIST PARTY

American Catholics in 2025 do not suffer from a lack of opinions; they suffer from a lack of a usable political form. The electorate is offered, on one side, a liberalism that frequently treats the moral law as an embarrassment and the family as at best a burden and at worst something to be snuffed out. On the other, a right-of-center coalition that can speak fluently about national interest while often remaining thin on the questions of social order. Many Catholics, sensing that neither party gives them an adequate instrument, begin to ask an older and more poignant question: what would a truly Catholic political movement look like, not merely as a set of “values,” but as a platform that could discipline the state and reorient a people?

It is precisely here that history becomes a tutor—and a warning. The temptation is to assume that moral seriousness requires political maximalism: that because the age is decadent and the parliaments are venal, the cure must be sweeping and the remedy must be purified authority. Belgium offers a particularly instructive case of the Catholic attempt: the Rexist Party, a movement born from a

Catholic milieu and bolstered in the language of the Church and the Crusades (*Christus Rex*), which rose rapidly by denouncing corruption, promising social solidarity, and presenting itself as an instrument of moral restoration—only to align itself with the losing side, militarily speaking, of the Second World War and collapse into discredit.

To tell the story of Rexism is to examine how a Catholic-populist insurgency could plausibly attract ordinary believers, how it attempted to convert spiritual capital into political power, and how some of the very vices it attempted to punish consumed it from within. For American Catholics searching for a political platform, it is all too important to identify which longings are legitimate, which strategies are perennial, and which paths, however promising at first blush, terminate in moral and national ruin, and to learn from them going forward.

Rexism emerged from a predicament common to much of interwar Europe: the acute exhaustion of parliamentary bargaining, the disorientation of mass society, and a pervasive sense, especially among religious traditionalists and war-marked constituencies, that the public order had

become morally thin. Belgium was not immune to the fractures intensified by the Great Depression. There was discontent in the petty bourgeoisie and among the underemployed, anxieties about social disorder, and a widening suspicion that political parties had become self-protective machines rather than organs of national service. Within that climate, the attraction of renewal movements was not, in the first instance, a fascination with brutality against the perpetrators of the system, but rather a hunger for coherence.

Rexism's first strength, then, was not simply that it attacked enemies, but that it articulated what many Belgians—especially Catholics—felt was missing from parliamentary life. It spoke in a register of moral indictment—corruption, decadence, spiritual drift—and it did so while presenting itself as resolutely Belgian and Catholic. The party's very name derived from *Christus Rex* ("Christ the King"), a Catholic journal and publishing enterprise from which the movement drew both identity and early networks. The symbolism mattered. In an era when many Catholic voters feared either socialist secularization or liberal moral indifference, Rexism positioned itself as a combative, disciplined counter-proposal preaching national unity, social hierarchy reconciled by corporative organization, and the restoration of public life to explicitly Catholic moral ends.

Yet the Belgian Catholic world was not monolithic. The mainstream Catholic Party, dominant in many periods, was itself internally plural, balancing conservative

interests, social Catholic currents, and the pragmatic compromises of governing. Degrelle's innovation was to paint that measured Catholic politics as complicity. The Catholic Party, he argued, had grown too moderate, too managerial, too resigned to the liberal frame. Rexism thus began as a revolt *within* a Catholic political universe in an attempt to seize Catholic moral energy for a more radical reconfiguration of the state.

The founder and face of Rexism was the journalist Léon Degrelle (1906–1994), whose charisma and rhetorical force were repeatedly noted by observers as essential to the party's early momentum. It is difficult to tell the story of Rexism without emphasizing this personalism. Even when the party possessed cadres, publications, and slogans, it often functioned—especially in public imagination—as an extension of Degrelle's persona: youthful, combative, morally severe, contemptuous of compromise.

In its first phase, Rexism targeted disappointed constituencies such as traditionalist Catholics, military veterans, and the financially downtrodden. The party's early promise lay in an argument that combined moral severity with social critique. It rejected liberalism as decadent and opposed both Marxism and laissez-faire capitalism, presenting corporatism as the alternative third-position: a social order in which classes would be organized into functional bodies and harmonized by a strong state, rather than set against one another in class war. This third way posture was a familiar interwar form, and it frequently drew on Catholic social language

even when it moved beyond Catholic social teaching's prudential constraints.

A key historiographical nuance matters here. Contemporary classification of fascism is often used as a moral shorthand, but the lived experience of early Rexism was not, for many participants, a simple rush into that governmental form. In its earliest period until around 1937, Rexism has been argued by some not to fit neatly as a fascist movement, but rather as a populist, authoritarian, conservative Catholic nationalism that sought power through democratic means and did not *initially* aim to abolish democratic institutions. That claim is debated, but it captures an important point about political psychology: the natural inclination of patriots to act on moral disgust or social rot is a powerful thing, and it will always be treated as unacceptable by the harbingers of such rot.

The temptation is to assume that moral seriousness requires political maximalism: that because the age is decadent and the parliaments are venal, the cure must be sweeping and the remedy must be purified authority.

Rexism's peak electoral moment came quickly. In the 1936 election it won 21 of 202 seats in the Chamber of Deputies—about 11.4–11.5% of the vote—along with a notable Senate presence, making it a significant parliamentary force.³¹ But even at its height, it

³¹ Richard Bonney, *Confronting the Nazi War on Christianity: the Kulturkampf Newsletters, 1936–1939*, International Academic Publishers; Bern; 2009 ISBN 978-3-03911-904-2; pp. 175–176

was not a mass party in the way of certain continental counterparts. Its support was uneven and highly localized; it performed far better in particular French-speaking regions than elsewhere, and it failed to establish deep traction outside Wallonia and Brussels.

This matters for understanding Rexism's trajectory. Movements that cannot broaden their social base often face a choice: moderate to grow, or radicalize to preserve intensity. The first course risks dilution, while the second risks isolation but can intensify internal cohesion. In Rexism's case, the arc bent toward doubling down, especially as the movement encountered resistance from the very Catholic establishment whose moral vocabulary it had borrowed.

Rexism framed itself as a Catholic awakening. It advocated "moral renewal" through the dominance of the Catholic Church in public life and through corporatist restructuring of society.³² This is precisely why the Belgian episcopal reaction proved decisive. The Church's leadership did not treat Rexism as merely another party among many. It saw it as a spiritual danger because it sought to fuse Catholic identity with what the clergy decided was too revolutionary a political movement.

Cardinal Jozef-Ernest van Roey, the leader of the Belgian Church, condemned Rexism as "a danger to the country and the Church." The significance is twofold. First, it shows that the Church's opposition was not

³² William Brustein, "The Political Geography of Belgian Fascism: The Case of Rexism", *American Sociological Review*. 53 (1): 69–80. doi:10.2307/2095733. JSTOR 2095733.

only political but also moral-theological. The concern was that Rexism's political method and spirit threatened Christian moral order itself. Second, the condemnation undermined Rexism's attempt to monopolize Catholic legitimacy. A movement that had hoped to shame mainstream Catholic politicians as half-hearted now found itself confronted by the Church's own hierarchy.

In practical terms, this ecclesial rejection helped accelerate Rexism's decline before the war. After its electoral high point, Rexism was on the decline by 1938. That decline did not end the movement, but it narrowed its options and increased the temptation to seek relevance through external patronage—above all, through Germany after 1940.

Even in the mid-1930s Rexism took inspiration from models abroad. It was initially modeled on Italian Fascism and Spanish Falangism before drawing closer to German National Socialism. In the interwar period, fascism was less a single blueprint than a family resemblance: a set of movements that exalted national rebirth, discipline, hierarchy, and a politics of mobilization against the consequences of liberal, even Bolshevik decadence. For a movement like Rex, the magnetism of successful foreign examples was intense.

The shift toward the German model proved fateful, however. It severed Rexism from any plausible claim to be merely a Catholic authoritarian reform movement within Belgian constitutional life. It recast the movement's identity around collaboration with an occupying power and around

participation in a wider racial-imperial project. That transformation was both ideological and organizational: it changed what kinds of men joined, what kinds of acts were tolerated, and what kinds of policies became thinkable.

After Germany occupied Belgium, Rex became, by many accounts, the most significant collaborationist group in French-speaking Belgium, parallel to the Vlaams Nationaal Verbond (VNV) in Flanders. Yet collaboration did not automatically produce German trust. According to an Oxford thesis record by Martin Conway, Degrelle publicly declared support for the Nazi cause in January 1941, thereby contributing to a decline in popular support while still failing to secure the recognition he sought from German authorities.³³

This paradox helped drive Rexism toward ever more demonstrative acts of loyalty. A movement that had once competed in Belgian elections now sought to prove its indispensability to the occupier. The logic was grim but the less popular legitimacy Rex possessed, the more it needed external power, and the more it relied on external power, the more it forfeited popular legitimacy.

One of the most revealing dimensions of wartime Rexism was the creation of its paramilitary wing, the Formations de Combat (FC). Belgium's WWII public-history project notes that in July 1940 Rex's leadership decided to establish the FC, hoping it would

³³ Conway, M. 1989. "The Rexist Movement in Belgium, 1940-1944." PhD thesis, University of Oxford.

become the militia of a future one-party state.³⁴

The same source gives a sobering picture of membership and decline. It estimates roughly 4,000 members by the end of the first year of occupation, followed by rapid attrition through exclusions, resignations, and especially the drain created by the departure of volunteers for the Eastern Front in 1941. By late 1941 the total membership reportedly fell below a thousand, with many remaining groups consisting of the very young, the elderly, or the infirm, and with only a few cities maintaining larger units toward the end of the occupation.

That decline in disciplined manpower did not necessarily mean a decline in danger. Paramilitary formations can become more volatile as they shrink, growing less accountable, more desperate, and more prone to retaliatory violence. And the FC served as a first step for many toward armed collaboration, featuring front service, armed bands, and other violent roles in the occupation's final phase.

If paramilitarism was one axis of Rexism's wartime identity, the other was the Walloon Legion (*Légion Wallonie*). The Walloon Legion was created in 1941 as a unit of volunteers recruited among French-speaking Belgian collaborationists to fight on the Eastern Front, first within the Wehrmacht and later in the Waffen-SS. The Legion was conceived by Rex as a means to

demonstrate loyalty at a time when the German authorities had largely ignored Degrelle's movement. The Legion's origin story illustrates Rexism's transformation. On the one hand, it was framed as anti-communist crusade—an ideologically powerful motif in Catholic and conservative circles across Europe. On the other hand, it functioned as political theater: a sacrificial offering meant to purchase influence. Degrelle himself enlisted as a private as a publicity stunt to boost recruitment, signaling how intimately the military project was tied to his personal politics.

The Legion's relationship to Nazi racial ideology was also revealing. The Walloon unit was initially kept within the Wehrmacht because Nazi racial theorists did not consider Walloons sufficiently Germanic for the Waffen-SS. Later, the unit was incorporated into the Waffen-SS after Himmler declared Walloons to be Germanic.

The record of Eastern Front service also contributed to Rexism's radicalization. The Walloon Legion's narrative emphasizes persistent casualties and operational difficulties. As violence became routinized abroad, violence at home became easier to justify.

The occupation years created a spiral dynamic. Collaboration produced resistance, resistance produced fear, fear produced retaliation, and retaliation produced deeper hatred and further resistance. The Conway thesis record describes how, after the creation of the Walloon Legion, closer links between Rex and German authorities emerged, and many Rexists were appointed to positions of

³⁴ Conway, Martin, Marc Efratas, Alain Dantoing, and José Gotovitch. *Degrelle: Les Années de Collaboration: 1940-1944: Le Rexisme de Guerre*. Ottignies: Quorum, 1994.

public responsibility by the Wehrmacht



Belgian politician Léon Degrelle (center) with fighters from the Belgian Volunteers. Belgium, August 15, 1941.

administrators. But those positions did not stabilize Rexism into a respectable governing class. Instead, they placed the movement at the center of popular resentment and made Rexists targets for resistance attacks.

One of the darkest episodes illustrating this pattern is the Courcelles massacre in August 1944, in which twenty-seven civilians were killed in separate instances by a Rexist-associated militia in retaliation for resistance activity.

By the war's final phase, Rexism had become politically ruined. The Conway thesis record describes it by 1944 as a "beleaguered marginal grouping" increasingly resorting to violence. In September 1944, many Rexists fled with the retreating Germans into the Reich. By the war's end, Rex was essentially discredited and then banned following the entrance of Allied forces.

Degrelle's postwar trajectory compounded the movement's infamy. Degrelle was sentenced to death by the Belgian justice

system for high treason. He managed to escape to Spain, which was led by the government of Francisco Franco. Degrelle obtained Spanish citizenship in 1954, which gave him legal protection from extradition and prosecution.

From Spain, Degrelle published numerous books. He died in 1994. That afterlife matters because it shaped how Rex would be remembered, principally as a project whose leader never accepted political defeat.

A Catholic historian—or a Catholic-minded political theorist—cannot avoid the central interpretive tension: Rexism's early language drew from genuine Catholic concerns regarding the moral order, social solidarity, and resistance to both revolutionary Marxism and atomizing liberalism, yet it transmuted those concerns into a politics that ultimately brought on the Church's own restraints and culminated in collaboration with the German regime.

The natural inclination of patriots to act on moral disgust or social rot is a powerful thing, and it will always be treated as unacceptable by the harbingers of such rot.

In that sense, Rexism's story is instructive beyond Belgium. It shows how a movement can begin with a critique that many ordinary people find reasonable and yet, through a sequence of ill-calculated decisions, become trapped in a logic of escalating dependency and escalating brutality.

Rexism's arc is therefore a kind of negative model for political Catholics. It begins with recognizably Catholic grievances, and it promises a remedy that seems, at first glance, completely desirable. It ends by demonstrating that the hunger for renewal can, if not done strategically, be exploited. A Catholic politics worthy of the name must therefore be more exacting. It must reject the liberal superstition that procedure alone can secure justice, but it must also reject the revolutionary superstition that justice can be secured by a party that exempts itself from any restraint at all.

The call to action for American Catholics is not necessarily to hunt for a ready-made third way costume in Europe's interwar wardrobe. It is the original creation of a third-position platform that is unashamedly Catholic in its ends—family, worship, the common good, the protection of the weak, the right ordering of economy to human flourishing—while rigorously rejecting the shortcuts that have doomed predecessors.

If Rexism teaches anything across the Atlantic, it is that Catholics are capable of real political energy and that such energy, without discipline, can be commandeered by men who promise restoration and fail to deliver. The task now is to harness the legitimate Catholic critique of liberal decay into a principled, patient, institution-building politics: one that can fight, certainly, but that refuses to become what it hates; one that can govern, but remembers that the City of Man is never the City of God.

THE ÆSTHETICS OF COMMAND

Regimes do not rule only by statute. They rule by habit, and habit is formed first by environment. Long before the citizen can name the principles of his political order, he is being trained by its streets and buildings, by what is monumental, what is cramped, what is permitted to endure, and what is allowed to look temporary and fleeting. This education is constant and mostly unconscious. It teaches, often without ever announcing itself, what deserves honor, what deserves shame, and what deserves no attention at all.

This is why architecture is never *just* architecture. It is the most public of the arts. It forms the theater in which all other arts and actions appear. Langbehn captures the basic intuition succinctly: “Architecture is the axis of the fine arts,” and when a people loses it, the whole cultural order splinters into specialization, imitation, and a frantic rummaging through styles with no style of its own.³⁵ The line is worth lingering over: an axis is not an ornament. It is what holds the parts together and gives them a direction.

³⁵ Langbehn, *Rembrandt as Educator* (1890), trans. Thomas Dunlap, in *Volume 5: Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890–1918, German History in Documents and Images* (German Historical Institute)

Modernity’s characteristic mistake is to deny this, and then to suffer the consequences while pretending they are accidental. It insists that the beautiful is subjective or relative, that public form is a matter of mere preference, and, most damning, that civic space is value-neutral infrastructure. And then it is surprised—genuinely surprised—when the built world produces citizens who are æsthetically illiterate: men and women trained to accept incoherence, to treat scale as aggression, to distrust hierarchy as such, to prefer novelty to nobility, and to confuse shock with awe.

The classical tradition begins from the opposite premise. Form is intelligible. Proportion is not a private whim. Beauty, rather than a mood, is an order that the mind can learn and the soul can be habituated to recognize. Vitruvius makes this almost programmatic: architecture, for him, rests on a small set of governing principles—order, arrangement, eurythmy, symmetry, propriety, and economy. What matters is how he immediately explains them. Order is the discipline of measure. The parts must receive their due proportions, and the whole must cohere by reference to a standard. He

imagines the work beginning from selected modules taken from its own members and then scaled upward so the total structure corresponds to that internal rule. Arrangement is the right placing of things—an intelligible disposition that produces an “elegance of effect” suited to the building’s character—and he treats it as inseparable from the ways a work is conceived and presented (plan, elevation, perspective), which themselves depend on a combination of painstaking reflection and inventive problem-solving. Eurythmy names the felt rightness of proportion—height suited to breadth, breadth to length—while symmetry is the deeper agreement that relates parts to whole by a chosen standard, and he illustrates it by the analogies of the human body as well as by the practical modular calculations used across different crafts. Propriety then gives the tradition its moral spine: a work achieves it when it is authoritatively built on approved principles, and this can arise from prescription (the right kind of temple for the right kind of god), from usage (an approach that matches the dignity of an interior; a refusal to mix orders in ways that spoil the effect), and from nature (healthy sites for sanctuaries, and orientations of rooms to light that fit their purpose). Finally, economy is not mere cost-cutting but rational stewardship: matching materials and siting to what is actually available, avoiding needless expense, and solving constraints with practical substitutes rather than demanding luxuries indifferent to place.³⁶ Read straight through,

³⁶ Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

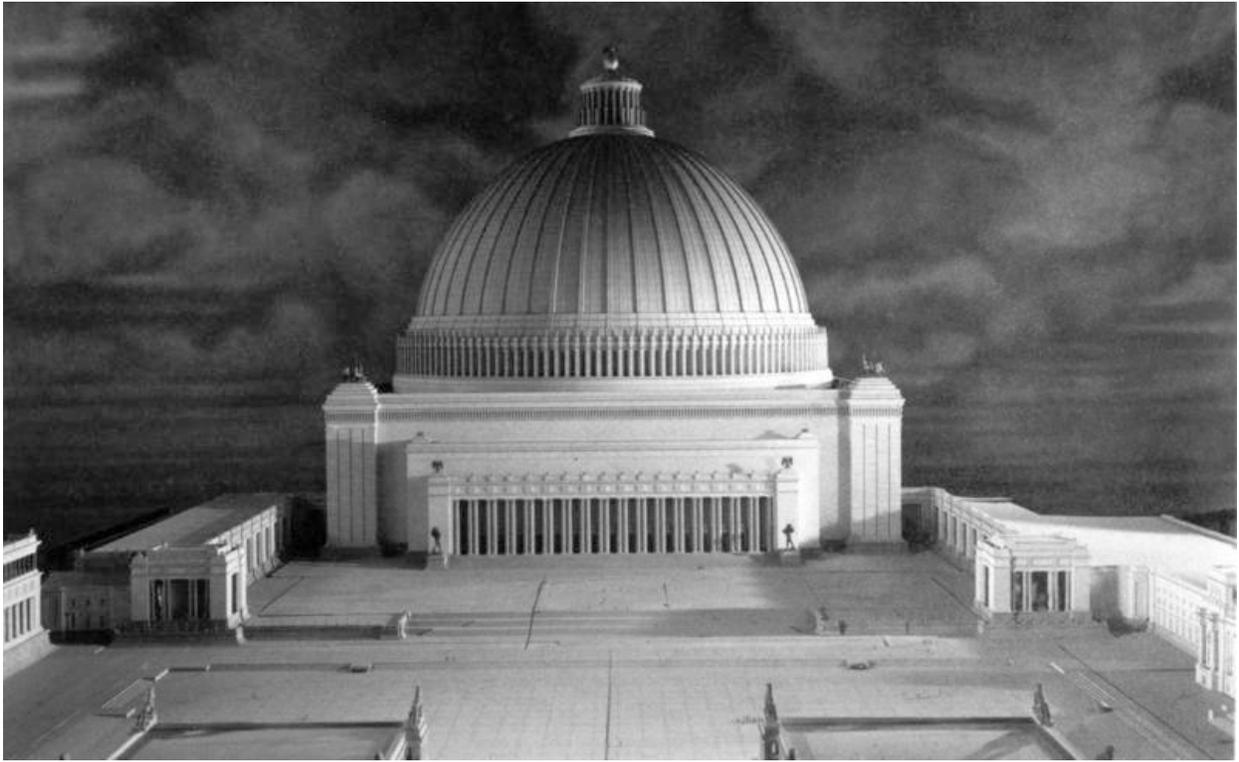
this is an excellent civic psychology. A people trained to live among measure, standard, fittingness, and propriety will find those categories thinkable in law; a people trained to live among arbitrariness and visual insolence will, in time, experience propriety itself as an imposition until public order is redescribed as oppression simply because it is order.

The aesthetics of command is not, at root, a question about one architect or one style. It is a question about whether a civilization still believes that authority can be made visible as something other than raw force, and whether the citizen can be educated—quietly, daily, almost without noticing—into reverence for measure, rank, duty, and limit.

The glass box is the signature architecture of the global managerial elite: the class that prefers spaces that could be anywhere precisely because it belongs nowhere in particular.

Classicism is often caricatured as nostalgia or austere administrative by the modernists: columns to support people who faint at the sight of new things. That is a presentist sneer, and it is also an evasion. The classical orders are less a “look” and more an all too important kind of grammar. Their force is precisely that they bind transcendentals like beauty to necessities like law so that the building can be both human

University Press; London: Humphrey Milford; Oxford University Press, 1914), 13–16.



Volkshalle Model, 1939.

and authoritative, both encouraging expression and obedience.

Notice what Vitruvius's set of principles excludes. It excludes the modern habit of treating parts as sovereign, the perverse celebration of fragmentation under any guise of authenticity. It excludes the cult of the arbitrary. It excludes the idea that a building should be a public toleration of the architect's psyche. And it excludes the democratic fantasy that hierarchy is an insult.

Even propriety, the most priggish-sounding of Vitruvius's terms, is defined with almost juridical sobriety. Form should match function and meaning. It means one cannot pretend that a temple for one god is just as suitable for another. And it further

means that one cannot swap the peculiarities of one order into another without spoiling the effect, because traditions are definitionally averse to interchangeability.

This is exactly why architectural movements like classicism have always been attractive to states that wish to look legitimate. Legitimacy, after all, is authority that appears as rightful order rather than mere dominance. A city that builds classically is trying, whether it knows it or not, to clothe power in intelligibility—Augustus after civil war, Charlemagne's imperial renewal, Napoleon's Roman theater, even modern projects like Albert Speer's planned Germania. In each case, classical form is recruited to make authority appear as

proportionate, continuous, and therefore rightful.

But the point can be pressed further: in the classical view, æsthetic education is political education. Plato, writing in the *Laws*, offers a blunt articulation: the “first education should be through music,” because music is the “orderly channelling of passions man shares with beasts.”³⁷ The issue is not taste. The issue is instead whether the passions will be brought into harmony or left to become tyrannical within the soul. In modern liberal societies, we are shocked by the thought that a city might truncate and even censor the arts for the sake of civic virtue, because we assume politics demands almost nothing of citizens. Plato’s frame is harsher: if the city is serious, it cannot pretend that art is innocent.

Architecture is music slowed into matter. A regime that surrenders public form to ugliness is not neutral. It is pushing the citizen, daily, into disorder.

Modernism did not merely propose new shapes. It proposed a new metaphysic: that history is emancipation from inherited forms, constraint is oppression, man is most authentic when unbound, and the future is morally superior simply by being later.

Langbehn’s critique targets precisely this spiritual posture. He describes an age in which science splinters into specialization, epoch-making figures vanish, and the arts “lack monumentality and thus their best effect.”³⁸ The “democratizing, leveling, atomizing spirit of the century” expresses

itself æsthetically in exactly the way one would expect: in style-hopping without style, in the refusal of hierarchy, in the inability to produce public forms that command assent rather than mere attention.

This is why the modern city so often looks like a denial of the city. Its streets do not culminate; its buildings do not address one another; its monuments, when they exist, are embarrassed about being monuments. The result is not freedom, but instead a cultural and spiritual homelessness, a public realm that cannot teach citizens what they are for, because it no longer knows what *it* is for.

What anti-modernism insists on is not a fetish for the past, but a refusal to grant moral authority to novelty as such. It refuses to call the rejection of form by any euphemism. It insists that civilization requires *boundness*: that the citizen must be re-tied to measure, to inherited standards, to the hard truth that not every desire is dignified simply because it exists.

This is also why modernist defenses of authenticity ring hollow among those whose eyes are turned toward civilization inheritance. The modern city is *not* more authentic. It is more interchangeable. The glass box is the signature architecture of the global managerial elite: the class that prefers spaces that could be anywhere precisely because *it* belongs nowhere in particular. Set the same towers in Boston, Dubai, Frankfurt, Paris, or London and nothing essential changes. They are designed to accommodate any ideology, sell any product, and house any transient workforce without ever confessing what a people is or what a place means. This is

³⁷ Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 406.

³⁸ Langbehn, *Rembrandt as Educator*

the built environment of a race for whom placelessness has become a matter of policy, no standard is binding, and every inheritance is treated as an obstacle to be value-engineered away.

Classicism, by contrast, is an intelligible form that claims the right to educate. It does not ask permission to be authoritative. It presents order as a public good that the citizen can see, inhabit, and imitate.

Any serious treatment of such aesthetics must confront Albert Speer as an icon and case study that forces clarity about what is being praised when one praises monumentality.

Speer's central intuition, that architecture can manufacture awe, synchronize bodies, and make the regime feel inevitable, is not unique to him. It is a standing possibility of the art. But Speer makes it explicit, systematic, and inseparable from a twentieth-century project of total mobilization.

Modernism is not wrong because it is new. It is wrong because it dissolves the visible conditions of order.

“Ruin value” intensifies the point. By this, I mean the deliberate designing of public works so that, after decades or centuries of decay, they would still present themselves as noble and symbolically potent rather than collapsing into rubble or becoming mere industrial wreckage. To build for ruins is, in one register, to reject the modern cult of

disposability, to insist that the public realm should not be made of materials and forms that age into trash. Vitruvius himself ties economy to a sober management of materials and site, but in Speer the desire to bequeath ruins often functions as a path to legitimacy: the future admiration of our remains speaks to our rulership in the present.

Neoclassicism, then, can, and in a time like ours must, be enlisted in projects that are civilizational in scope. The question, then, is not whether one may recover classical form, but on what terms we draw the line. This architectural movement will be reattached to the classical insistence on measure, limit, and the moral education of free citizens, sure, but let us not forget its role in domination, be it the domination of a skyline or of an oppressive force from whom we seek to liberate the unawakened masses.

Modernism is not wrong because it is new. It is wrong because it dissolves the visible conditions of order. Speer is not great because he is grand—though he is. He is great because he exposes how grandeur, unmoored from restraint, becomes a political technology. If aesthetics is not merely decoration but political pedagogy, then architecture must be at the regime's front of mind. It is the one civic art that speaks in mass, proportion, and permanence. It habituates the citizen's eye, and through the eye, the soul. Plato is unembarrassed about this, insisting that delight in certain rhythms, postures, and songs assimilates the person to what he delights in, and therefore the lawgiver cannot be indifferent to aesthetic formation. The same point applied to the

built world is almost too obvious to mention: we become the kind of people who can live comfortably inside the forms we normalize.

Return, then, to Albert Speer: a modern figure who more than most recognized the political power of classical form and attempted to wield it at continental scale. It is precisely *because* Speer's work is morally radioactive by most Western accounts that it makes a useful diagnostic instrument. He demonstrates, with a clarity almost unbearable, what moderns often deny: that monumental classicism can produce obedience and understanding, and that architectural form can be used to build up legitimacy, especially in a society whose spiritual and civic muscles have already atrophied from Weimar decadence.

Classicism, by contrast, is an intelligible form that claims the right to educate. It does not ask permission to be authoritative. It presents order as a public good that the citizen can see, inhabit, and imitate.

Speer's genius lies in his grasp of command as an aesthetic experience. His projects are not merely big. They stage the citizen as small. The individual is invited to perceive himself as a unit inside a larger body. This is why size in this tradition is not a vulgar craving for bigness but an attempt to make the state feel like fate. Here we should introduce a distinction the anti-modernist needs if it wishes to be serious: there is a

difference between monumentality that dignifies and monumentality that crushes.

Classical architecture can dignify because it places the person inside an intelligible order, one in which the whole is higher than the part, but the part is still *recognized* as a part. The best classicism has a human logic: it can be read; it can be learned; it implies a rational world. Vitruvius's talk of proportion and standard is not trivial. It implies that the city should be comprehensible and reasoned, not merely asserted. In this respect, classical form is anti-modern less because it hates novelty as such and more because it hates arbitrariness—the modern belief that the built world is merely an arena for self-expression or economic throughput.

This gives us a more mature anti-modernism: one that does not merely replace modern glass with classical stone and call it a counterrevolution. Speer's case forces the question: What end does your order serve? And here Plato returns with a vengeance. He argues that people are harmed or benefited by what they take pleasure in. He even praises the audacity of a lawgiver who would be firm about aesthetic education, capable of mandating what is correct in music and refusing innovation that corrupts the young. Translate that into architecture and you get an unfashionable but unavoidable proposition: a regime that wishes to endure must be willing to say, "These forms elevate; those forms degrade." Modernism refuses to say this because it fears metaphysics; liberalism refuses because it fears judgment; capitalism refuses because it fears constraint.

The anti-modernist, if he is not merely a contrarian, must be willing to make discriminations.

So what is the legitimate use of the Speerian insight? It is, first, the recognition that public architecture must be public in meaning. It cannot be a private prank at civic scale. The courthouse, parliament, cathedral, and war memorial are not the places for whimsical novelty.

Second, it is the recognition that ruin and memory matter. Even where one disagrees with ruin value as a programmatic obsession, the underlying intuition is sound: a civilization should build as though it expects to be remembered. Modernism's disposable aesthetics—its contempt for ornament, its love of temporary materials, its cult of planned obsolescence—teaches the citizen to expect transience, and therefore to live as though the permanent is not real.

Third, and most importantly, it is the recognition that classicism must be morally anchored. If the classical revival becomes merely an aesthetic of domination, it will replicate the modern illness in a different key: it will treat the city as material for will. The true anti-modern alternative is not the substitution of one style for another, but the restoration of a hierarchy of ends in which architecture serves worship, family, and civic virtue—rather than propaganda, consumption, or managerial convenience. That is why the best classical principles remain Vitruvius's: order and symmetry disciplined by propriety and economy; grandeur disciplined by appropriateness.

In other words: the lesson of Speer is not “build like Speer.” The lesson is that architecture can command—and therefore must be handled like a weapon. The anti-modernist is right to reject the modern city and its fragmentation. The goal is the city as *formative order*: a built environment in which beauty trains the eye toward truth, and permanence trains the will toward responsibility.

Modernity's deepest lie is anthropological. It says that man is a consumer before he is a citizen, more still a body before he is a soul. That lie becomes visible in modernist architecture with its contempt for proportion, the suspicion of ornament, the preference for abstraction, and the worship of novelty. In such a city, people do not merely live. They are re-made, habituated to ugliness, trained to accept this impermanence, and coached into thinking that the public realm belongs to nobody in particular.

If a civilization delights in deformity, it becomes deformed. If it delights in ordered beauty, it is at least given a chance to become ordered within. The neoclassical tradition, when it remembers its own principles, offers a way capable of expressing hierarchy, civic seriousness, and reverence, not because it is old, but because it is intelligible.

Yet one last temptation remains. That is, the temptation to treat classical form as a shortcut to greatness. Aristotle reminds us that great public works can be instruments for keeping the ruled poor and without leisure. The lesson is not that building is bad, but that building is never innocent. A politics

that loves beauty must love justice more;
otherwise it will use beauty as an opiate or a lash.

So the conclusion is necessarily a call to build again as if the city were worth inhabiting, and as if posterity were real. Recover order, symmetry, and propriety, not as nostalgia, but as a discipline. Reject modernism not only because it is ugly, but

because it is metaphysically dishonest and perverse in its refusal to confess what man is for. And if we must speak of the aesthetics of command, let it be command first of the self and the recovery of a public taste capable of saying no to novelty, to ugliness, to the thin gruel of the disposable.

RACE AND DEMOCRACY

Failure to recognize the clear distinction between race and nationality and the still greater distinction between race and language and the easy assumption that the one is indicative of the other have been in the past serious impediments to an understanding of racial values. Historians and philologists have approached the subject from the viewpoint of linguistics and as a result we are to-day burdened with a group of mythical races, such as the Latin, the Aryan, the Indo-Germanic, the Caucasian and, perhaps, most inconsistent of all, the Celtic race.

Man is an animal differing from his fellow inhabitants of the globe not in kind but only in degree of development and an intelligent study of the human species must be preceded by an extended knowledge of other mammals, especially the primates. Instead of such essential training, anthropologists often seek to qualify by research in linguistics, religion or marriage customs or in designs of pottery or blanket weaving, all of which relate to ethnology alone. As a result the influence of

environment is often overestimated and overstated at the expense of heredity.

The question of race has been further complicated by the effort of old-fashioned theologians to cramp all mankind into the scant six thousand years of Hebrew chronology as expounded by Archbishop Ussher. Religious teachers have also maintained the proposition not only that man is something fundamentally distinct from other living creatures, but that there are no inherited differences in humanity that cannot be obliterated by education and environment. It is, therefore, necessary at the outset for the reader to appreciate thoroughly that race, language and nationality are three separate and distinct things and that in Europe these three elements are found only occasionally persisting in combination, as in the Scandinavian nations.

To realize the transitory nature of political boundaries one has but to consider the changes which have occurred during the past century and as to language, here in America we hear daily the English language spoken by many men who possess not one



Study For Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences, or The Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks by Samuel Jennings 1791-2. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

drop of English blood and who, a few years since, knew not one word of Saxon speech.

As a result of certain religious and social doctrines, now happily becoming obsolete, race consciousness has been greatly impaired among civilized nations but in the

beginning all differences of class, of caste and of color marked actual lines of race cleavage.

In many countries the existing classes represent races that were once distinct. In the city of New York and elsewhere in the United States there is a native American aristocracy resting upon layer after layer of immigrants of

lower races and these native Americans, while, of course, disclaiming the distinction of a patrician class and lacking in class consciousness and class dignity, have, nevertheless, up to this time supplied the leaders in thought and in the control of capital as well as of education and of the religious ideals and altruistic bias of the community.

In the democratic forms of government the operation of universal suffrage tends toward the selection of the average man for public office rather than the man qualified by birth, education and integrity. How this scheme of administration will ultimately work out remains to be seen but from a racial point of view it will inevitably increase the preponderance of the lower types and cause a corresponding loss of efficiency in the community as a whole.

The tendency in a democracy is toward a standardization of type and a diminution of the influence of genius. A majority must of necessity be inferior to a picked minority and it always resents specializations in which it cannot share. In the French Revolution the majority, calling itself "the people," deliberately endeavored to destroy the higher type and something of the same sort was in a measure done after the American Revolution by the expulsion of the Loyalists and the confiscation of their lands, with a resultant loss to the growing nation of good race strains, which were in the next century replaced by immigrants of far lower type.

In America we have nearly succeeded in destroying the privilege of birth; that is,

the intellectual and moral advantage a man of good stock brings into the world with him. We are now engaged in destroying the privilege of wealth; that is, the reward of successful intelligence and industry and in some quarters there is developing a tendency to attack the privilege of intellect and to deprive a man of the advantage gained from an early and thorough classical education. Simplified spelling is a step in this direction. Ignorance of English grammar or classic learning must not, forsooth, be held up as a reproach to the political or social aspirant.

In the democratic forms of government the operation of universal suffrage tends toward the selection of the average man...

Mankind emerged from savagery and barbarism under the leadership of selected individuals whose personal prowess, capacity or wisdom gave them the right to lead and the power to compel obedience. Such leaders have always been a minute fraction of the whole, but as long as the tradition of their predominance persisted they were able to use the brute strength of the unthinking herd as part of their own force and were able to direct at will the blind dynamic impulse of the slaves, peasants or lower classes. Such a despot had an enormous power at his disposal which, if he were benevolent or even intelligent, could be used and most frequently was used for the general uplift of the race. Even those rulers who most abused this power put down with merciless rigor the antisocial elements, such as pirates, brigands or

anarchists, which impair the progress of a community, as disease or wounds cripple an individual.

True aristocracy or a true republic is government by the wisest and best, always a small minority in any population. Human society is like a serpent dragging its long body on the ground, but with the head always thrust a little in advance and a little elevated above the earth. The serpent's tail, in human society represented by the antisocial forces, was in the past dragged by sheer strength along the path of progress. Such has been the organization of mankind from the beginning, and such it still is in older communities than ours. What progress humanity can make under the control of universal suffrage, or the rule of the average, may find a further analogy in the habits of certain snakes which wiggle sideways and disregard the head with its brains and eyes. Such serpents, however, are not noted for their ability to make rapid progress.

A true republic, the function of which is administration in the interests of the whole community—in contrast to a pure democracy, which in last analysis is the rule of the demos or a majority in its own interests—should be, and often is, the medium of selection for the technical task of government of those best qualified by antecedents, character and education, in short, of experts.

To use another simile, in an aristocratic as distinguished from a plutocratic or democratic organization the intellectual and talented classes form the point of the lance while the massive shaft represents the body of the population and

adds by its bulk and weight to the penetrative impact of the tip. In a democratic system this concentrated force is dispersed throughout the mass. It supplies, to be sure, a certain amount of leaven but in the long run the force and genius of the small minority is dissipated, and its efficiency lost. *Vox populi*, so far from being *Vox Dei*, thus becomes an unending wail for rights and never a chant of duty.

Where a conquering race is imposed on another race the institution of slavery often arises to compel the servient race to work and to introduce it forcibly to a higher form of civilization. As soon as men can be induced to labor to supply their own needs slavery becomes wasteful and tends to vanish. From a material point of view slaves are often more fortunate than freemen when treated with reasonable humanity and when their elemental wants of food, clothing and shelter are supplied.

The Indians around the fur posts in northern Canada were formerly the virtual bond slaves of the Hudson Bay Company, each Indian and his squaw and pappoose being adequately supplied with simple food and equipment. He was protected as well against the white man's rum as the red man's scalping parties and in return gave the Company all his peltries—the whole product of his year's work. From an Indian's point of view this was nearly an ideal condition but was to all intents serfdom or slavery. When through the opening up of the country the continuance of such an archaic system became an impossibility, the Indian sold his furs to the highest bidder, received a large price in cash and then wasted the proceeds in trinkets

instead of blankets and in rum instead of flour, with the result that he is now gloriously free but is on the highroad to becoming a diseased outcast. In this case of the Hudson Bay Indian the advantages of the upward step from serfdom to freedom are not altogether clear. A very similar condition of vassalage existed until recently among the peons of Mexico, but without the compensation of the control of an intelligent and provident ruling class.

In the same way serfdom in mediæval Europe apparently was a device through which the landowners repressed the nomadic instinct in their tenantry which became marked when the fertility of the land declined after the dissolution of the Roman Empire. Years are required to bring land to its highest productivity and agriculture cannot be successfully practised even in well-watered and fertile districts by farmers who continually drift from one locality to another. The serf or villein was, therefore, tied by law to the land and could not leave except with his master's consent. As soon as the nomadic instinct was eliminated serfdom vanished. One has but to read the severe laws against vagrancy in England just before the Reformation to realize how widespread and serious was this nomadic instinct. Here in America we have not yet forgotten the wandering instincts of our Western pioneers, which in that case proved beneficial to every one except the migrants.

While democracy is fatal to progress when two races of unequal value live side by side, an aristocracy may be equally injurious whenever, in order to purchase a few

generations of ease and luxury, slaves or immigrants are imported to do the heavy work. It was a form of aristocracy that brought slaves to the American colonies and the West Indies and if there had been an aristocratic form of governmental control in California, Chinese coolies and Japanese laborers would now form the controlling element, so far as numbers are concerned, on the Pacific coast.

Vox populi, so far from being Vox Dei, thus becomes an unending wail for rights and never a chant of duty.

It was the upper classes who encouraged the introduction of immigrant labor to work American factories and mines and it is the native American gentleman who builds a palace on the country side and who introduces as servants all manner of foreigners into purely American districts. The farming and artisan classes of America did not take alarm until it was too late and they are now seriously threatened with extermination in many parts of the country. In Rome, also, it was the plebeian, who first went under in the competition with slaves but the patrician followed in his turn a few generations later.

The West Indian sugar planters flourished in the eighteenth century and produced some strong men; to-day from the same causes they have vanished from the scene.

During the last century the New England manufacturer imported the Irish and French Canadians and the resultant fall in the

New England birth rate at once became ominous. The refusal of the native American to work with his hands when he can hire or import serfs to do manual labor for him is the prelude to his extinction and the immigrant laborers are now breeding out their masters and killing by filth and by crowding as effectively as by the sword.

Thus the American sold his birthright in a continent to solve a labor problem. Instead of retaining political control and making citizenship an honorable and valued privilege, he intrusted the government of his country and the maintenance of his ideals to races who have never yet succeeded in governing themselves, much less any one else.

Associated with this advance of democracy and the transfer of power from the higher to the lower races, from the intellectual to the plebeian class, we find the spread of socialism and the recrudescence of obsolete religious forms. Although these phenomena appear to be contradictory, they are in reality closely related since both represent reactions from the intense individualism which a century ago was eminently characteristic of Americans.

The preceding chapter is excerpted from Madison Grant, The Passing of the Great Race; or, The Racial Basis of European History (Fourth Revised Edition, with a Documentary Supplement; with prefaces by Henry Fairfield Osborn), published in New York by Charles Scribner's Sons (1936). Originally published 1916.

PRO ECCLESIA ET PATRIA

